

PORTLAND AFOOT

PDX's 10-minute newsmagazine
on buses, bikes, and low-car life

January 2010:

THE ANIMAL ISSUE

old tricks
new rules
borrowed money
blue kids (and how to fix them)



Arriving Now

Four stories you can't miss this month



1 Black night

Angela Burke, 26, was killed Dec. 16 as she **walked her bike across SW Barbur** and was struck by a driver police said was drunk and high. **"What do you think?"** the driver allegedly bragged to his passenger, BikePortland reported, before accelerating to an estimated 75 mph and losing control.

WHY IT MATTERS

Oregon's manslaughter law is one of the country's **most forgiving**. But like most of the other 59 Oregon pedestrians killed in 2010, Burke was also **killed by a road**: In this case, one with no safe crossing into a big residential complex.

JOIN 'FRIENDS OF BARBUR'

<http://pdx.be/PaintAintEnough>

2 Good news

A bus driver who saw an **8-week-old puppy loose in Forest Grove traffic** stopped his bus, scooped him up and posted flyers everywhere. On Dec. 22 his owner, a nearby farm store, said the driver could keep him, free. His new name: **Oreo**.

READ THE STORY

<http://pdx.be/PuppyPuppyPuppy>

3 Working local

Don't we all dream of **commuting 30 minutes or less**? Surprise! We should all move to East & North PDX, the Census found Dec. 14: Mill Park, Humboldt, Arbor Lodge. NoPo transpo pro Lenny Anderson credits **commuter-friendly employers like Adidas**, which fled Beaverton in 2002 for a new HQ on the Yellow Line.

THE QUICKEST COMMUTES

<http://pdx.be/LowCarHomes>

4 Bridge #11

Quick, somebody alert the New York Times: The Willamette River is about to get **the first bridge in the USA that carries buses, bikes, rails and feet but no cars**. Approved Dec. 8, it'll link the South Waterfront with southeast PDX by 2015, just north of the Ross Island Bridge. Bus activists howled that TriMet can't afford a new \$1.6 billion MAX line. **"This company is making a transition from a transit agency to a development agency,"** Cameron Johnson testified. If any of the developers or business leaders who showed up to defend the project actually rode TriMet, we'd be less worried that Johnson's right.

CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

<http://pdx.be/BrandNewBridge>



Sauvie Island, approximately 5:30 a.m. Nobody on the bus, just me.

It was that snow we had a couple years ago, the worst snowstorm I'd ever seen. Over half our fleet was down that day.

I was supposed to turn around right in the parking lot there, but I couldn't get to that turnaround. The sheriff told me to go straight, to loop around the island.

I was just fine until I found a hunting club out there. These big 4x4s started coming at me. I swerved to the right, and the inevitable happened: The rear right side of the bus slid off the road into a snowbank. It was at least 8 feet tall. Snow came in the back window.

Dispatch just said, "Hang with your bus."

At first I was okay with it. Actually, I was quite calm. I had the heaters going. I didn't have a radio; we're not allowed to carry any electronic equipment except our



cell phones. I called my wife.

I read the paper and the crosswords. I got bored.

2 p.m.-ish, one of the neighbors that had passed me a few times came by with chicken noodle soup and grilled cheese. He asked if I wanted to wait in his house; I said no.

I called home every few hours. My wife was getting very angry, wanting to call TriMet, the media. I said, "Honey, I love my job. Don't do that."

The neighbor passed the bus again and invited me to come in. So I ended

up hanging out there, having pizza for dinner and watching a movie. *Stripes*. The fella stayed up and watched it with me. He was retired, a civic engineer.

I left around 11, walked through the field back to my bus, probably about six blocks. Finally an off-duty rail supervisor came out with a big Subaru station wagon, fixed me up, and took me back to the station.

I went in, signed in for my next day's run, and curled up until it was time to go.

Which was about two hours.

What's your favorite bus story? Write michael@portlandafoot.org or call 503-662-2871. Storytellers get a gift card to our favorite bar or coffee shop.

They just said,
"Hang with your
bus." So I did.

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Did you notice the last issue was sort of wrapped up like a present? Yeah, funny story.

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Also, FYI: Lenny Anderson (quoted above) is a partner in our work subscription program. We like him.

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\$14 a year. Details on back. (503) On-A-Bus-1
<http://PortlandAfoot.org>

•
Truly yours.

