

PORTLAND SAFOOT

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



August 2011:

THE ART ISSUE

- *writing on the 75*
- *rhyming with "Tualatin"*
- *biking with Bill Murray*
- *exposing yourself to trouble*

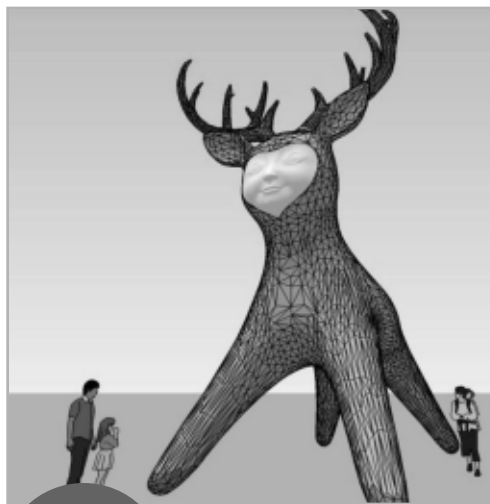


image: TriMet



1

Big art

TriMet's future neighbors drew battle lines over *Rebirth*, a **30-foot, \$250,000 yellow deer sculpture** with a cherub's face proposed for a new MAX station at SE Park and McLoughlin. **"Maybe the Paul Bunyan statue can kill it and eat it,"** wrote bojack.org's Jack Bogdanski, who broke the story.

ON THE OTHER HAND

"Art is meant to provoke something, a conversation," said Cora Potter of Lents, who loves the design. "Even if it's just an internal conversation with yourself. Next time you're **freaked out** by something, maybe ask yourself why."

WEIGH IN WITH TRIMET

<http://pdx.be/BigDeerArt>

2

Good news

Ten years after TriMet moved beyond the posted bus schedule, its northern neighbor is on the same track. **C-Tran's new real-time bus arrival hotline**, 360-695-0123, drew 6,500 calls in its first month, *The Columbian* reported July 21. **Estimates for downtown Portland's express lines** are spotty, because they rely on an east Vancouver radio tower. Still 100% reliable: gridlock at Delta Park by 4:45.

HOW TO USE C-TRAN STOP IDS

<http://pdx.be/CouvoBusTimes>

3

Bikes & race

Do bike lanes gentrify black neighborhoods? A rush of resistance July 20 by some African-American residents complicated a proposal to **pull an auto lane from increasingly white N. Williams Ave.** and widen a 4-foot bike lane for safety reasons. Some black critics said cars need the

space; some said black voices have been silenced during decades of changes in the area. **"How come it wasn't safe 10 years ago?"** BikePortland.org quoted Sharon Maxwell-Hendricks, who is black, as saying. **"We wanted safe streets back then;** but now that the bicyclists want to have safe streets, then it's all about the bicyclists."

BIKERS' RACE: THE NUMBERS

<http://pdx.be/BlackOnABike>

4

Germier buses

Don't skip that soap. Cloth bus seats are **40 times germier than vinyl MAX seats** and nearly as germier as bus floors, the *O* reported July 13 – about the same as a "movie theater or shopping mall." Fortunately, TriMet says every new bus it buys will use vinyl, so get ready to **kiss your cloth seat goodbye**. Not literally. 

TRIMET'S GERMIEST SPOTS

<http://pdx.be/LatherUp>

Listening up.

This is cool: We're kicking off our second year with a new monthly podcast, produced by the disturbingly talented local transphile Lillian Karabaic.

It'll be maybe 15 minutes of news, tips and too-true TriMet stories: pdx.be/podcast.

Published monthly by Portland in the Round, an independent journalism startup, under a CC-BY-SA license. Printed on recycled paper at Eberhardt Press on SE 11th and rolled out the door in a granny cart.

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Play on.

Street Talk

Five questions and someone worth asking

Steve Gutmann is living proof that the secret to seeing the future is being a cheapskate. The 27th member of CarSharing Portland, the visionary PDX startup that was later imitated and bought by Flexcar and Zipcar, Gutmann became Flexcar's national sales manager and now directs business development for "peer-to-peer" carshare startup Getaround. We met in Hollywood to talk about how much an under-used car is worth and just how cheap carsharing is going to get.

Getaround lets people set an hourly rate to loan their car to others. What's the pitch?

It's a lot like Homeaway or Airbnb – if you have an extra room in your house, you can rent it to somebody who's coming to town. Because a hotel's expensive and you've got this excess capacity in your room. This is the same concept applied to cars.

