

PORTLAND AFOOT

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



June 2011:

- *Liberty from the bus schedule*
- *Equality on the balance sheet*
- *Fraternity on the 35*

**THE
FREEDOM
ISSUE**



left photo: Michael Schoenboltz

1 Pass cut?

Oregon legislators continue to consider **killing the free YouthPass** for 13,000 Portland Public high schoolers and hiking by up to 54% big employers' cost for **subsidizing employee TriMet passes**. Both programs, available statewide, are funded indirectly by private tax credits.

WHY IT MATTERS

Leaders in both parties said tax credits are **a dumb way to pay for YouthPass** – funding it directly could cut the state cost by 27%. But tax credits have invisible costs, while direct spending is on the books. Guess which one is easier to pass.

TRACK THE BILLS

<http://pdx.be/TransitTaxCredit>

2 Same as cash

Monthly TriMet passes have **"become like cash on the streets"** for crooks laundering stolen money, the Oregonian reported May 21. Good news: TriMet passes have **universal resale value!** Bad news: last year, the agency reimbursed \$85,303 for fraudulent purchases with stolen credit cards. **"Don't buy those cheap TriMet tickets on the street,"** columnist Joe Rose wrote. "It may be the best way to shut down this black market."

Jesus!) and Saturday evening (buckle up, alcoholics!).

WHY C-TRAN IS BROKE

<http://pdx.be/CowwBusVote>

4 Good news

Looks as if **getting TriMet arrival info by texting 27299** is here to stay. Nine months into a 1-year trial, the Beaverton company that created the pioneering service said that despite some downtime, they're serving 10,000 texts a week, **growing 122% each month and already breaking even financially** at no cost to taxpayers, thanks to geo-targeted ads. Quick, somebody run this distribution system past the folks at Powell's. 

WHEN '27299' DOESN'T WORK

<http://pdx.be/TextArrivals>



Facing front.

Did you find last month's "Only on the Streetcar" transphobic? Some did. We're discussing it: pdx.be/TransTalk

Also last month, we misstated Bridgette Lang's last name, and incorrectly stated that Laura Freeman was her sister. That was pretty dumb.

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\$14 a year. Details on back. 924 NE 65th Ave. Portland, OR 97213

Dust off.

Street Talk

Five questions and someone worth asking

PedalPalooza, the legendary 3-week PDX bike festival that kicks off June 9, was a few years old when Jenny Fosmire, 41, moved from Texas and immediately caught the bike bug. Fosmire catches a lot of bugs. Five years later, the science editor (she got an M.D. once but it didn't quite take) is a self-taught residential architecture buff who leads monthly bike tours past interesting homes. We met in a NePo sports bar to talk about ugly houses and Portland's faux English accent.

What are the official criteria for houses in this 'Hot Mess' bike ride you're leading June 26?

Ramshackle. (later...) I've never taken a class on architecture; I've been known to promulgate made-up architecture terms. Like "El Fenix style." It's a Tex-Mex restaurant in Dallas.

How do you plan such a ride?

I put all my rides on Flickr, so I'm outside these houses taking pictures of them. People know why I'm there. One lady burst into tears and told me, "I came home from work one day and they'd painted it this color! This wasn't the color I picked!"

Any advice for other bike tour leaders?

Start at a coffee house and end at a bar. I used to start at parks and nobody ever came. Somebody finally took me aside.

How is Austin different from Portland?

