

PORTLAND SAFOOT

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



February 2012:

THE IDEAS ISSUE

- *Thinking* outside the bus
- *Doing the math* on when to walk
- *Announcing* City Hall's new mayor



1

Ugly fight

"Drunk on their own spit" on the day after Christmas, three teen girls physically assaulted a fourth after she verbally defended a male friend on the Green Line, *The Oregonian* reported Jan. 13. The assailants, aged 13-18, were arrested after a **YouTube video of the attack** made the TV news.

WHY IT MATTERS

Was it a **racial hate crime**? Victim Karly Bucklin, 14, said she didn't think so, though one bully did say "white girl." DaveKnows.org, meanwhile, looked at TriMet's 36 assaults per 41 million boardings in 2011, concluding: **"If you're afraid to ride TriMet, you're an idiot."**

FAR SAFER THAN CARS

<http://pdx.be/LongOdds>

2

A lot of money

No MAX fare? Fine is \$175. Illegally paved a Pearl parking lot for your tenants, possibly netting **more than \$100,000 from paid parking over three years?** Fine is \$5,500, at least if you're TriMet's senior board member and one of Portland's top developers. Tiffany Sweitzer of Hoyt Street Properties said Jan. 25 that she'd known about a ban on new surface auto lots but, as reported by the *Tribune* last fall, paved one anyway. **"I think it's a goofy code,"** Sweitzer explained.

NO APOLOGIES

<http://pdx.be/NonzeroTolerance>

3

Flat fare?

This could be the last stop for Zone 2, *The Oregonian* reported Jan. 26. Amid other changes, TriMet's budget task force was ready to recommend **replacing fare zones with a flat \$2.50 fare** everywhere. TriMet

holds hearings this month on many proposals that would take effect by fall.

LATEST HIKE & CUT PLANS

<http://pdx.be/2012cuts>

4

Good news

Well, that's settled, the *Mercury* reported Jan. 23. Dark-horse mayoral candidate Max Bauske, 22, found a use for the mobile app Foursquare by "checking in" at City Hall 34 times in 60 days, **enough to be electronically dubbed "mayor" of the location.** "This is a small example of what can be accomplished with a **bit of determination, a bus pass and an Android phone,**" wrote Bauske, whose 6-point platform includes OPAL's call to extend TriMet transfer times, in his press release. 



Light rotation.

•
Odd months: food cart reviews. Even: commute tips. That's the plan. Sound good?

•
There was a mixup, and some folks might have been unable to opt out last month. It'll work now: pdx.be/Unsubscribe. Just an accident, of course.

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924 NE 65th Ave.
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Knuckle system: rejected.

Easy riding

One trick to optimize your commute

The problem

It's raining hard. Wait for the bus, or walk?

★ The tip

Multiply the distance to your destination, in miles, by 15. If the answer is more than the wait time for your next bus in minutes, wait.

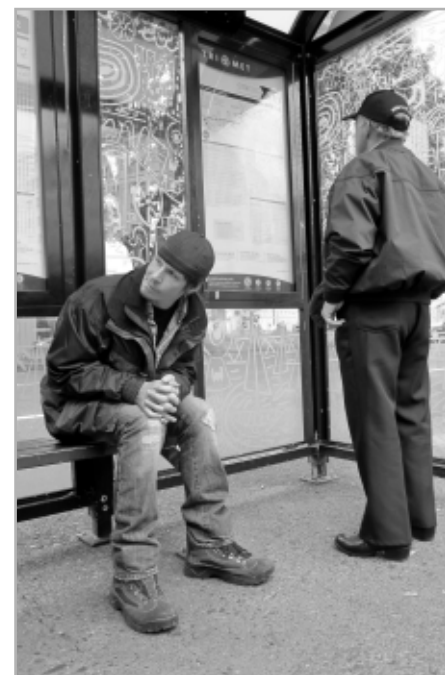
For example

You're at 12th and Morrison, headed to the Guild Pub on 11th and Burnside. It's only eight blocks up, a little less than half a mile, but your phone says the #70 is coming in 5 minutes. Tough call! Multiply the distance by 15

to get 6 or so – that's bigger than 5. Wait for the bus.

Why it works

We're assuming you walk at 3 mph, counting stoplights, and that buses move at 12 mph. Bus speeds vary – the 44 averages just 10.5 mph on N Vancouver, while the 9 breaks 13 mph on SE Powell – but the bigger factor is your walking speed. Time yourself walking in the central city when you get a chance: 3 mph is about 1 minute per block. Just be sure you're not stumbling home from Guild at the time. For that, we'll always recommend the bus. 