How much do the car loaners earn?

Routinely \$250, \$300 a month. One woman's making \$850 a month. She went to France and stuck her Nissan on the network. Because it's available all the time, it gets used all the time.

Carsharing is sold as a cost saver. Doesn't that ultimately mean it's for the poor and the stingy?

Everybody's got financial constraints. I could afford to own a car my whole life. I didn't want to. I wanted to take a trip to Europe every couple years.

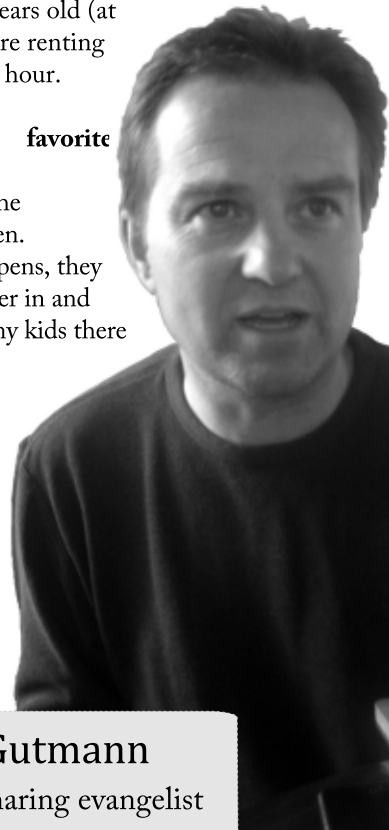
Seems to me one big advantage of Getaround is that Zipcar won't let people borrow a crappy car for cheap.

Getaround cars can't be that crappy. They can only be 150,000 miles, 15 years old (at most). But people are renting for as little as \$3 an hour.

What's your favorite Portland secret?

Early mornings at the rhododendron garden. Before it officially opens, they just let people wander in and out. I used to take my kids there before school.

Getaround operates in the Bay Area with a pilot program in Portland: pdx.be/ShareMyCar. Qs & As edited for brevity. 



Steve Gutmann
personal carsharing evangelist



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On the line *A great idea within one block of a transit stop*

The Spot Paradise.

The Line Skamania County Public Transit (by way of the Red Line and C-Tran #65).

The Times 8:25 a.m., 2 p.m., and 7:30 p.m. weekdays.

The Link pdx.be/SkamaniaBus

The Price \$2 for adults, \$1 for teens, free for kids under 12. Plus an all-zone TriMet pass to get to Fisher's Landing Transit Center on SE 164th Avenue in Vancouver.

The Skinny A driver's seat is no place to enjoy the Columbia Gorge.

But the real pleasures of the Skamania bus don't come from the moments of panoramic ecstasy on state Route 14, halfway up the Washington side of the Gorge. They come from the \$2 ticket to the old, weird America that starts just upriver of the Bonneville Dam.

"It's the only county in the state where you can't shoot Bigfoot," says Ron Miller, 45, of Carson, Wash., riding the bus into Stevenson on a Friday afternoon last month.

"County ordinance," a woman across the aisle pipes up.

It's true. Skamania Cty Ord. 69-01: "Sasquatch protection."



The Skamania bus & Columbia Gorge
 3510 SE 164th Ave., Vancouver

"There's a guy who drives these vans who knows the guy who took The Picture," adds Doug Radliff, who's behind the wheel. "I'll bring the picture next week."

Radliff, the summer bus operator, knows most of the regulars' names. During the school year he teaches first through third grade at a private church school in Hood River.

He's happy to drop you off (or pick you up, if you're waving)

anywhere between his seven official stops on the way to Carson, 40 miles up the Gorge. If you call 509-427-3990 a day in advance, they'll detour the bus up to 3/4 of a mile to reach your location.

The Pacific Crest Trail crosses the route, and there's great hiking and camping throughout. Feel free to bring your bike – the front rack holds two, and there's usually room for more in the back.

Just be sure to have four dollar bills to cover the ride out and back. The Skamania bus makes for the perfect low-car getaway, but it doesn't make change. 🙄

Got a spot? Send your nominations to michael@portlandafoot.org.

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Craigsbest *Our favorite missed connections* -----

Sometimes they probably work. Sometimes we're pretty sure they won't. They're the best of the month's TriMet-related missed connections, from portland.craigslist.org. Monthly at portlandafoot.org/blog and occasionally in print, too. All posts reprinted as typed. Keep connecting, kids. 