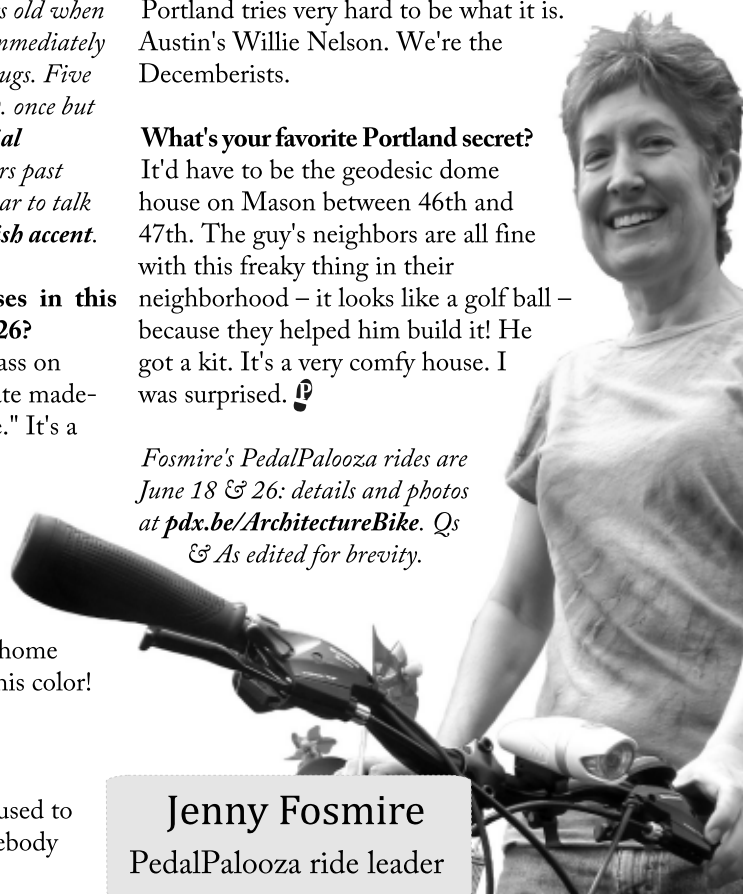
Portland tries very hard to be what it is. Austin's Willie Nelson. We're the Decemberists.

What's your favorite Portland secret?

It'd have to be the geodesic dome house on Mason between 46th and 47th. The guy's neighbors are all fine with this freaky thing in their neighborhood – it looks like a golf ball – because they helped him build it! He got a kit. It's a very comfy house. I was surprised. 

Fosmire's PedalPalooza rides are June 18 & 26; details and photos at pdx.be/ArchitectureBike. Qs & As edited for brevity.

Jenny Fosmire
PedalPalooza ride leader



We're having a PARTY!

Great Goldschmidt's ghost – this thing is working out.

A year after our no-budget launch, we've got 850 monthly subscribers, 4,000 monthly web readers and (along the way) more pride than ever in our lovely low-car city. On **July 21**, come downtown with us to celebrate it.

It'll be **6 p.m.** on SW Ankeny, PDX's first motor-free street. More details coming soon.



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

The Spot Geek Trivia at the Kennedy School
 (with Cort & Fatboy)

The Lines Buses 72, 73

The Times Alternate

Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

The Link [facebook.com/PortlandGeekTrivia](https://www.facebook.com/PortlandGeekTrivia)

The Skinny When the *Mercury* reported in 2009 that local radio hosts Cort Webber and Bobby Roberts had just been canned, a commenter noted that the pair had "totally hit the nerdy white guy demographic in a way that no other DJ has ever done."

The pair apparently took it to heart. Moving their daily show to the Web-based cascadia.fm, Cort (tallish) and Fatboy (shortish) jumped merrily into their audience's skinny arms. Last month their geek-themed trivia nights ("What home video-game console was the last to use cartridges?" "T/F: Dr.

Sam Beckett never returned home.") outgrew



*Geek Trivia at the Kennedy
 5736 NE 33rd*

trivia," Roberts said before the May 31 event. "Sometimes they're right. That sort of lends itself to a nice little nerd froth, which is just as fun." 

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

NoPo bar Vendetta and moved to the auditorium of the Kennedy School, an abandoned elementary turned iconic Northeast Portland entertainment venue, one block north of the city's most frequent bus line (see cover story).

Two rounds of 20 questions with a multimedia pop-cultural tiebreaker, the free event offers impressive prizes donated by Cort and Fatboy's main sponsor, Milwaukie-based geek shop Things from Another World. And also, inevitably, disputes over the correct answer.

"It happens at least once a

Electronic mail.

•
 Howdy, cyberspace! We've added a lot of email readers in the last few months, and want to serve you as well as we do our print subscribers.

•
 Portland Afoot is all about speed – getting you exactly what you're interested in and nothing more – and we're big believers in using good layout and design to quickly ship information into your brain.

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

Some are strange. Some are cute. Some are just jokers horsing around (we hope). 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. Aside from one bad word, all posts reprinted as typed. Keep connecting, kids. 

I saw you on the Red Line Max (Portland) 32yr

(May 12) We were sitting next to each other yesterday on a train around 4pm near the Hollywood Transit Center. I was in a mauve track suit, you were wearing acid washed jeans and a puffy HOYAS winter jacket. You picked a scab off your face and flicked it. It landed in my mouth and I swallowed it. Drinks?

Laptop on the 4 - m4m (NoPo) 29yr

(May 17) To the bearded and bespeckled and very hot guy on his laptop on the number 4 bus this morning, I can't help but wonder if reviewing medical records in such a public environment might be poor professional practice. Still, I'd let you examine me and violate my medical rights any day. I stood in the aisle for a bit then sat behind you. Let's play doctor sometime.

