

PORTLAND SAFOOT

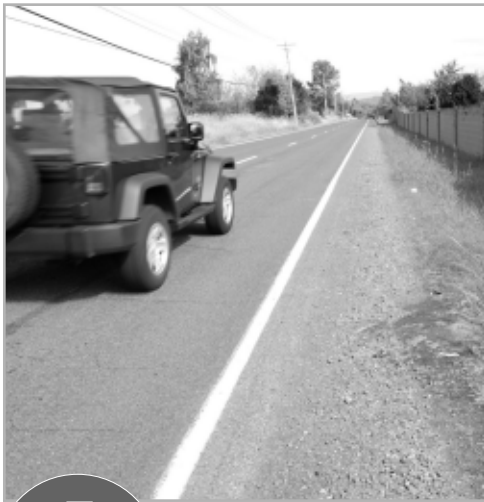
*PDX's 10-minute newsmagazine
about buses, bikes & low-car life*



December 2011:

THE EASTSIDE ISSUE

- 122nd Avenue's *greatest hits*
- The world's *cheapest streetcar*
- Alec Baldwin's *finest performance yet*



1

Don't walk

Portlanders keep driving less. Good reason to **build fewer sidewalks**, right? That's what happened Nov. 1, *The Oregonian* reported, when the city fixed **83% of a \$4.2 million shortage in gas taxes** by cutting new sidewalks for 102nd, 162nd, Glisan, Prescott and Vermont. Remember to always walk facing traffic, kids.

WHY IT MATTERS

The city's transpo bureau, **funded primarily by autos**, needs to "fundamentally restructure," it wrote in a news release. Director Tom Miller said this means **permanently cutting discretionary budgets 16%**. That bell you just heard was for a boxing match.

NEW POLITICAL GROUP

<http://pdx.be/BikeWalkVote>

2

Good news

Portland psychologist Jeff Guardalabene, who **rides TriMet 3.5 hours a day** for his commute to Forest Grove, started a holiday project in October: he's **collecting donated TriMet tickets to give nonprofits** whose clients have a pressing need to get somewhere. He was hoping for 20 books. By Nov. 28, he'd received 95 – about \$2,500 worth of transportation for folks in need. Chip in: pdx.be/HolidayFare.

DR. JEFF VISITS OUR PODCAST

<http://pdx.be/DrJeffPodcast>

3

Worst driver?

Bus riders call her "**the monster**," The *O* and *Tribune* reported Nov. 16. TriMet driver Claudeen Hendren, 67, made national news this fall for asking a mom off the #57 if she couldn't quiet her child, but it **wasn't Hendren's first rider complaint** – it was her 40th. Of 2011. The

average driver gets 6. Various complaints describe Hendren screaming at riders, refusing to open her door and, once, **ordering everyone to pay again**. TriMet said it'll review its discipline system.

HENDREN'S FULL RECORD

<http://pdx.be/AngryDriver>

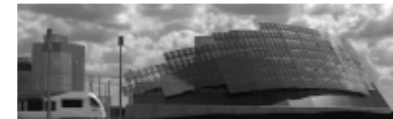
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Solar shocker

What do you do when the city says your **new rail operations buildings near PSU** are too ugly? If you're TriMet, you spend \$134,000 from your last federal rail grant to trick them out with a **60-foot-tall solar panel array** that'll knock \$4,500 off your electric bill, starting next year. Let the solar haters howl – we call that clever.

COST BREAKDOWN

<http://pdx.be/SunMoney>



One time around.

"Transportation, and life, has to be more than just comfort.

Driving a car is almost a guarantee that nothing interesting or memorable is going to happen to you."

That's a follow-up from Scott, last month's "Only on the Bus" contributor. Seemed smart.

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924 NE 65th Ave.
Portland, OR 97213

Occupying ourselves.

Street Talk

 Five questions and someone worth asking

Rustin Wright has crazy ideas. For example: deciding to make a living as a haver of crazy ideas. Also: An "ultra-low-cost streetcar system" whose two vehicles would weigh next to nothing and cost \$150,000 each. Craziest thing is, talk to the indie publisher, former publishing consultant and "radical utilitarian," 44, for long and he starts sounding right. It happened to us at his Kenton studio, where we talked big plans, low costs and (unexpectedly) noble gases.

What do you mean by an ultra-low-cost streetcar?