Cause of the month: Each month, we give 2% of ad + subscription revenue to a charity picked by a random paid subscriber. For February, Katie P. sends \$13 to Sisters of the Road, because they feed people every day in an atmosphere of self-respect and community while systemically pushing for justice, security and health. pdx.be/SistersCafe

PDX.be links: If you have a smartphone, download a scanner app (say, i-Nigma), point your lens at this 2D barcode and it'll send you to a mobile-friendly online list of the month's goodies: pdx.be/feb12links.



What's the big idea?

It's rolling toward rush hour on North Lombard Avenue when Brian Riley hails a van that doesn't exist yet.

"I could stand right here, put my hand out and flag one of them," says the transplanted New Yorker, waving toward the curb. As cars roll past, ignoring him, a crowded #75 bus stops at the transit center on the corner to pile in more passengers.

The private 16-seater vans Riley sees for Lombard have never existed in Portland. But for Riley, a glass mosaic artist who grew up *choo-chooing* tissue boxes across the floor of his West Indian family's Brooklyn apartment, the need couldn't be clearer.

"Jitneys and dollar vans tend to line themselves in areas where people are just trying to get to the main transit," Riley says. "All the routes they're talking about cutting right now, most of the route is probably wasteful. But there's always that little bottleneck."

Some, including TriMet, call jitneys like the ones Riley knows from New York, Jersey City and Barbados a nuisance and a safety hazard. But as

TriMet's leaders watch their own dreams – MAX to Vancouver and Sherwood, bus rapid transit on Powell – sinking in red ink, Riley sees a way to speed up buses (they'd stop much less) by letting private vans scoop paying passengers from the crowded curbs of Lombard, Sandy and 82nd.

In 2005, TriMet opened its bus schedules to private app developers. Opening its stops and fare system to private taxis might just be the next step.

Riley is the first to admit he's got a thing for ambitious schemes. Once, for a college project at the Pratt Institute, he built a machine that used 100 marbles to spin a wheel and pour his orange juice.

But that's exactly the point. Private jitneys would let dreamers like Riley design creative new routes to serve transit riders.

"You'll never know whether something works until you actually run it," Riley says. If jitney operators took those risks, TriMet could see which paid off.

Or, looking at it another way: Each successful jitney would be a reason for TriMet to "step up their game," Riley says, "and make their buses better."

The idea License and insure private group taxis to serve the busiest stretches of TriMet routes.

Why Makes long-haul buses faster and short-hop service more frequent while shifting risk to private operators.

Why not Vans get in the way of buses, slowing them. Hard to integrate fare collection.

Cost \$\$
Zaniness 🍷🍷🍷🍷

photos of Riley by Michael Schoenholtz

legend (not to scale)

\$ money (measured in money)
🍷 zaniness (measured in IPAs)

The idea Luggage racks on the Red Line.
Why No more squeezing your roller into the seat behind the cab.
Why not "Has this bag been outside of your control since you packed it?"
Cost \$
Zaniness 🍷

credit: Oregonian reader Phyllis M.

The idea Bury I-5 through the central east side.

Why A new Marquam Bridge would slope down into a tunnel that would free up 43 acres of precious riverside real estate for more productive uses while solving existing problems in the Rose Quarter. It's a long-term vision that would take 10-15 years to execute.

Why not Cost might be \$1 to \$2 billion "if you're really sharp with your pencil," estimates supporter Ron Buel, the Willamette Week founder who cut his teeth helping lead PDX's 1970s freeway revolt.

Cost \$\$\$\$\$
Zaniness 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷

more: RiverfrontForPeople.org

The idea Heaters at rail shelters that radiate for 2 minutes at the push of a button.

Why Makes late nights and early mornings so much better.

Why not Even in Minneapolis (where the average nightly low in February is 13 degrees), the transit agency can only afford to install these at shelters near electrical utility boxes, said Metro Transit's John Siqveland. At \$3,500 a pop, one at each MAX stop would cost \$300,000 to install – not counting power.

Cost \$\$\$
Zaniness 🍷

The idea Able-bodied seniors only get fare discounts if they're poor.

Why In 1976, when the feds began requiring transit agencies to charge seniors half-fare, 15% of seniors lived in poverty. Today, only 8% of Portland seniors do, compared to 21% of Portlanders 18 to 24.

Why not TriMet gives us a bus discount after we turn 65 in part to deter us from using LIFT, the van service for people with disabilities that costs the agency \$28 per ride.

