

PORTLAND AFOOT

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



March 2011:

THE JUMPING ISSUE

skipping fares ... singing bumps ... talking buses ... changing lines ... eating donuts

Arriving Now

Four stories you can't miss this month



1

Talking bus

How Portland-y can we get? TriMet said Feb. 28 that it's testing systems on 10 buses that will **play a woman's voice saying "Pedestrians, bus is turning"** before they round each corner. Next up: "No, I insist, you go," at each 4-way stop, quipped the Daily Journal of Commerce.

WHY IT MATTERS

This would be TriMet's first big response to a horrific crash last April, when a #9 **illegally swung into an Old Town crosswalk, killing two women.** Will neighbors gripe? The buses detect noise and cut their volume when it's quiet.

HEAR THE NEW VOICES

<http://pdx.be/TalkingBus>

2

Good news

We're #...1? USNews.com named **Portland's transit system the nation's best for its size** Feb. 8 – confusing anyone who's visited, say, the nation's capital. Just one problem: U.S. News cited population data from 2000. When we recrunched the numbers, **PDX ranked 7th overall:** 8th in funding, 10th in ridership, 11th in safety. The real #1? NYC, of course.

THE REAL RANKINGS

<http://pdx.be/StillPrettyGood>

3

3-hour tour?

A bus transfer lasts 1 hour. A MAX ticket lasts 2. Makes no sense, bus group OPAL said Feb. 21. They want TriMet to **extend all transfers to 3 hours**, or all night after 7. They haven't yet estimated cost. **"The fare has continued to go up and service has continued to go down,"** OPAL's Grayce Bentley said. "It's a way for TriMet to give

back to their customers."

READ OPAL'S PETITION

<http://pdx.be/LongTransfer>

4

Groovy bridge

The paved path over TriMet's new car-free bridge would urge bikers to **make their mornings last** under a concept reported by BikePortland Feb. 16. A series of 3/16" bumps built into the path would **play the first line of Simon & Garfunkel's "59th Street Bridge Song"** as bikes whiz over them. "I thought it was just called 'Feelin' Groovy,'" admits artist Doug Holls, who already has a claim to pop music fame: creating Seattle's wind sculpture "A Sound Garden" in 1982. Two years later, a little local band took a shine to the name.

photo: Luca Vanzella

ONLY ON THE BUS



Kathy

TriMet #33

unzipped his leather jacket real slowly and pulled out ... a balloon animal. A dog. I want to say it was pink. And began to play with it. Talk to it. And then this clean-cut man proceeds to dance it around on this kid's shoulder. "Doodootdootdeetdoo."

Vampire boy, I saw the blood drain from your face.

We were all just staring at them. There was no rationalizing it.

Vampire boy looked at me. I could see the desperation. He parted his lips and mouthed the words "HELP ME."

The white-haired lady saw his plea, touched his hand and began talking to him. The boy got off the bus a few minutes later.

And the guy in the leather jacket just continued to look out the window like nothing had happened.

The next day, the same regulars are there, without those two. Nobody ever talked about it, Now I wish we'd had a conversation. Here we were all so concerned about having this vampire boy sitting there, and the man in the leather jacket turns out to be the weird one.

What's your favorite bus story? Write michael@portlandafoot.org or call 503-662-2871. Storytellers receive a gift card to our favorite bar or coffee shop.

Vampire boy, I saw
the blood drain
from your face.

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Just so you know: we've teamed up with OPAL, the group in #3 above, on some joint grants. We don't endorse their views, but we do find them interesting. Details:

pdx.be/OpalPlusUs

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News item.

Street Talk

5 questions & someone worth asking

Pick your punchline: "Mozart mellows muggers." "Scofflaws Bach off." State Rep. Jefferson Smith (D-East Portland) says TriMet should curb crime by broadcasting classical music at the worst MAX stops. We caught Smith between a visit with President Obama and a MAX action meeting to dig into his kooky, creative concept.



Why only play classical music at the high- crime stations?

We could do it at all of them.

Any other cheap- and-easy ideas for MAX?

Community bulletin boards at MAX

stations as part of an 'adopt-a-stop' program. Also a once-a-month "ride free day" to boost ridership. More ridership engenders a greater sense of safety, and greater actual safety. The MAX line was built as a way to get *through* East Portland; it wasn't as well-designed with an eye toward how it could be a community asset.

What's your favorite piece of instrumental music?

The guitar solo in 'Yellow Ledbetter' by Pearl Jam. I'm not a big classical music fan.

Should MAX be free everywhere?

I love the idea of a free MAX. On the other hand, data demonstrate you can increase the use of something by charging for it. People value it more. The sweet spot is paying something, but not a bunch.

