

PORTLAND SAFOOT

*PDX's 10-minute newsmagazine
about buses, bikes & low-car life*



February/March 2013:

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THE CROSSING ISSUE

.....

- *Paying for Portland pavement in Seattle*
- *Paying for pay raises at TriMet*
- *That math degree finally pays off on the lower deck*



1

CEO raise

Last April, TriMet execs agreed to spend \$910,000 from a one-time "contingency" fund to give managers permanent raises...



photo: dougtone (Flickr)

2

Highway deal

Oregonians' 11-year-long decline in driving would be saving taxpayers big bucks by now - if only our highway department weren't still insisting it's a temporary blip...

(gas not included). "We've been pretty focused on building supply," said Getaround's Steve Gutmann. Let's hope the California startup figures out how to build demand...

FIND THE NEAREST CAR http://pdx.be/ShareMyCar

4 Good news

Job by job, the local economy is coming back - giving TriMet what managers called "a short window of financial stability" in 2014. The agency said March 13 that it expects to hold fares steady...

WHY THE STEEL IS SO SLOW http://pdx.be/BadVibrations

GAS TAX REVENUE FORECAST http://pdx.be/GasBubble

3 500 carshares

One year after its Portland launch, peer-to-peer carsharing service Getaround has the mightiest fleet in town: 500 private vehicles across the region are now listed as shareable...

Giving back.

Last summer, the Portland Afoot community Kickstarted a plan to make our monthly product free on mobile phones & tablets. This month we're rolling out backer rewards ... and preparing for a very memorable launch on May 4: pdx.be/GamesAfoot.

A misinterpretation marred January's ridership stats: MAX dropped ~8%, not ~12%.

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Turnabout's fair play.

Easy riding One trick to optimize your trip by Lauren Hudgins

The problem

Whenever Portland's bridges lift, cyclists, runners and walkers politely pile up behind the gates. When the gate opens, two lines of pedestrian traffic and at least one bike lane jostle each other to pass.

The tip

Forget who arrived at the gate first. We're all better off if we line ourselves up according to speed: Bikes first, then other wheeled transportation (such as skateboards), joggers and finally walkers.

Why it works

The time it takes for a person to go from a full stop at the first gate to the second gate is the square root of twice the distance divided by the rate of acceleration (t=sqrt(2D/A)). The distance from one gate to the other on the lower deck of the Steel Bridge is 211' 2".



the second gate in 13 seconds. If a walker accelerates at 0.88 ft/s^2 and reaches full speed in 10 feet, she will reach the second gate in 53 seconds. If faster-moving traffic starts in front of slower-moving traffic, it could save 40 seconds of frustration for all.

Cause of the month: Each month we give 2% of monthly ad + subscription revenue to a charity picked by a random paying subscriber. This month, Linda H. gives \$9 to the Wikimedia Foundation...

PDX.be links: If you have a smartphone, download a scanner app (say, i-Nigma), point your camera at this 2D barcode and it'll send you to an online list of all the month's goodies: pdx.be/feb13links





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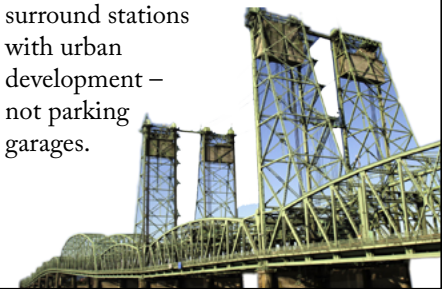
Threading the Needle

Three reasons **even rail-lovers** can hate the Columbia River Crossing

70% of it is highway widening. Most of the CRC's \$3.5 billion is for interchanges up to 2 miles away from the ¾-mile bridge. Earthquake-proofing the old one would cost just \$200 million. Ending 91% of bridge lifts: \$42 million. Fancy new trucks-and-trains bridge: just \$1 billion.

All we need to solve congestion is a toll. There's a reason every afternoon on the I-5 bridge looks like free ice cream day at Ben & Jerry's. It's true that freight access is important to the economy; and the fastest way to keep trucks rolling smoothly would be to put a fair price on highway space.

