

PORTLAND AFOOT

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

December 2010:

THE CROSSTOWN ISSUE



best routes ... worst corners ... cheap vanpools ... standing up for ghosts ... walking scenery



It was 7:30 or something in the morning. Even in July, probably a little too cold to be going without a shirt.

Since the streetcar is about as fast as a grazing bovine, it allows a lot of staring out the window. I watched a young guy getting out of his car. And I wouldn't have noticed him, except that he wasn't wearing a shirt. Even in the summertime, you need a sweatshirt in the morning.

But this was just the kind of guy you would hope to see without a shirt. He was a young pup – had to be early to mid 20s. Lean, muscled, probably gay. Too cute to be completely straight, anyway.

If you have a fabulous body, and have your shirt off on a chilly morning, you likely have an agenda. If you don't have a fabulous body, and you have your shirt off on a chilly morning, you are likely hung over and/or

kicked out of the house by an angry spouse. And you are doing a public disservice. Please wear your shirt.

I watched the pretty boy and wondered how cold and gay he must be.

As the streetcar moved, he dropped from my field of vision. I was the last in a row of three women, and I kind of caught myself. I had a bit of self-awareness – *Oh, I don't want to make myself totally obvious that I was staring at this guy.* I was like, okay, I'm gonna let it go. I turned my eyes forward.

And just as I did this, I saw these two

other women with me doing the same exact thing.

We all turned our heads in unison. Synchronized ogling. It was perfect.

I felt some heterosexual sisterly bonding with strangers on the streetcar. It's like we were best friends for 3 seconds.

Women ogle too, you know.

What's your favorite bus story? This one is lightly adapted from a post on trimetdiaries.com, a great new website by Heather and her husband, Dave, for swapping public transit tales in PDX.

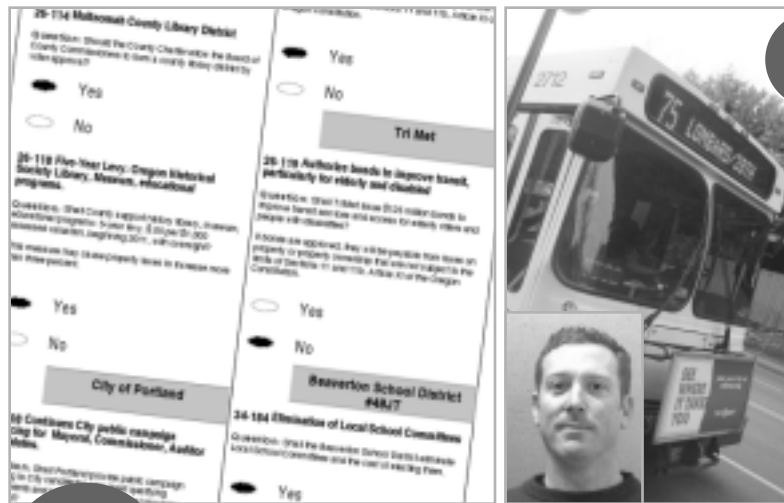
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Arriving Now Four stories you can't miss this month



1

'No' vote

PDX voters gave TriMet its **worst-ever ballot defeat** Nov. 2, opting to save about \$10 per home per year instead of buying **hundreds of better buses and stops**. "The people in this region support public transportation," boss Neil McFarlane said Nov. 3. "A bad economy did not work in our favor."

WHY IT MATTERS

Money may only get scarcer. TriMet is borrowing for new MAX lines based on a strange assumption: that **PDX wages are on the cusp of a record-setting, 30-year explosion**. Plan B: feel under the seats for loose nickels.

OUR BUDGET INVESTIGATION

<http://pdx.be/BigExpectations>

2

Good news

TriMet driver Ryan Ferro, 38, **spoke up for a ghost** Nov. 13 after a man loaded an all-white bike onto the rack of Ferro's 75 bus. Ferro, a biker himself, quietly confronted the man, BikePortland.org reported: "**That bike was put up for someone that was killed.** It belongs somewhere else and it needs to go back." Ashamed, the thief gave Ferro the ghost bike, and it was back at 39th & Taylor by Thanksgiving Day.

PORTLAND'S 'GHOST BIKES'

<http://pdx.be/GhostBikes>

3

Risky corners

Ghost bikes help warn bikers of local trouble spots, but in the end nothing beats **statistics**. In the last 10 years, NW Broadway and Couch, near downtown's Embers nightclub, has been **the city's most crash-prone intersection** for pedestrians

and cyclists, the Portland Tribune reported Nov. 18. Three other bad spots were on SE 82nd and 122nd, where wide lanes fool drivers into thinking they're alone.

THE FULL LIST

<http://pdx.be/RiskyCorners>

4

Price plunge

The cheapest way to commute to and from Clark County might get moreso. Scrambling to fill empty seats, C-Tran will **cut vanpool fees by as much as 47%** if board members approve Dec. 14. Shared vans would rent for **as little as \$31 per rider per month**, gas included, for a 25-mile round trip. "All of a sudden, things have started to move," spokesman Jim Quintana said Nov. 29. We're thinking about moving to Battle Ground.

HOW TO CHIME IN OR SIGN UP

<http://pdx.be/CheaperVans>

Free information now available.