An order

Waiting for the Max – m4w (Interstate/Rose Quarter Max Station)
(July 10) We were at the Interstate/Rose Quarter Max Station around 3-3:30pm. I was going north, you were going downtown. I was admiring you at a distance while waiting for the max. Before the max you were waiting for arrived, you left, walking up the stairs towards the Rose Quarter. As you were doing so, A stranger across the tracks said to me, “I think she likes you.” He then forcefully said, “Go after her...Now!” Immediately after he said this, the max heading downtown arrived and the strange disappeared.

My first thought was, “That was a little weird and should I really go after her? I’ve never done anything like that before.” Out of pure optimism, I decided to follow the strangers advice/order and followed your path up the stairs. When I reached the top, I walked around, but could not find you. Disappointed, I went back to the station for the max just arrived. I got on just in time. After I went in, I noticed you were sitting on a bench at the station, again waiting for your ride heading downtown. By then, it was too late. The max I was on just left the station. Ugh!

How not to hit on your TriMet crush, vol. IV

On the blue line max towards gresham – m4w (82nd max stop) 23yr
(July 8) I was the guy rocking out and silently singing lyrics to what I was listening to. Which was sublime. the band. I’m actually pretty drunk right now, I was drinking a lot at work (free beer, woo). You kept looking in my direction. From what I remember you had curly brownish hair. Wearing a white top? long hair though. I couldn’t keep looking over at you. I would’ve said something, especially since i’m drunk, but I didn’t realize it was my stop, and I had my bike. Sad days. You looked awesome. Drink sometime? if your not 21, then coffee?

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Conveniently for Tienken, it's more or less the same thing he'd be doing if he weren't a novelist.

"I'm a city dork," Tienken says. "I just like looking out of the window. That's fun time for me."

And for a moment, Tienken is almost speaking quickly.

Mass Transportation, Scott Tienken's second novel, is now available at <http://pdx.be/BusNovel>.

English from Portland State University, hadn't been looking for a job that would give him three hours a day with his notebook. But that was what he got – and the 75 was where he got it.

"You can only read so much," Tienken says. "The iPod drills a hole in your brain after a while."

So Tienken found himself building a novel around a former police officer who, in a twist of fate, rides the bus every day with a woman he once shot and blinded.

This brings us to the second thing you need to know about *Mass Transportation*: Tienken's third main character is the city of Portland. And it has been moving.

"This isn't a metaphor," says Tienken. "It is actually moving. It's rebelled against the citizens. It has a life of its own. ... 'Hey, I need that bridge!'"

Tienken does not smile when he describes this. This is because he is nervous. Not nervous that it will sound strange. Nervous that it will sound like anything else you've read before.

Tienken has strong opinions about familiarity. He's against it.

In fact, he says, that's why looking out the window of a bus turned out to be the perfect way to write a book.

Watching the world whip past at the same speed he can think is a way for an author to do "the hard work of being totally objective about the space you're in," Tienken said.

It's 3:30 on a Wednesday afternoon and Scott Tienken is, as usual, staring in slight amazement at a building.

In this case, the building is the slowly rotting brick wall behind a restaurant called Pho PDX. It backs onto a grassy, unfenced lot at SW Third and Taylor.

Strictly speaking, it's the vacant lot that has grabbed Tienken's attention.

"I've written on this corner," Tienken says slowly and carefully. "I've been offered drugs on this corner."

Remembering things that have happened to him – one gets the sense that he's working through a predominantly legal but notably long list – is one of the many things that makes Tienken speak slowly and carefully.

Another is the novel he's just written. It's his second. Sometimes Tienken describes it as the second in a loosely knit "Portland Trilogy," along with his 2010 novel *Greatness*. Sometimes he calls it his "fable."

Whatever it is, *Mass Transportation* is almost certainly one of the oddest books yet written about Portland, Oregon.

The first thing you need to know about Tienken's new book is that it's set almost entirely on the 75-Lombard/39th to St. Johns.

photos of Tienken by Michael Schoenholtz

"Even though Portland, except for a real Portland dork, is not *too* too recognizable," he quickly adds.

Ninety percent of the action, Tienken estimates, happens on or around the bus, which is ridden by two of his three main characters.

It's the line Tienken has ridden three days a week since last year, when he left his night shift at a downtown housing agency to become a page at the St. Johns Library. (Tienken's wife, an insurance marketer, drives to work.)