It'd mess up the region's second-nicest downtown. To max out federal grants, the CRC gooses rail ridership by adding 3,000 free auto parking spaces to West Vancouver. The whole point of light rail is to surround stations with urban development – not parking garages.



Shape the story

pdx.be/HelpSeattle

Three reasons **even highway-haters** can love the Columbia River Crossing

This might be the only way to get rail or tolls over the river. Clark County conservatives are freaking out about rail and tolls *with* a new highway. No way they'd back those *without* one.

Construction jobs. Here's the basic reason so many Democrats support the CRC: Government projects have to be built with union labor, so trade unions push hard for them and for the jolt of federal dollars they pull back into the local economy.

Low-car activists have other fish to fry. Here's Rex Burkholder, environmentalist and CRC backer, last month: Oregon "just committed almost \$400 million to a totally disastrous project east of Salem that would serve 500 cars a day. And no one says a thing about it. It's criminal."

• arguments.pdx.be/CRCProsCons •

Portland urbanists have hated the Columbia River Crossing for years. But the massive project will live or die in the hands of a very different low-car city – one whose own residents are only now deciding what to think of it.

SEATTLE - Still draped in his scarf, the tall bespectacled political organizer slouched over a basement table in the oldest bar in town and started preaching to his city's smallest choir.

"There are certainly lots of elements that need to be done as far as the border crossing," said Brock Howell, King County program director for the anti-sprawl group Futurewise. "But to build six interchanges? Ridiculous." His companions, a pair of transportation bloggers, were already nodding along; but Howell, 31, was just warming up.

"Adding another lane on the bridge, for congestion that isn't really that bad compared to the rest of the country?" he went on. "We haven't become that precise in our freight movement that a trucking company can't wait three hours to get around congestion. So there's a better plan forward – and the frustrating thing, I think, is really the cabal of interests that have always been at stake in this. You have pro-business folks, you have labor folks, you have an agency with staff and you have engineering firms that need to have contracts. ... They're going to spend a lot of money in the political system to build the projects they know how to build."

Howell's case against the Columbia River Crossing between Portland and Vancouver, Wash., a \$3.4 billion freeway-rail expansion, was old news to Howell's friends. What was new was the name of the city that was about to control the project's fate.

Suddenly, and to the knowledge of very few Seattlites not seated around this table, it was becoming clear that the city that would save or kill the biggest transportation project in Oregon's history was their own.



Rob Johnson folded two hands behind his knee and told the story from the 1960s that every urbanist in Seattle knows. Like so many stories in Seattle politics, this one starts with a series of ballot issues.

"They were called Forward Thrust, and they would have created a massive subway system in the region," said Johnson, director of the Transportation Choices Coalition. "The federal government was asking us to pick up 10% of the tab, and they would pick up 90% of the tab. And the kicker was you needed to get 60% of your local population to vote for it."

Johnson grimaced. "The last time, in 1970, we got like 58%," he said. "Our region sort of had a chance. And we blew it." Over the next 20 years, Seattle boomed and its highways clogged. Meanwhile, starting in 1982, the blue-collar backwater to its south was building a new sort of public transit: a street-level electric rail line it called "MAX."

Light rail, as it was known, was cheaper than subways, and the data was clear: middle-class commuters loved it. Clambering to follow Portland's

example, Seattle finally opened a light rail line in 2009.

It was part of a powerful shift in city politics toward low-car life. In quick succession, Seattle voters rejected a freeway/rail ballot issue, approved a second one without the freeways and then elected a bike-commuting, highway-hating Sierra Club veteran as its mayor.

Seattle liberals say they're eager to fulfil the promise of their low-car town, which seems likely to overtake Portland this year to claim the nation's No. 8 transit ridership per capita.

It's a story that, for many here, has made light rail synonymous with good public transit.

It's also why the story of a project that could bring light rail to Vancouver, Wash., has deep appeal – even to Seattlites who would never agree to spend \$2 billion on highway expansion in their city.