This is cool: We now offer Portland Afoot subscriptions at no cost to selected PDX workplaces. To sign yours up, write a note to michael@portlandafoot.org.

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Gift subscriptions are deeply affordable. It's our way of thanking you. Details on back. (503) On-A-Bus-1 <http://PortlandAfoot.org> Cinnamon always helps.

Street Talk Five questions and someone worth asking

If Rick Gustafson isn't the father of modern Portland, you might say he delivered the baby. As a TriMet planner, state rep, 2-term Metro exec and now dealmaker-in-chief for Portland Streetcar, Gustafson's lifelong gift has been getting 'er done. We grilled him on the bike-bus generation gap and his zany scheme to add fares to downtown trains.

You wrote the staff report that created downtown's Fareless Square. Why on earth do you want to kill it?

You ride the westside for free, and you ride the eastside for \$2.25. Those of us who live on the eastside should pick up some rocks and throw them at the westside. "You bastards! You got all the money, and you get free rides besides!" I want there to be a "central city fare" of \$1 for zone 1.

And you'd put the money into a bike-share program?

Make it free within 30 minutes. Free circulation, but it's carbon-free.

Young activists, like in your fall PSU class about Portland transportation, seem more interested in bikes than mass transit.

I finally found a group, the 20 to 30 year olds, who can take over. What we did in the 70s was get people on buses for free to get them to use transit. The same thing with bike-share – it

introduces people to the idea that they can use a bike. We haven't even scratched the surface of what bicycling can do for our city.

What's your salary for running Portland Streetcar?

Probably \$80,000. Probably 50% of my time.

What's your favorite Portland secret?

A person can have enormous influence in this town without any résumé – of all the bizarre things in politics, for being logical and effective. That is an enormous asset. You don't have to be an extremist to get heard in Portland.

Qs & As edited for brevity.

Gustafson's PSU class is free with a city scholarship: pdx.be/TranspoClass.

Rick Gustafson

executive director,
Portland Streetcar

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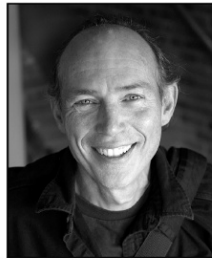
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Forget bike lanes. PDX is staking the future of its bike network on safe, low-traffic streets that cars don't like. All we wanted to know was: Which ones are the fastest?

How's the map work?

The longer the arrow, the fewer slowdowns a route has.
The number on each route stands for slowdowns per mile. A stop sign or uncontrolled intersection added 1 point, and stoplights count triple. Lower numbers mean more cruising.
It's a hand count by editor Michael Andersen and contributor Thacher Schmid. Official records aren't reliable, the city says.
Full results: pdx.be/BestBikeways.

Why just NE and SE?

If you're not sure which route to take, you must be on the inner east side.
NoPo, NW, SW, outer E and the burbs can only dream of this problem: they're usually lucky to have one good alternative to a busy street.
Thank your great-grandparents, who liked living on grids because they got around without cars, too.

NE Going/Alberta Court/Alberta Street
Vancouver to 72nd: 3.3
What's in a name? The fastest low-traffic route in our study was Portland's brand-new bike boulevard on NE Going, which had zero uncontrolled intersections and 14 total stops in 4.3 miles. Fortunately, it's the model for future human-friendly "greenways."

NE 7th/8th/9th Dekum to Tillamook: 8.9 *This route has more slowdowns, but mostly avoids the bane of NE biking: Alameda Ridge.*

NE 18th/17th Dekum to Tillamook: 5.4

NE 28th/27th/29th/30th Dekum to Tillamook: 5.4

NE Ainsworth/Holman/Parks Lombard to MLK: 9.6

NE 72nd Killingsworth to Sacramento: 5.0
North-South bikeways tend to be lower quality. This one along quiet 72nd Avenue is first-rate.

NE Skidmore/9th/Shaver 72nd to Vancouver: 9.6

NE Klickitat/Siskiyou/Fremont Drive 47th to 92nd: 16.4
With 13 stops and 28 uncontrolled intersections in just 2.5 miles, this was by far the worst route we found.

NE Tillamook/Hancock/Grant 92nd to Vancouver: 8.5

NE Everett/Davis/41st/SE Ankeny 71st to Grand: 8.7

SE Taylor/Salmon/Yamhill Water to 92nd: 6.8

SE Mill/Lincoln/Harrison/Clay 92nd to 7th: 4.3 *Zoom! 18% fewer stops than Clinton.*

SE Woodward/Tibbetts/Clinton 87th to Milwaukie: 5.2

33rd/34th/32nd Gladstone to Glisan: 11.5

43rd/41st Powell to Multnomah: 10

72nd/71st/76th/74th Holgate to Tillamook: 7.1
The clearest north-south route through SE has just 2 uncontrolled intersections.

Dude, where's my stop sign?

Portland has about 11,000 "uncontrolled" intersections, without signs or signals. You're supposed to treat them like all-way "yield" signs ... if you notice them in time.
At \$150 per sign, it'd cost about \$3 million to control every intersection in town. So the city does case-by-case studies instead. Know a site that needs a sign? Call 503-823-SAFE to get things rolling.
We've started a list, too. Visit pdx.be/UnsafeStops.