Bus 12 to King City - m4w (Barbur/99) 24 yr

(May 17) You asked me for a cigarette and then blew me a kiss as the bus was leaving. I thought you were gorgeous! Coffee sometime....

Lust on the MAX Line...Love was in the air! - (Old Town/Chinatown)

(May 18) I was sitting alone this morning. You walked on wearing dirty lime green sweatpants, a faded purple t-shirt and a lemon yellow 10 gallon hat. You sat right next to me and totally f----- farted. I'm not to sure what it was, maybe pheromones, but I was instantly turned on. I got off at Lloyd Center and have been thinking about you all day. Drinks?

MAX - Red Line - Hollywood Transit, this AM - m4w (Portland) 30yr

(May 25) You got on at the Hollywood Transit Center and sat next to me. You are tall, beautiful long legs, a mane of dark brown hair, had a soft dark brown coat and an exotic long face with the deepest brown eyes. I brushed up against you by accident and now I think you gave me equine herpes. Drinks?

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Call it freedom

Somewhere in this city is the perfect bus for you. Let's find it.

Most Reliable

Frequent service lines

57 TV Hwy/Forest Grove	89% unbunched
75 Lombard/39th	87% unbunched
33 McLoughlin	82% unbunched
12 Barbur/Sandy Blvd	78% unbunched
15 Belmont/NW 23rd	74% unbunched

Most Reliable

Standard service lines

34 River Rd	92% on time
63 Washington Park	91% on time
59 Walker/Park Way	90% on time
85 Swan Island	90% on time
92 South Beaverton Express	90% on time

Best Midday

Time between buses (at noon)

72 Killingsworth/82nd	9.9 minutes
14 Hawthorne	15.2 minutes
4 Division/Fessenden	15.3 minutes
9 Powell/Broadway	16 minutes
19 Woodstock/Glisan	17 minutes

Swankiest Vehicles

Average model age

57 TV Hwy/Forest Grove	1.2 years old
54 Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy	1.6 years old
56 Scholls Ferry Rd	2.4 years old
6 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd	6.7 years old
78 Beaverton/Lake Oswego	6.9 years old

Least Crowded

Peak loads

84 Kelso/Boring	12% capacity (night)
53 Arctic/Allen	16% capacity (a.m. peak)
59 Walker/Park Way	17% capacity (a.m. peak)
18 Hillside	17% capacity (a.m. peak)
154 Willamette	19% capacity (p.m. peak)

Most Honest

Fare payment rates

Of TriMet's 79 bus lines, 28 – more than a third – **didn't report a single case of fare evasion** for the week we reviewed, Feb. 12-18. (Oddly, TriMet said it can't track evasion over anything longer than one week.) Of the 28 perfect lines, the most ridden was the **67-Jenkins/158th**.

Best Flavour Spot Connectivity

Waffle sandwiches

4 Division/Fessenden	3 locations
35 Macadam/Greeley	2 locations
44 Capitol Hwy/Mocks Crest	2 locations
1, 6, 8, 12, 19, 20, 24, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 75, 94, 99	1 location

In Portland, the difference between carelessness and carfreedom comes down to finding a good bike, a good bus, or both.

We'll save the bike for another issue.

MAX is great, but it'll never go everywhere. That's why our annual bus rankings dig into public records to help low-car households get to know the lines worth living by.

So what makes a good bus? If you have trouble walking, it's a low floor. If you're a downtown 8-to-5er, it's a place to sit.

We asked Jarrett Walker, a Portland native who writes a lot about buses on HumanTransit.org, for

advice. Different buses are good at different things, he said, but for him, staying on schedule isn't most important. In a big city, he'd rather be free from looking at a schedule in the first place.

So how do Portland's buses stack up against other U.S. cities?

All too well, Walker said – so well that we get complacent.

"Maybe you should be running comparisons among cities that share Portland's objectives and values," Walker said. "What you really need is to feel mediocre by European standards."

photo: Jarrett Walker

Every line, online
(plus: Most Walkable)
pdx.be/BusRankings

Here's the downside of the 72: during the evening rush, it's feast or famine. More than two in every five buses clumps up.

Somehow the 84 manages to be both TriMet's emptiest bus (see left) and its second most likely to be off schedule. No wonder Boring has been talking about dropping out of TriMet.

Since 2000, TriMet's strategy has been to make urban bus service so good that close-in people can live car-free if they want. The cost: numbing midday wait times in the burbs.