On eBay, a school bus costs around \$4,000. Think of the percentage of things you need in a streetcar that you just got for \$4,000. If you go to Michael's, buy lightweight picture frames and put a piece of plastic on each side, you've now got a double-glazed window. That's like \$20 each. If anything goes wrong, you just put another one in, and who cares?

Could this work in Portland?

I doubt it. It's a way to have rail again in towns like Sisters that don't have \$4 or \$5 million.

How'd you get into infrastructure iconoclasm?

I did this insane project for four years, starting in 7th grade, about water channels and ways to run power lines. My father was working off and on for the California Public Utilities Commission, so I would sneak into buildings and know where to find stuff.

What's the best thing about TriMet?

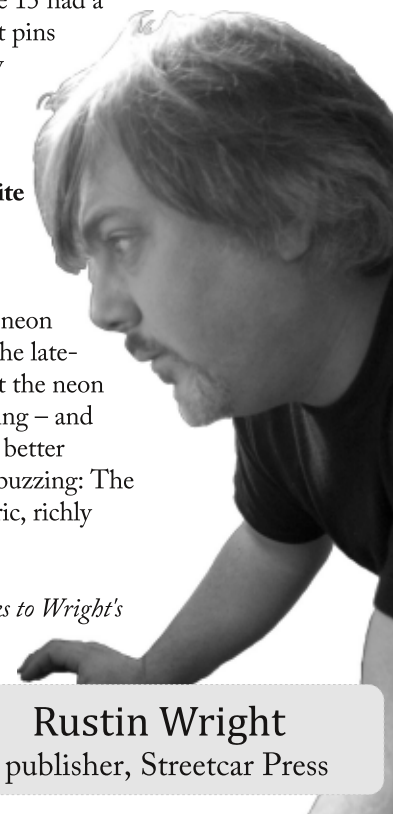
I know no other city where operators are so comfortable having personalities and interacting as if we're all people here. A driver on the 15 had a hat with 15 different pins on it and would play his own music over the PA.

What's your favorite Portland secret?

Neon. There's a Humphrey Bogart romance to the way neon works in this city. The late-night fog creates just the neon surrounded by nothing – and acoustically, you get better transmission of the buzzing: The little ambient, historic, richly textured *jijit, jijit*. 

Qs & As edited. Links to Wright's latest obsessions (and gifts for information geeks):
pdx.be/IdeaMan.

Rustin Wright
publisher, Streetcar Press





INTRODUCING

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Metro



Giving back, **WIKI STYLE.**

These days, bringing together
enough money to start something
good ain't easy. But by gum,
together we're doing it.

Portland Afoot will finish its first
full calendar year with about
\$14,000 in revenue. (Next month
in this space: annual report!) And
we figure there's no better time to
start saying thanks.

That's why we'll now be giving **2%
of ad and subscription revenue** to
other nonprofit organizations, but
doing so the Portland Afoot way:
to charities you choose. Each
month we'll draw a random paying
subscriber to choose their favorite
charity (any mission, any location)
for a shoutout in the monthly and
a little cash donation.

Starting now. Matthew and Kate
W., check your email. 

Michael Andersen
publisher & spokesmodel

Hello, OPAL supporter!

As part of a partnership with Portland Afoot, OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon will deliver its latest news on this page all year. See you on the bus!



Bus Stop Workshop: Action Meeting for the EPBS Project

Monday Dec 12th | 6:00-8:00 PM

OPAL Office 2407 SE 49th Ave, Portland OR 97206

We are hosting a Bus Stop Workshop for community members interested in the East Portland Bus Stop (EPBS) Project Dec 12. This meeting will be a chance for folks to learn more about the project and start getting involved right away. The goal of this project is to increase the number of transit rides and walking by residents of low-income communities and communities of color in East Portland, while decreasing the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips by advocating for much needed transit stop improvements. EPBS Project also aims to increase ownership of bus stops by the people who use them and to transform our bus stops into community spaces where people gather and connect.

Are you interested in the direct and dynamic action of our upcoming Bus Stop POP events? Getting out in the community to educate folks about bus stop improvements? Or is working with a team to assess the bus stops we use daily for accessibility and improvements more your thing? We need your skills and enthusiasm in these areas and more!

We'll be providing food and childcare so please bring the family! We'll also be able to provide folks with a single trip bus ticket to help offset traveling costs. Looking forward to seeing you December 12th from 6 – 8pm at OPAL! RSVP with Myrna Andrade (971) 340-4866 or myrna@opalpdx.org.