Street Talk

Five questions and someone worth asking

Every morning before work, MAX operator Anthony Forrester, 37, jots down some daily thoughts and slips them in his pocket. Then, twice per run, he brings his train a little touch of class: upbeat in-flight announcements over the train's PA. We caught him between shifts at Ruby Junction to discuss big vehicles, small talk and his favorite PA subject: the Oregon Ducks.

I love your routine. Does anybody complain?

Not that I've heard. I always give the weather, and if I can, some sort of joke. Last week I was like, "Don't be afraid of the sun! It is a perfectly natural form of vitamin D."

TriMet and your union are in a big fight. Your take?

I just think you can only get positive results from positive actions. At the same time, I know how blessed I am. Operating a train? Holy crap! I mean, there's these

kids standing with their moms on the platform scowling and I ring my bell and wave and it's like HEYYYY! THE TRAIN OPERATOR WAVED AT ME!

Do bus and MAX drivers have different cultures?

It's a different mentality. On the bus side, if something goes wrong with the bus ahead, they just go around. On MAX, there's 150 operators and I probably know 100 by name. It's more of a family. You have to be! I'm affected by everyone else around me.

Auburn: What's your prediction?

Oregon by 10 to 14, but it really depends on Cam Newton.

What's your favorite Portland secret?

Rimsky-Korsakoffee House – if you know which tables to sit at.

Forrester works day shift on the Blue Line. Qs & As edited for brevity.

Anthony Forrester

MAX operator,
lifelong Ducks fan



How it's going.

Reported & written

- camping by bus
- bus route rankings
- the perfect MAX seat
- bike transportation basics
- service-cut scapegoats
- anti-car retailers
- transportation obsessions
- crosstown bike routes

back issues by email: ask
michael@portlandafoot.org

Stamped & sorted

- monthly subscribers: 257
- sustaining members: 33
- copies distributed: 3,599
- wiki pages: 595
- unique web visitors: 8,832
- printing cost per copy distributed: 28¢
- folding & mailing per copy mailed: 79¢

Portland Afoot is a public experiment: As big media splinter, can ordinary people who ride the bus and MAX build a conversation of our own? At the end of our startup year, here's a peek at the first few results. (Full details, forever: pdx.be/Transparency.)

In case you were wondering, freelance pays my own rent, savings buy my groceries and about 3/4 of my time goes to building a weird little nonprofit that can't pay anyone yet. I'm enormously grateful to the many who've offered advice, volunteered skill or chipped in a few bucks to spread the word. (Sustaining members: Your goodie bags are not forgotten.) I've been thrilled so many people find this as exciting as I do.

Portland Afoot's next step is downtown, where any worker can now get a free subscription. No joke! If you want to help, let people know: portlandafoot.org/partnerships.

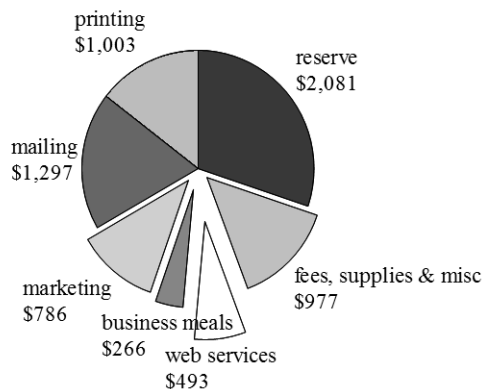
Wherever we're headed, I'll see you on the way. I'll be the one leaning his laptop against the next seat up.

Michael Andersen, publisher & guinea-pig-in-chief

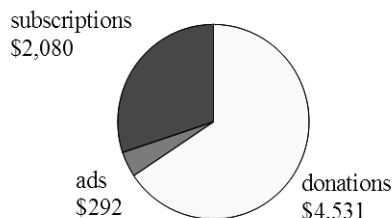
Seen & heard

- BikePortland.org
- pdx.fm
- The Portland Mercury
- Sustainable Business Oregon
- The Oregonian
- Portland Business Journal
- Oregon Public Broadcasting
- Willamette Week
- Columbia Journalism Review
- NiemanLab.org
- Sunset Magazine

Expenses, 2010



Revenue, 2010



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Guide Horse photo courtesy of the Guide Horse Foundation. Other animal photos from Flickr. Potbellied pig: Rora. Boa constrictor: Hoyanmeg. Tarantula: Finlitz. Parrot: Pokerbit. Monkey: Devos.

