



CITY OF

PORTLAND, OREGON

OFFICE OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

Sam Adams, Commissioner

1221 S.W. Fourth Avenue, Rm. 220

Portland, Oregon 97204-1994

(503) 823-3008

FAX (503) 823-3017

Email: samadams@ci.portland.or.us

www.portlandonline.com/adams

To: The Public of the City of Portland
From: Commissioner Sam Adams
Re: Inflammatory Radio Comments

July 17, 2006

An open Letter to City of Portland:

It has been brought to my attention by several concerned members of the community that the 95.5 radio broadcast of "The Playhouse" on July 13, 2006 and July 16, 2006 included a number of inflammatory statements that could negatively impact the safety of Portland. These statements may have included sentiments that news of people dying is funny. It is not. The discussion included statements to the effect of:

"When I hear on TV that a cyclist has been hit and killed by a car, I laugh; I think it's funny,

"If you are a cyclist you should know I exist, that I don't care about you. That I don't care about your life."

Upon first becoming the Commissioner of Transportation, I set traffic safety as my number-one priority. I believe that one death on our roads is one death too many, and in Portland, we have 10% more traffic fatalities each year than murders. Last year in America (I note that the show in question is broadcast in 12 markets), 43,200 people died in traffic crashes. This was more than any year since 1990. If the USA had shared the same success in reducing fatality rates as Australia, England, and Canada, we would have had 20,000 fewer dead people last year.

It is in this light that I wish to express my extreme concern for the statements in your show that made light of the tragedy that visits families coping with the aftermath of traffic casualties. This past year alone has brought us here in Portland an unacceptable number of tragic pedestrian and bicycle fatalities – fatalities of mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives. While making light of these tragedies exhibits poor taste, the main concern I hold is that the broadcast may have actually encouraged people to behave in reckless and dangerous ways towards others. While I am a strong defender of freedom of speech, incitement to violence is not afforded the same protections as other types of speech.

Through our "I Share the Road" campaign, the City is working to combat road rage and promote safety and tolerance through education, engineering, and enforcement strategies that relate to motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. This effort is led by a coalition that includes the Oregon Truckers' Association, AAA of Oregon, the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition, Trauma Nurses Talk Tough, Elders in Action, and others. We

take increasing the civility on our streets seriously. As a coalition, we have pledged to challenge statements that trivialize or dehumanize the effects of road rage.

I have had a chance to listen to some edited versions of the broadcasts in question, and am shocked by some of the inappropriate commentary I have heard. However, since the Jamn 95.5 has taken the full versions of the broadcasts off of their website's public archives I have not had the opportunity to hear the entire unedited broadcasts. Because of this, I am calling on the 95.5 management to cooperate with community requests and provide a transcript, tape, or the podcast of the show to the public. This action would either alleviate community concern or help to foster a dialogue about appropriate action 95.5 could take to assist in efforts to improve the safety of our streets.

I hope to do what I can to help this seemingly unfortunate incident into a constructive event that may lead to something positive within our community. I look forward to continuing my work with transportation advocates of all sorts, as well as radio staff, in the case that I can be of additional assistance.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.A. Adams". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Sam Adams
Commissioner of Transportation
City of Portland