

PORTLAND SAFOOT

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



March 2012:

THE MONEY ISSUE

- *TriMet's big picture*
- *A bus clown's straight dope*
- *Carsharing's next revolution*



1

Labor fight

TriMet boss Neil McFarlane dialed up the volume of his rhetorical fight with his union Feb. 24, saying the benefits TriMet agreed to in 2003 – notably, **full retirement at 58 with free medical** after 10 years' service – are **"slowly strangling" the transit agency** and "put us on a path to becoming a health care agency instead."

WHY IT MATTERS

Turn the page and look in the lower left to see how the cost of those future benefits, **unfunded and stacking \$75 million higher every year**, dwarf TriMet's \$12 million service cut. Say, what's the formula for attracting workers with sky-high medical premiums?

LOW PAY+AMAZING BENEFITS

<http://pdx.be/MakesSense>

2

Sweet deal

Say this for Fred Hansen, the former TriMet boss who signed the agency's 2003 union contract on taxpayers' behalf: he **believes in retirement**. Bus operator Al Margulies reported on his blog Feb. 16 that thanks to the agency's old executive pension system, **Hansen is pulling in \$15,551 a month**, 72% of his \$258,000 salary when he retired in 2010 at age 63. "What drives me crazy is that is for only 10 years of service," one commenter observed.

HANSEN'S INCOME

<http://pdx.be/NiceBenefits>

3

Good news

Once in a while, change is good. PSU planning student Zef Wagner reported March 3 that even as TriMet cuts buses again, it's making a few **very smart improvements to the system**, including, finally, a direct bus link on the 70 between the Hawthorne

and Alberta districts. **"Not everyone wants to go downtown,"** Wagner said. "Crosstown routes in Portland are some of the busiest."

3 GREAT BUS CHANGES

<http://pdx.be/GoodBusNews>

4

One-way cars

Suddenly, not every car trip has to come with a second. **One-way carsharing service Car2Go** said Feb. 29 that it'll launch in PDX March 31 with 200 cars. They'll **rent for 35 cents a minute, have no set home base and park for free**. Add self-driving cars – coming by 2020, some say – and this starts to look like the month the (driverless) future of public transit began. 

SIGN UP FOR FREE

<http://pdx.be/OneWayCars>



Paying forward.

This issue is a little later than usual because next month's will be a little more awesome than usual. Look for it in a couple weeks, in early April.

Not to say this one's a slouch. One last special thanks on the graphic: Jason McHuff. Cover photo by Andrew Magill.

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924 NE 65th Ave.
Portland, OR 97213

So that's where winter went.

Foot fuel

A tiny review of a former parking space

It's called: The Frying Scotsman.

So it sells: Fish and chips, mushy peas and hot English tea. Secret off-menu bonus: they'll deep fry and batter any food you bring, for free.

Corner of: SW 9th & Alder.

Hours: 11-4 weekdays, 11:30-3 Saturday.

Proprietor: James King, born outside Glasgow, uses his mom's secret batter recipe and the skills he honed as a nautical chef. He tried to find a chef's jacket with a Scottish flag patch, but settled for a Union Jack instead. Which makes him pretty chill for a Scotsman.

Menu range: Starts at cod (\$7.50 for four ounces, \$8.50 for eight) and moves up the ladder past haddock, red snapper and mahi-mahi to halibut (market price, which is a bit over \$11 for the medium this time of year). Also offers a British sausage meal. For afternoon snacks, salt and vinegar potato-wedge chips are \$3.

Weirdest on-site ingredient: Mars Bars.

King will deep-fry one of those for you for \$3.

If it were a haiku:

Crispy, sweet batter
But the chips need vinegar.
Bring an Oreo. 



Cause of the month: Each month, we give 2% of ad + subscription revenue to a charity picked by a random paid subscriber. For March, John M. sends \$12 to Friends of the Children, which provides professional mentors to Portland's most vulnerable young folks from kindergarten through high school graduation. pdx.be/FriendsOfKids

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/mar12links.



money

in portland's public transit system



a weirdly informative project by the friendly nerds at **portland afoot**

(pdx's 10-minute newsmagazine about buses, bikes & low-car life)