For frequent-service lines, being on schedule is actually less important than being evenly spaced. Who cares when the 57 or 75 is due, if one's always on the way? (By the way, we based figures on each line's *worst* time of day.)

On the 72, it's still 2009: this was the only major bus spared by TriMet in last year's heavy cuts, and its midday frequency shows it.

Psst: The 19 isn't officially a frequent service line, but it sure acts like one during the day. Good news for Montavilla, Laurelhurst, downtown and Moreland.

TriMet does almost nothing by chance. Each morning its late-model buses are sent first to lines with lots of black and Latino riders. That means low floors, less pollution – and air conditioning.

We asked readers on our blog what makes a good bus line. For Marissa Welch, 30, the answer was clear: proximity to Flavour Spot locations. Thanks to the waffle carts on Lombard, Mississippi and SW Ash, one TriMet line towers above the rest. Mateo Welch, 5, recommends the powdered sugar. (Also, he added, "sitting under the table.")



photo of Mateo: Marissa Welch of Mount Hood: Noël Zia Lee

LEAST RELIABLE

Frequent service lines

72 Killingsworth/82nd	43% bunched
14 Hawthorne	36% bunched
4 Division/Fessenden	35% bunched
9 Powell-Broadway	34% bunched
6 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd	26% bunched

LEAST RELIABLE

Standard service lines

54 Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy	25% off schedule
84 Kelso/Boring	24% off schedule
14 Front Ave/St Johns	22% off schedule
20 Burnside/Stark	22% off schedule
154 Willamette	22% off schedule

WORST MIDDAY

37 Lake Grove	83.9 minutes
156 Mather Rd	81.4 minutes
34 River Rd	72 minutes
152 Milwaukie	71.7 minutes
154 Willamette	71.2 minutes

OLDEST VEHICLES

66 Marquam Hill/Hollywood	22.5 years old
155 Sunnyside	21.3 years old
61 Marquam Hill/Beaverton	19.6 years old
34 River Rd	19.5 years old
39 Lewis & Clark	19.3 years old

MOST CROWDED

35 Macadam/Greeley	101% capacity (a.m. peak)
94 Sherwood/Pacific Hwy Express	96% capacity (night)
14 Hawthorne	94% capacity (a.m. peak)
4 Division/Fessenden	94% capacity (a.m. peak)
20 Burnside/Stark	94% capacity (p.m. peak)

MOST FREELoadERS

32 Oatfield	7.4 per 1,000
70 12th Ave	3.7 per 1,000
80 Kane/Troutdale Rd	3 per 1,000
6 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd	2.9 per 1,000
20 Burnside/Stark	2.9 per 1,000



The guy sports a van dyke, which should tell you everything you need to know. Part soul patch, part handlebar mustache – think three musketeers.

He's a good-looking 20-something, well-dressed. We've both ridden the #35 for years, though not always together. My schedule is static; his seems flexible. But I always notice him. He's always aloof, not talking to his fellow riders, and considering I've seen most of my fellow 35-ers at King Burrito and other cheap-eats spots, but never him, I imagined him traveling to Farm or Rontoms so that he could eat with his own kind.

Fine by me.

I had a two-seater to myself when he got on and sat down beside me. I said good morning, and he gave a silent nod, meeting but not exceeding the minimum courtesy guidelines for public transit. He started getting out a book, which I imagined would be David Foster Wallace or perhaps *Catcher*

in the Rye. It turned out to be a children's chapter book. I was trying to fit that into my preconceptions of his *Portlandia*-skit existence when I heard his voice for the first time.

He was audibly struggling to read the large-type text, sounding it out slowly. As he read, his finger inched along the page to accompany the labored syllables.

I imagined him traveling to Farm or Rontoms so he could eat with his own kind.

I began hurriedly deconstructing the damning picture of him that I had assembled using years of so-called clues.

He wasn't aloof, but shy. He probably didn't eat at King Burrito, with its massive billboard of a menu – all words, no pictures.

I stared out the window, listening, suffocating in my own shame.

I ride the bus two ways every day. Some people, I've never even gone so far as to think about what their closet looks like, let alone their life. Some faces jump out at us – some people have more story, I think.

But I'm willing to bet everyone who rides

TriMet with any regularity has starred in some inaccurate storyline, too.

As told to Michael Andersen, adapted from TriMetDiaries.com. Read Bill's work at WilliamReagan.com. What's your favorite bus story? Write michael@portlandafot.org or call 503-On-a-Bus-1. 📧

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