Fearing frauds, TriMet cracks down on the Bus Menagerie

5 ways to spot a rider (or your driver) breaking the new rules

- If it's any animal except a dog or miniature horse, without special permission from TriMet, but isn't in a "well-designed" container.
- If it is a dog but isn't held by a leash, harness or other restraining device. (No, purses don't count.)
- If the rider describes it as a "companion" or "therapy" animal but not a "service" animal.
- If the driver asks for a service animal's documentation or proof of the rider's disability.
- If the animal gets out of its owner's control – or turns out not to be housebroken.

6 things you didn't know about dogs, service animals & TriMet

Typical cost to the owner of obtaining a dog guide, thanks to private donations: \$0 • Cost of breeding, training and delivering a new dog guide, according to Guide Dogs for the Blind: \$65,000 • Number of dog guides in the U.S. and Canada: 10,000 • Number of dogs in Portland (2006 estimate, Dog Fancy): 136,332 • Fine for falsely telling TriMet that a pet is a service animal, typically: \$175 • Penalties for TriMet animal violations in 2010: 14

3 amazing stories about service and companion animals

- **Pigs:** In 2000, Maria Andrews brought her 300-pound potbellied pig Charlotte onto a US Airways flight to Seattle. The pig was needed to relieve stress from a heart condition, she said – and the FAA agreed. [pdx.be/PigFlies](#)
- **Parrots:** Jim Eggers of St. Louis has a parrot, Sadie, who has learned to defuse his psychotic spells by saying “It’s O.K., Jim. You’re all right, Jim. I’m here, Jim.” Sadie learned it from Jim, who talks to himself. [pdx.be/CoolBird](#)
- **Boas:** Daniel Greene of Seattle says his boa constrictor, Redrock, warns him about seizures by squeezing his neck. It's important, he says, "to be stronger than the snake." [pdx.be/GentlySqueezed](#)

Starting March 15, the only legal 'service animals' will be dogs. Can TriMet stop extraordinary animals like David the cat from falling through the cracks?

Lina Bensel probably wouldn't want *that* cat, the worker at the Troutdale animal shelter said. It was already three years old, missing its right eye, and suffering from fleas, tapeworms and a beef allergy.

"Well," Bensel replied, sitting in her wheelchair, "he'll fit in just fine in my family."

Five years before, in 1990, Bensel's epilepsy had turned catastrophically to the worse. After 17 years of occasional seizures following a childhood injury, the 33-year-old was suddenly attacked by six seizures in a row, knocking her unconscious and temporarily paralyzing half her body.

They kept coming. Keeping her job at a little home for developmentally delayed adults wasn't an option.

By 1995, Bensel was living on disability checks in a studio apartment near Hollywood, getting around on TriMet's van service and never knowing when the next seizure might send her slumping to the ground.

It wasn't until a few months after adopting David that she noticed his habit of climbing up her chest, staring her in the face with his one green eye, and giving her nose a quick sniff.

Maybe her body's electrical shifts change her scent, she says. Maybe every cat has a sixth sense, but only David felt a strong enough bond to act. But unlike any of her cats before or since, David and his little sniffs could

perfectly predict that Bensel was on the cusp of a major seizure, and should find a safe place to lie down.

"It was almost always about 15 minutes," Bensel says. "If you believe in miracles, it was, kind of."

A year later, new medication brought Bensel's seizures further under control, freeing her of the wheelchair. But until David's 2005 death she brought him, leashed, on TriMet vans and buses, to be sure she'd have warning of any trouble.

Today, people can bring cats, dogs, tarantulas, monkeys or anything else onto TriMet by describing them as medically essential – whether or not it's true. By federal law, TriMet can't dispute any such claim.

That's about to change. At the urging of people with real service animals who say the public is losing trust, the Obama administration says that after March 15, only dogs can be protected "service animals." (There's a separate exception for – no joke – tiny horses.)

The ban on pets will remain, TriMet leaders say, with exceptions for animals like David – but only by special permission of the general manager. Their decision is due this month. For details, visit [pdx.be/DogsOnly](#).

Bensel, who now works at Independent Living Resources of Portland, thinks the registration plan will work. "If it's important enough for the person," she says, "they'll go through the hoop." 🐾



original portrait of David the cat by Kay L. Thompson