Tienken, who holds a 2000 master's in

Almost all the visual art at TriMet stations is deliberately **designed to not be about transit**, TriMet Public Art Manager Mary Priester says. The exception: The Interactivators, which opened with WES commuter rail in 2009. At each station is a **set of sliding heads on tracks, each based on a theatrical archetype**. They invite passers-by to "become the director of the theater and move the heads around," Priester says. "Stories can sort of emerge based on which characters are interacting with which." Sounds somehow familiar.



photos: Thomas Ngo (left), Tim Jewett (below)

what's your favorite installation? pdx.be/TriMetArt

Sculpture

The allure of the streets

Some works of art are inspired by cars. We're leaving those for the museums ... and writing about everything else.

Music

Low-car tunes: a mixtape

- Young Love • Mystery Jets
- Joe Metro • Blue Scholars
Seattle indie rapper rides the 48 with thinking cap on
- Handshakes • Metric
- North Coast Flyer • Lenny Anderson
future NoPo transit activist's 1979 paean to regional rail
- Beaverton TC • Dr. Something
rhymes "Washington" with "Tualatin" & nearly pulls it off
- Chillaxin' on the MAX • Dynamix
2004: TriMet hires PDX act to prove that hip-hop should never, ever be written on commission
- I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles) • The Proclaimers
- Bicycle Song • David Rovics
PDX-based protest singer explains bike fun in 2.5 minutes
- You're Crazy for Taking the Bus • Jonathan Richman
punk pioneer explains Greyhound
- I Missed the Bus • Kris Kross
- On the Bus Mall • The Decemberists
Meloy writes an Only on the Bus but can't resist the word "urchin."
- Light Rail Coyote • Sleater-Kinney
fauna boards MAX; Brownstein falls hard for Portlandia
- I Like My Bike • Hurtbird
Cake-esque local rockers go commercial ... Portland style

Film

"The **single most joyful scene of bicycle riding in the movies**" lasts "all of about two or three seconds," says Aaron Mesh, *Willamette Week's* movie editor.

The moment came to Earth in 1998 near the end of *Rushmore*: it's two cuts of Jason Schwartzman and Bill Murray bicycling alongside each other. "**Right on the beat of 'Oh Yoko!', of my love will turn you on, they leap their bicycles in the air,**" says Mesh, 30. "That single scene may be entirely responsible for the rise of bicycle popularity among the young and fashionable. It just makes riding bikes look like **so much fun.**"

pdx.be/BikeWithBill. Start the clip at 0:59.

photo: Matt Wong



musical input from...



Brock Dittus
(of the Sprocket Podcast)



Lillian Karabaic
(of our new podcast)



Lenny Anderson
(modestly nominating himself)

links to every track: pdx.be/LowCarTunes

photos courtesy Brock, Lillian & Lenny



Daniel

TriMet Blue Line

I'd venture to guess that he was in his 40s or 50s – he was an older man. This was 15 years ago; I was 12.

We were actually headed into Gresham to catch a movie at the old Gresham center. Ruby Junction, eastbound to Gresham – me, my younger brother, and a friend, Jerry.

I remember going on the train and seeing him sitting there wearing a trenchcoat. And I was like, *This guy can't be up to anything good.*

Nope.

It was one of the old cars with the sideways seating, and he was sitting across the aisle and behind us. We were sitting there for a while and he said, "Look at this." And then he flashed us. Just opened it up.

I tell you, you see it all.

Me and my brother look away. Jerry looks straight at him.

Psychological tidbit: if people think they themselves are

in danger, they will be faster to respond to a dangerous situation. So Jerry immediately yells, "FIRE!"

They were doing a lot of training in school at the time. I was at that age.

Jerry was a bigger guy, between 100 and 150 pounds. And after he yells, he stands up, walks over to the flasher, and punches him in the face.

He wasn't an expert or anything, just normal karate classes. But the flasher guy is pretty hurt. So he calls the police.

Meanwhile, we went right back to my

house and told my family what happened. And when the police look into it, it turns out that the flasher guy was already wanted for two similar incidents. So they send him to jail.

They dropped the assault charge.

Jerry ended up being a Marine. He was military police at

Guantanamo Bay.

As told to editor Michael Andersen. What's your favorite transit story? Write michael@portlandafoot.org or call 503-On-a-Bus-1. Storytellers get a gift card to our favorite bar or coffee shop. ☕

Me and my brother look away from the flasher. Jerry looks straight at him.

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