What's your favorite Portland secret?

If you go to Heavenly Donuts at 102nd and Glisan at around 9 p.m. and ask for "anything that's warm," there are good odds that they'll have donuts right out of the oven. They're waaaaay good.

*Qs & As conducted by Rebecca Robinson and edited for brevity. The **most dangerous lines** last year: pdx.be/MAXcrime. One **study of Smith's music idea** suggests it might actually work: pdx.be/MusicTest.*

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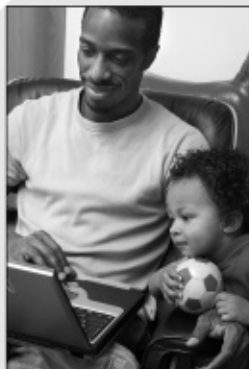
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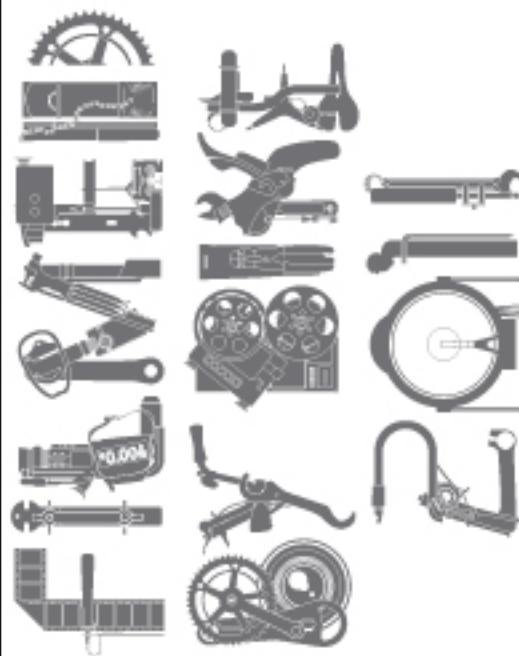
instead of across town?

- Be your own boss, but with complete training and support.
- Partner with an award-winning GREEN (really) company and a dedicated support team.



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Watch movies on our website:
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A festival of bike-themed movies

APRIL 15-17, 2011

PORTLAND OREGON

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

The Spot Bailey's Taproom, a "beer bar" with rotating local taps

The Lines Buses 1, 12, 20, 54 and 56;
Green and Yellow MAX

The Times Mon-Sat, 4 p.m.-midnight

The Link BaileysTaproom.com

The Skinny Bailey's is a bright, clean triangle of a space at SW Broadway and Ankeny. With a mix of comfortable chairs and regular tables, under-counter and post-mounted hooks for jackets and purses, board games on shelves by the door and water on the counter, it's welcoming to the last detail. Bottles adorn the windows, light fixtures, shelves and cabinet, and the layout includes a small table almost hidden in the back, perfect for a quiet drink for two. Tall windows look out on the busy street.

Michael, the bartender, was friendly and service was prompt. I tried out two beers, Boneyard's Girl Beer and Oakshire's Kilted Badger, and enjoyed both tremendously, especially the Kilted Badger with its complex layers of flavor. All the taps at Bailey's rotate regularly, so you'll rarely find the same beer twice.

Not only is Bailey's in the heart of downtown, it has just added its own TriMet arrivals board, a Transit Appliance installed by Portland Transport, so you can see when your next bus is without even leaving the bar. The

inconspicuous screen near the cash register displays departures for the many nearby stops, ordered by time (it can be a bit hard to find the line you need). Bartender and patrons alike said it's heavily used.

With Bailey's friendly atmosphere, excellent beer, and easy transit access, if I were going to hang out in a bar, this would be the one.

*Reported & written by local
active transportation activist
Alexis Grant. Got a spot?
Send your nominations to
alexis@portlandasfoot.org.*

The "Transit Appliance" is a volunteer project of Chris Smith, who also sits on Portland Afoot's board: details at pdx.be/Appliance. 



Bailey's Taproom
SW Broadway & Ankeny

There's always something happening at Blitz



Espresso- Specialty Roasted Coffee
Breakfast All Day
Burgers-Sandwiches-Pizza
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Craigsbest Our favorite missed connections -----

Don't you love the Craigslist "missed connections" section? We do. Well, sometimes. Not gonna lie: Some scary stuff in there. That's why Portland Afoot is introducing a new feature: **only the best** of the month's TriMet-related missed connections. It'll run monthly at <http://portlandafoot.org/blog/> and occasionally in print, too. All posts are reprinted as typed, minus the line breaks. Keep connecting, kids. • michael@portlandafoot.org