OPAL People of Color Community Potluck

Friday Dec 16th | 5:30-8:30 PM

OPAL is committed to building a space and political power for People of Color to address environmental racism, and welcomes members and community partners who self-identify as People of Color to join us for a community potluck Dec 16. Enjoy great food, music, and an opportunity to give input into the future of People of Color leadership in OPAL's work. Hear about our current Transit Justice work, and meet other great people working for environmental justice. We hope you will join us, and if you're interested but can't attend this one, please let us know so we can invite you to future gatherings. White Allies are respectfully asked to reserve this space for self-identified People of Color.

Please bring a side dish to share for 4 people. Main dishes, drinks and desert will be provided. RSVP by Thu Dec 15th with Rev. Joseph Santos-Lyons (971) 340-4866 or joseph@opalpdx.org.



OPAL Community Holiday Party

Wednesday Dec 21st | 7:00-9:00 PM

Come celebrate another year of Environmental Justice grassroots organizing and advocacy with OPAL at our annual Holiday Party Dec 21. Join members of Bus Riders Unite, leaders of our Campaign for a Fair Transfer, East Portland Bus Stops activists, coalition partners, board, staff, family and friends for an evening of socializing, sharing, and building community together.

Dinner and drinks provided. RSVP by Mon Dec 19th with OPAL Office (971) 340-4866 or info@opalpdx.org.

The ten DUMBEST Transportation Problems in East Portland

This month's cover story is made possible by reader contributions and a grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust. It's the final project of **Natalie Baker**, our east-side intern this fall. For an interactive map of the spots she found and a link to her rogue's gallery of dumb photos around the east side, visit pdx.be/EastSideProblems.

Anyone who's traveled east of 82nd knows that compiling a list of infrastructure problems in the area is a massive undertaking, if for no other reason than the fact that the list probably never ends. But there are some problems that are just so ridiculous that we had to call them out. Like, in a time of budget cuts, having a bus line no one rides while others overflow, or a missing bike lane that almost got an NFL star killed. All is not lost (see below for the silver lining) but for the time being, here are the 10 east-side issues that struck us as—pardon the phrase — train wrecks.

NE HALSEY & 101ST

Gateway is great for TriMet commuters, but what's a rider to do when they prefer to use their bike over the MAX? Halsey's westbound bike lane stops at 101st without any warning, **spitting riders onto a high-speed and narrow highway overpass.**

CONNECTIVITY: THERE ISN'T ANY

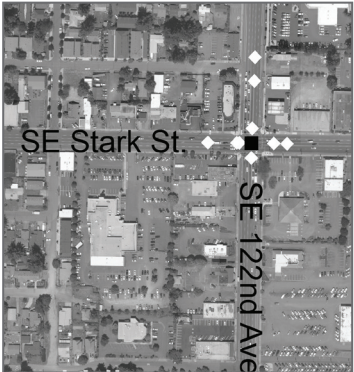
Biking west out of the Argay neighborhood is pock-marked with so many dead ends and dangerous roads that Katie Larsell, former chair of the East Portland Action Plan's bike committee, has **resorted to cutting through a private housing development and weaving her bike upright through a narrow gate** in order to connect to NE Halsey. If you've read the item on the left, you know that the ride doesn't improve from there.



Photo illustration

MIDLAND LIBRARY ACCESS

The closest pedestrian crossing to this popular kids destination is SE 122nd & Stark, which just happens to have the **highest frequency of pedestrian crashes in the city**, with seven injuries and one fatality since 2000.

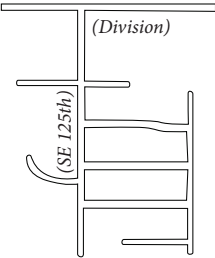


Map by Michael Halleen.

White diamonds represent pedestrian injuries; black square represents pedestrian fatality.

NO-ESCAPE NEIGHBORHOOD

Like a multi-family residential fire hazard, this this 76-lot stretch of the Mill Park neighborhood has just one access road, meaning you have to **walk half a mile** from its farthest point to get out.



SE POWELL & 134TH

This bus stop has so many riders that it even has a bus shelter, but it's just an island in a sea of dirt and gravel. For a street that has **seven of the 50 most dangerous intersections and over 6,000 daily bus riders** (plus over 1,000 monthly LIFT users), the fact that huge chunks of Powell Blvd east of 82nd still don't have sidewalks is beyond unreasonable.

