

Hello again. This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, January 11, 2024 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

On Wednesday, U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer announced nearly \$16.7 million in new federal funding for two projects on the Olympic Peninsula through the U.S. Department of Transportation Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program. These grants are made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the largest long-term investment in America's infrastructure in nearly a century. More than \$2 million will go for the City of Port Angeles to install 50 electric vehicle chargers and a whopping \$14.5 million will go to Energy Northwest to install 40 fast and 12 Level 2 EV chargers across Western Washington for rural communities, including indigenous communities in Forks, Sequim, Quilcene, Shelton, and Port Ludlow.

While this new investment will help reduce the environmental impacts of combustion engine vehicles, it comes with impacts of its own. Electric cars weigh considerably more than gas-powered cars which can cause considerably more damage to roads. For example, the Ford F-150 Lightning weighs 35% more than the gas-powered Ford F-150 truck. This amount of added weight on our roads can directly cause more stress and may eventually result in the failure of our paved roads. And considering how potholed the roads already are in Port Townsend, this could be a serious problem.

Not only that, but to fix the potholes and crumbling roads, federal, state, and local governments rely on fuel taxes, which pay for around three-quarters of what the U.S. spends on building new roads and maintaining them. In Washington, we've tried to solve the fact that electric vehicles don't pay anything in gas taxes by charging a flat fee. The electric car fee in Washington is a \$100 annual fee and that money is used to not only offset the impacts of electric vehicles on roads, but also help fund the state's electric vehicle infrastructure, such as charging stations. The most recent financial modeling estimates Washington drivers pay an average of \$146.40 per year in gas taxes. This means electric vehicles do more damage to roads and bring in less money to repair them, not only because the fee is lower but also because that money is split between road maintenance and charging stations.

And since there aren't any local lithium mines, I won't get into the environmental impact all those electric batteries create, but it's worth thinking about the damage you don't see, as well.

If balancing out the environmental impact of electric vehicles has got you down, maybe there's a young person out there who can help. Do you know any 12- to 19-year-olds who impress you with their commitment to the environment and their leadership skills? If so, the Jefferson Land Trust encourages you to nominate them for the Fairbank Award for Youth Environmental Action by March 1. Jefferson Land Trust established the Fairbank Award last year in 2023 in honor of longtime Land Trust volunteers and supporters Sarah and Owen Fairbank. The \$500 award, provided by an anonymous community member, is given annually to a young person who has, in the last year, shown leadership, commitment, and innovation to build a community that's healthy, happy, sustainable, and deeply connected to nature for generations to come.

Here are some examples of the types of actions that eligible nominees may be taking to demonstrate their commitment. They might be demonstrating involvement or initiative in environmental protection, restoration, or new projects. Or perhaps they're influencing people's behavior toward sustainable living. Or maybe they're building environmental and climate change awareness within our community.

For more information, including eligibility requirements and nominations instructions, go to [tinyurl.com/FairbankAward \(https://saveland.org/fairbank-award-for-youth-environmental-action/?fbclid=IwAR2q2gwV_R90iwDoxFvgoUjKgbzoHPwAjvEkPkFwNP7J5RTgT5s04UzQYJU\)](https://saveland.org/fairbank-award-for-youth-environmental-action/?fbclid=IwAR2q2gwV_R90iwDoxFvgoUjKgbzoHPwAjvEkPkFwNP7J5RTgT5s04UzQYJU).

Finally, with temperatures dipping below freezing this week, the Winter Welcoming Center will be extending operations to 24 hours a day during the cold snap, from today through at least Sunday and possibly into Monday morning. Located in the Pope Marine Building at 100 Madison Street in Port Townsend, the Winter Welcoming Center is a warming center for individuals who may need a place indoors and out of the cold weather. It usually operates from 8:30am until 12:30pm, but will extend 24 hours a day to provide warmth, WiFi, bathrooms, and community for those who have nowhere else to go.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturdays. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.