Blue Line Groove - m4m (Max to Hillsboro 2/2) 23yr

You caught me rockin' out to a new playlist on my ipod and had the most gorgeous smile as you got off (the train) at Willow Creek ? I sure would like to m-o-o-o-o-ovvve with you. What was I wearing? Your lip was pierced.

i see your pretty face on the max - m4w (blue line max) 30yr

I've seen you quite a few times. Your mysterious, usually the fur lined hood on your jacket keeps me from seeing your eyes. Today I fell asleep on the Max and awoke to your beautiful self you said hello. I replied a hello right back. But smiled real big on the inside. You continued to read your book, which was something titled "if you really loved me" I couldn't help but gaze at you throughout the ride into downtown. Well you will probably never see this posting, but you do have a secret admirer .

bus#16 (front st.) 33yr

You were the beautiful raven haired woman in black, with a blue wool hat. I was the guy who looked away when our eyes met. Uncomfortable with the fact that I am using the bus. But its only temporary while I serve my punishment for dui.

Playing a ukelele? small guitar? Thurs. 2/17 N Interstate & Lombard TC - w4m (MAX/Lightrail TC station)

Around 5:30pm. You, a tall young man in a soft dark blue cloth hat, speaking to an older woman with a scarf. You, playing a black-and-amber ukulele? small guitar? I'm not sure. Me, a young woman in a red bandana, black sweatshirt, one earbud plugged in, driving a grey Mazda, dirty face (I had just gotten off work). Backing into the line of traffic so as to get into the left turn lane. You met my eye, held my glance. I watched you play so beautifully, and I smiled at you. As I turned the corner, you followed me with your eyes. I parked at Fred Meyer's and ran back to talk to you, but you had already caught the train/Max and were gone. You reminded me of the possibilities all around us. Even if you don't read this, Thank you. 

Slipping away

Leaving money on the table?
TriMet doesn't collect on every ticket it writes – last year, it brought in less than a third of its billings. But even so...



If TriMet replaced all fare warnings with citations, it would be billing another \$1.1 million annually – enough to roll back last fall's cuts to the #9, the #14 and half the cuts to the #4.



If TriMet were still issuing citations at its 2010 rate, it would be billing another \$563,000 annually – enough to pay starting salary and benefits for 5.8 full-time fare inspectors.

April 2009
504 citations
\$46,000 value

March 2010
674 citations
\$62,000 value

August 2010
421 citations
\$38,000 value

September 2010
17 fare inspectors cut
186 citations
\$17,000 in billings

December 2009
370 citations
\$34,000 value

Myles Vaylon has heard it all before. He's been hearing it since he took this job, in 1994.

"People would tell us, 'I haven't seen you guys in a year,' when I know for a fact we were on that same train the previous day," the TriMet rail supervisor said, idly scanning the platform at Beaverton Transit Center as he talked.

But here's the thing: this time it's true.

With TriMet scrambling to keep vehicles on the road and redirecting millions of dollars toward its newly beefed-up transit police, agency records show that fare enforcement at TriMet is in sharp and continuing decline.

Fare-evasion citations are down 64 percent in the months since September, when TriMet cut 17 inspection positions, leaving only seven full-time inspectors to the 1500-mile system. Overall enforcement is down 45 percent, in part because first-time offenders typically get off with warnings, and repeat offenders are less likely to be caught twice.

Vaylon, one of 52 supervisors who theoretically set aside one hour each shift to check rail or bus fares, isn't complaining today. Not to reporters, at least. But he'll wax nostalgic for his first years on the job, when there was only one MAX line to Gresham.

"There were, like, 35 fare inspectors," he said. "Will we ever get back there? I don't know."

TriMet operations executive Shelly Lomax said she's considering restoring positions to her skeletal fare inspection staff, who start at a wage of \$67,000 a year plus health and pension.

"It's one of the things that's on the list of budget requests," Lomax said.

Meanwhile, many TriMet riders say they've been noticing the change.

"I used to see them every day at 42nd," said Taylor Bacon of southeast Portland. "Now I haven't seen them in five months."

"I've been tempted," he added.

Back on the Beaverton rail platform, Vaylon is tallying two hours' work. He's checked about 200 fares, caught seven first-time offenders, and let them all off with warnings.

If he'd issued citations instead, TriMet would have netted \$91.40 from each \$175 ticket, after state and county fees. Though many TriMet tickets are never paid, it would have taken only two of those seven tickets to pay for Vaylon's time.

But Vaylon said he'd rather be a teacher than an enforcer.

"I think I just made 7 friends," he said. "Instead of 7 enemies." 

It's not your imagination.
TriMet fare citations have quietly slid

since September.
64%

*photos of Vaylon:
Michael Schoenholtz*

As fare inspections plummet, is TriMet inviting riders to break the law?