ALL OF 122ND AVE

TriMet hails the high transit use along this road as an East Portland success story, but every major intersection along this road, save Burnside, is among the most dangerous for pedestrians in Portland, according to a 2009 City of Portland report. We'll call 122nd a success when walking to the bus feels normal, not just necessary. **THE GOOD NEWS:** According to PBOT's East Portland In Motion report, the street is slated to get fresh sidewalks and crosswalks over the next five years.



POINTLESS BUS ROUTE

TriMet says it's too broke to improve bus service, so it's hard to understand why the #25 TriMet line along NE Glisan exists. At least when a MAX line runs parallel to it and total daily boardings of all of the line's stops for 96 blocks (85th to 181st) get half the action of **a single northbound stop** at 122nd and Burnside. North/south options in east Portland are awful: maybe it's time for TriMet to admit east-siders have places to go besides downtown.

UNDERWATER WALKWAYS

Intersections along SE Foster were built with cars in mind, not the pedestrians crossing them. The problem with that is that it rains in Portland. Frequently. Ever roll a wheelchair through Niagara Falls? Experience the rush sans pricey airfare by trying to get through this sopping mess:



SE FOSTER & 90TH AVE

Just **two blocks** from the spot where former Lions quarterback Joey Harrington was struck by a car while bicycling in August of 2011, Foster Road's bike lane ends abruptly, and a sign directs bike riders to head left through two lanes of high speed traffic. Many riders ignore it and continue down Foster. Surprise. **THE GOOD NEWS:** Sam Adams is giving the dicey road badly needed attention and improvements through the city's High Crash Corridor Safety Plan. The plan: pdx.be/FosterFix.



The silver lining

There's one very bright spot in East Portland's transportation system, and it's one of the city's best-kept secrets: an alternate-universe PDX where public transit is as frequent as NYC or Vancouver, BC. It's the Gateway area, 99th and Halsey. As TriMet has added one MAX line after another, average westbound train frequency has fallen to one every 5 minutes, with – no joke – 1.7 minutes between downtown trains from 6 to 8 a.m.



Photo by Aaron Hockley

By 2040, the city is planning to make Gateway a sort of secondary downtown, with office and residential towers and even a 2-mile streetcar loop on 102nd Ave. from Pacific to Main. (Map: pdx.be/EastSideStreetcar.) It's the city's next great low-car neighborhood, and real estate prices haven't figured it out

ONLY ON THE BUS



Jeff

TriMet #57

I saw *Arrested Development's* Tobias Funke on the MAX the other day. He was standing next to a young Helen Mirren. Helen looked as though she'd been in a minor industrial accident – maybe a mishap on the assembly line. Later, Steve Buscemi strolled through the car, glaring at people with those eyes of his.

I see Buscemi all the time.

If you spend any time at all on public transit, you can't avoid the doppelgangers. Hey, there's Justin Bieber as a woman! Look, that guy looks like Alec Baldwin as a homeless dude! After you've been riding a while, though, spotting the lookalikes just isn't enough. After a while, it's time to up your game and step into the big leagues.

I've moved on from simple solo celebrity spotting. I'm into groups now. For example, all I need is a Justine Bateman to fill out my *Family Ties* card. Michael J. Fox is everywhere in

Portland. Tina Yothers was tough.

If you really get into this game, you'll need to take a few days off so you can ride lines that you wouldn't normally ride in the course of your workday.

Say you wanted to fill out the cast of *Entourage*. You might start with the Green Line, and keep an eye peeled as you roll through downtown toward PSU. But you'll most likely need to disembark and hit the streetcar up through the Pearl. And someone with a *Portlandia* bent is going to want to work the low bus numbers. 4, 9, 14, 15 – Division, Powell, Hawthorne, Belmont –

will probably do the trick.

You get the idea. Start easy, maybe *Friends* on the Green Line, and work your way up the ladder to something really difficult, like *True Blood* solely on even-numbered bus lines. Soon, you'll have toured Portland and made some new buddies along the way. And, on weekends, you can turn this into the only drinking game you can safely play on city streets.

Adapted from a post on TriMetDiaries.com, where Jeff (see Arriving Now item #2 inside) posts most Mondays. What's your favorite bus story? Write onlyonthebus@portlandafot.org. Storytellers get a gift card to our favorite café. ☕

Michael J. Fox is everywhere in Portland, but Tina Yothers was tough.

Electronic mail.

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