Cost (to seniors) \$\$\$
Zaniness 🍷🍷

credit: Nick Welch

The idea Buses use Square mobile phone readers to take credit cards.

Why The free credit card readers, which plug into smartphone audio jacks, now dominate craft shows, food carts and taxicabs. Why not buy an old iPhone for every bus, get thousands of the little readers, pay Square's cheap 2.75% transaction fee and make fares far easier to pay? Sure, 660 data plans would cost \$650,000 a year, but the old farebox system depreciates faster than that, and every bus would get a GPS and phone line on board.

Why not Square's plastic readers aren't exactly durable. Also, a startup that still loses money on every transaction might not be the best long-term partner.

Cost \$\$
Zaniness 🍷🍷🍷🍷

The idea Anti-microbial copper in buses, MAX and stations.

Why Germs can survive for weeks on stainless steel or, worse, plastic, but copper kills 99.9% of microbes in 2 hours. Santiago, Chile, began adding copper to its subway station railings last summer.

Why not Wears and tarnishes easily if you fall behind on maintenance.

Cost \$\$
Zaniness 🍷🍷🍷

or, less zanily: pdx.be/ElectronicFares

The idea Commuter rail from downtown Vancouver to Union Station.

Why Avoid freight congestion on Hayden Island with a new rail bridge and bypass that'd also carry the planned high-speed rail line to Seattle. Amtrak or a new partnership would run trains mostly on existing track through Northwest Portland. Travel time: 12 minutes.

Why not Complicated politics. BNSF's fees to run on its track might require ticket prices in the \$5 to \$8 range per ride.

Cost \$\$\$\$
Zaniness 🍷🍷🍷🍷

credit: Jim Howell. part of his group's "common sense alternative" to the Columbia River Crossing: pdx.be/BridgesNotLanes

The idea "Conversation priority area" on MAX.

Why Just as MAX has a designated area for people with disabilities, each car could have one for people who enjoy talking to strangers. It'd be a rolling carnival of interesting characters ... or, if you prefer, flypaper for the crazies.

Why not Conversations "already happen organically" on MAX, TriMet notes.

Cost free-ish
Zaniness 🍷🍷🍷🍷

credit: John Beaston. more: pdx.be/ConvoPriority

more ideas

including the one you're going to add: pdx.be/CrazyTalk

TriMet budgets are busted. While public workers circle wagons and every interest group in town defends turf, somebody's got to keep thinking the thoughts that are too weird for experts to take seriously.

If only Portland were heavily populated by obsessive, vaguely countercultural do-gooders with a yen for crazy ideas...

ONLY ON THE BUS



Derrick

TriMet #71

I've been writing on iPods for two years at least, since I was 14. I've got a lot of hand dexterity, so I got used to typing with my thumb. On my iPod I can type about 100 words per minute.

If you play guitar because it sounds beautiful and it's something you love doing, that's basically how I feel with my writing. I'd sit in my room in the middle of the night with my iPod and just write until I passed out.

On Facebook, people I don't even know from New York, Texas, Australia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, Wisconsin, will send me messages like, "Hey Derrick, can you write me a poem?" And 10, 15 minutes later, I'll post it on their wall.

I was on the 71, 7:30 p.m. I'd had writer's block for 6 months. It's a horror novel, about 650 pages. I based it on the Stephen King books my stepdad would read.

She was about 23, wearing a gray hoodie over a pink tank

top and khakis. I actually had my music in when she sat next to me and started talking.

I think people feel they can connect to me better than other people. I'm a Pisces.

She told me her name was Kiely, and she had been in this relationship for a while and he had been calling her liar and cheater. She had to go to her mom's in Gresham to feel good about herself.

It struck a chord – the fact that you're able to recognize that you can go somewhere to help the way you feel.

I told her how she has the choice to be who she wants to be, who she wants to be with. We kept talking way past my stop.

It took 20 minutes to scroll through my novel on the iPod.

Before she got off, she said how happy she was to have met me and gave me one of the best hugs I've ever gotten.

She was strikingly stunning, but I was not attracted to her. I had a girlfriend at the time.

I felt amazing. I took out my iPod and just started writing. I sat on that bus and wrote 150 pages. By the end of that bus ride, I had found the end of that book.

I don't want to give anything away, but one of the teens basically becomes an apprentice to the OCD guy.

As told to editor Michael Andersen. What's your favorite bus story? Write onlyonthebus@portlandafoot.org or call 503-On-a-Bus-1. 📞

Electronic mail.

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