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QuickPoint! – Something’s Rotten in Metro’s Missing Garbage Tax Money

By John A. Charles, Jr. and Allison Coleman

Metro is asking for a new tax levy this November (Measure 26-178 on your ballot) [despite the fact that it already has sufficient funds](#) to operate all its parks.

In 2002, the Metro Council enacted a garbage tax for the specific purpose of funding operations and maintenance of Metro parks. That amount was raised to \$2.50 per ton in 2004. Between 2002 and 2015, the garbage tax brought in \$46.8 million for Metro parks.

Given that Metro raised all this money for parks, why is Metro asking for voter approval of another \$80 million parks levy in the upcoming November election? Where did the \$46.8 million in garbage tax money go?

The answer can be found in a [bait-and-switch ordinance adopted by Metro](#) in 2006. The Council amended the Metro Code to retain the garbage tax, but “undedicate” its use so that revenues would be swept into the Metro General Fund.

Since 2006, regional taxpayers have paid more than \$32 million in garbage taxes that should have gone to parks, but instead went to other purposes. We’ve heard the scare stories before, but [it’s time to call Metro’s bluff](#). Voters should reject the Metro tax levy and demand that all money from the garbage tax be rededicated to parks maintenance, as promised 14 years ago.

John A. Charles, Jr. is President and CEO of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market public policy research organization. Allison Coleman is a Research Associate at Cascade.