"We're very excited about light rail these days in Seattle," said state Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon, 26, a liberal Democrat who said he leans toward including funding for the Columbia River Crossing in a transportation ballot issue Washington's legislature is now considering. "I think we're excited that our friends to the south in Vancouver would also be able to get it."



Three miles south of downtown Seattle, Paul Guppy sat in the remodeled gas station that serves as the headquarters of the state's libertarian think tank and sketched out how the Columbia River Crossing plan could die in the Washington legislature.

"Constituents are generally delighted when Democrats and Republicans work together," said Guppy, the Washington Policy Center's vice president for research.

What it'd take, Guppy said, is an alliance of Seattle urbanists like Howell, Johnson and Fitzgibbon to join Republican rail skeptics to block funding for the current plan until after a key federal deadline next year. Instead, he said, they'd promise to agree on a simpler, cheaper version that offered bus rapid transit instead of light rail.

"That's what I would be pushing," Guppy said. Even Seattle liberals who dislike the Columbia River Crossing are skeptical. Johnson said he can't imagine left-wing Seattle Democrats crossing their leaders to join right-wing Republicans on anything.

But one of Howell's friends at the bar rendezvous, Seattle Transit Blog writer Ben Schiendelman, said lawmakers like Fitzgibbon are "educatable" – if Portland freeway foes can make them see the CRC as a freeway project, not just a light rail expansion.

"The Seattle urbanists will need help," said Schiendelman. "This is going to be a Washington state vote, and the thing that you're going to have to do is help us out." P




Who **WHACKED** Ms. Faire LeSquare?

A live mystery adventure game in PDX

Who Whacked Ms. Faire LeSquare? is a free, freewheeling **murder mystery public transit adventure game** that will be played on TriMet and social media on Saturday, May 4, 2013. With a small team of friends (or strangers, if you want), you'll race around the metro area to smuggle and intercept shipments using the bus network, paddle across the Willamette and track clues and shady characters through the mean streets of PDX.

Grand prize for one lucky player whose team gathers all five clues: a **one-year TriMet pass**. Yep, that's a cool \$1,100.

Also, there will be balloons.

The game is a celebration of the launch of Portland Afoot's free mobile magazine. Request a preregistration invite now at PortlandAfoot.org/game – we'll see you there. 

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ONLY ON THE BUS



Justin
TriMet #15

He was an older guy, I'm a young guy, and I sort of have that absorptive student kind of thing. I think he just wanted to share.

It was a Friday night, probably like 9:15. I just got off work cooking downtown. I had my headphones on and I was just trying to do my thing.

I had just shown my pass. His eye was whited out, so one eye was blind – pretty interesting-looking guy. He had this big, peaceful rasta grin. Like unusually friendly, you know? He was like, “Sit down, sit down!” So I sat down. He might be crazy, but he was gentle.

Maybe a minute or two in, he started talking to me. He was from Jamaica, but he lived all over: in Africa, but I think he lived in New York, too. He'd been in Portland for a few years, he said.

He was like, “Oh yes, today I had one vodka, I smoked

some ganj. I'm just an alcoholic, but I don't hurt anybody.”

He put up his hands in quotation marks. “Sometimes, I'll be like, ‘Oh, can I have a dollar?’” Then he was like, “I don't know what this means.” I tried to explain air quotes to him, but I wasn't able to. He just cut me off.

“Let me show you my style,” he said. So he sits down next to me and pulls out this bottle of musk. It has a wand in it. And he pulls my right hand and marks it with a huge X of musk.

Then he dips the wand again and grabs my left hand and marks it with a huge X. Like a big amount, you know? A huge, sloppy X.

And then he dips the wand again and

slaps it on my face – big slap on my face, on both sides of my chin.

I just started laughing.

And he put the wand back, put the musk back in the bag, scooted back over, and pulled out an issue of Out magazine and started flipping through it. I don't know if

he could read it or not.

My hoodie has had musk now for like two weeks. I think he said it was Ethiopian. It smells kind of nice. I had to work late one night, cleaning. Usually it's kind of annoying. But the musk kept me relaxed.

*As told to editor Michael Andersen.
What's your favorite TriMet story? Write
onlyonthebus@portlandafoot.org.* 

Electronic mail.

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