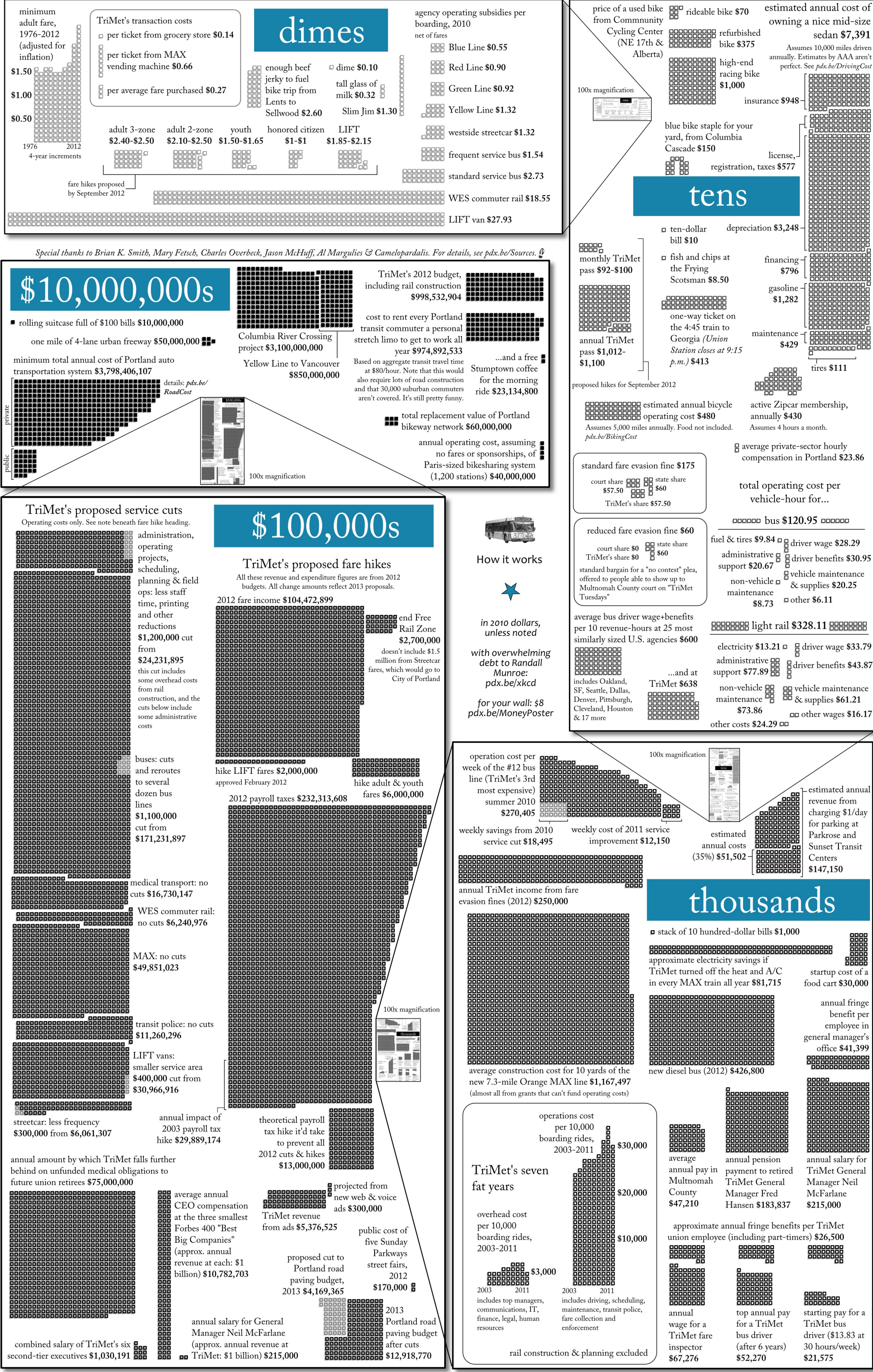
illustrated by cells that represent different amounts of cash, each 100 times larger than the last:

- 10¢
- \$10
- \$1,000
- \$100,000
- \$10,000,000

which means you definitely want to

zoom in.

(zoom to fit your screen width. best enjoyed in firefox, safari, internet explorer 9, on a tablet or by downloading the pdf. chrome makes it pixel-y.)





Probably 14 years I've been playing guitar and clowning. Portland people tend to take it easy. They're unambitious. So I look for people who are in the burbs, looking for a way to make their mark in an interesting kind of way in comedy or in music. They're hungry.

These kids had come to my open mike two years ago. We became friends online. Last month I said "come over and we'll try to make something fascinating happen."

The gig was at 9 pm at Milepost 5. They did music (they call themselves Trees Wear Plaid) and I did some stand-up.

We try to entertain people everywhere we go. On the way home, middle of the night at the bus stop, we had an environment going, as I like to call it.

When the 19 came, the driver, she looked to be in her 50s, she stopped my friends on the way in. She was saying: don't pay. I think she'd had a long day.

"Would you just please play some G-rated music?" she said.

We travel with a backpack full of guitars, kazoos and balloons. We can roll with a lot of gear.

We played three songs. I was making balloons the whole time.

The bus was about three-quarters full. It's awkward. There's a little jingling of the keys, a little swaying back and forth, some *wow, look what is happening*. But after a while, everyone started acting like Portlanders. They were like, *okay, this is what happens in our town*.

Then we got where we were going and got off. We were all sober – I don't drink

We try to entertain people everywhere we go.

at all – but the kids were high on goodwill. It was awesome. They were like: "We just transformed that whole bus!" And I was like: "Yes. We do that everywhere we

go. And sometimes we get paid for it, and sometimes we get kicked in the teeth, but we're going to keep doing it."

Then the next bus came, and we had to pay anyway.

I'd like to get them on bikes, too. Neither one of them can ride a tallbike, poor things. People from the burbs are kind of a little pudgy. 

As told to editor Michael Andersen. What's your favorite bus story? Call 503-OnABus-1 or write onlyonthebus@portlandafoot.org.

Electronic mail.

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