How to:

- Cut the rent by $100 a month
- Eat lunch for $5
- Eat breakfast for nothing at all
MAX mess
A car driven by a person having medical trouble soared off the Rose Quarter I-84 offramp at 80 mph Oct. 4, somersaulting into a box of equipment that tracked train arrivals. The driver lived, but the crash threw off TriMet's Transit Tracker arrival estimates for a week – amid the worst MAX reliability failures in three years, TriMet records showed.

WHY IT MATTERS
It's not your imagination: the trains haven't been running on time. TriMet watcher Adri Coates noted Sept. 27 that 1 in 5 MAX trains was off schedule in July, worse than buses. TriMet says it was due to unusual staff turnover. Funny how that happens when benefits go down.

MAX RELIABILITY OVER TIME
http://pdx.be/RailTrouble

Bus stabbing
Three Oregon City riders and their driver Leonard James were stabbed Oct. 2 by a 19-year-old who had allegedly been shouting racial slurs on the 33 just before 11 p.m. “I didn't see the knife,” rider John Olchea, who took a punch before three other riders jumped to restrain the attacker, told KPTV. “I just heard somebody scream.” All victims, one of whom had known James for years, survived. Austin Vanhagen of Oregon City faces assault charges. “We had each others' backs,” said James, 63.

AUDIO: 'I'VE BEEN STABBED'
http://pdx.be/RoughNight

Ballot time
What's all this about broken promises, mumble-mouthed deceptions and nasty punches? Portland Afoot has never felt better about the fact that we don't endorse politicians. But if the city council's positions on buses and bikes seem important, we're here to help by Nov. 6.

OUR PODCAST VOTER’S GUIDE
http://pdx.be/LowCar2012

Foot fuel
A tiny review of a former parking space

It's called: Thai Sky.

So it sells: Cart food that's old-school in all the right ways: on-site stir-frying, quick-trigger service and double-size portions for $5. Except these days they take credit cards (for 50¢), so the new school is cool too.

Corner of: SW 5th & Stark, on the southbound MAX line.

Hours: 11-4 Mon-Fri.

Proprietor: Achara Schulze, 41; her husband cooks. Once, Schulze tried downsizing portions. Regulars would wait, expectantly, for the next scoop. She gave up.

Menu range: 2 egg rolls, $1.50; 6 potstickers, $3; pad thai, $5; pad tom yum with chicken, $6; fresh strawberry lemonade, $2. Everest College, next door, sends a stream of Thai students seeking comfort food, so the Pad-Ka-Prao is the real deal.

If it were a haiku:
Someday, you'll tell the grandkids: "I couldn't spend ten dollars if I tried.”

Clearing up.

We regret two errors in last month's issue. First, unlike Zipcar and Getaround, car2go's insurance coverage doesn't allow drivers to switch off. We were misinformed.

Second, the Lloyd's superblock project is owned by American Assets Trust of San Diego. Langley is its local partner, but not itself an investor.

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Hold still. Up a little. Perfect.
It’s 12 minutes to the next Green Line, and Kaela Williams is halfway through the three-transfer haul to the apartment she shares with her sister and four children for $650 a month.

“I don’t like having no car,” says Williams, 35, who lives at SE 190th and Stark. “But when I have a car, I don’t really care for that either, because of gas.”

Williams, a longtime Portlander, has bounced from northeast Portland to Vancouver to Gresham, chasing apartments as close to work and transit as a hair stylist’s wages can afford. “Every place that I’ve looked for has been too far on the bus line,” she said. “The further you go south, it makes it difficult, so I’ve tried to stay more towards the Northeast.”

It’s the paradox of 21st century urbanism. Just as more and more people choose low-car lives — households that have more adults than cars accounted for 71% of Portland’s population growth in 2011, the Census reported last month — the families who use low-car transportation most have been priced out of the neighborhoods where it actually works well.

Last month Ed Bryant, who lives on SE 162nd and rides the 4 to his downtown job as a janitor, thought he’d finally scored a place to move in with his fiancé: $1,200 for a 3-bedroom in Montadale, “only about 5 blocks off the bus line,” he said approvingly. Then the landlord asked why he’d arrived on foot, and the interview seemed to end. “They expect you to roll up in a car,” said Bryant, 56, who owns a car but rarely drives it.

“I’ve been talking about this for 40 years after a neighborhood of low income was created Portland,” he said. “It wasn’t quite that simple. Cress’s business was smelling a bubble. To developers, it’s a gift. Each parking space would have added $20,000 or more to a building’s cost. If substantial parking were required, some of the projects wouldn’t be financially viable. To anti-sprawl warriors, it’s a dream come true: “We are underbuilt in this kind of housing,” said Jason Miner, executive director of 1000 Friends of Oregon. “We’ve built a great urban center where people actually want to live. … It’s what we’ve been looking for.”

To everyone involved, it’s something of a puzzle: Why are banks, after decades of refusing to finance small buildings for low-car renters, finally approving such projects? “We had more time on our hands,” Cress said. “So we said, ‘We’re coming up!’”

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It was the month U.S. job losses would hit a 60-year high. “Not an easy time to get a project underwritten,” Cress said. UDP had been watching the numbers. Portland’s rental market, Cress was certain, was about to boom. But there was only one way to make the math work on the east side’s new apartments: Build in years it couldn’t include auto parking.

That was how Cress and his key ally, a young local Wells Fargo vice president named Bryce Payne, decided it was time to explain Portland to a banker. Payne flew the bank’s underwriter up from San Francisco and, Cress said, drove him to the base of the Hawthorne Bridge.

“Look at this,” Payne said. It was rush hour. The bikes streamed past.

“I was always talking about how great Portland is,” Cress recalled. And by 2006, Cress’s Oakland-based real estate development company was smelling a bubble. So they decided to, temporarily, cash out. “We had more time on our hands,” Cress said. “So we said, ‘We’re coming up!”

The housing market peaked that year. Cress’s little firm, Urban Development Partners, found itself flush with cash — and buying land. …

The drunk driver whose van, early on the first day of 2009, splintered through the front porch of the house at 38th and Division didn’t know the crash would ignite a revolution in low-car housing. If any other landlord had owned the place, it might not have.

But the quarter-acre lot on two major bus lines, one block north of Clinton Street’s iconic bikeway, belonged to UDP.

Should Portland require auto parking at every new home? Weigh in by Nov. 13: pbs.re/MandatoryParking

The market for new homes has exploded. Copycat proposals began to pile in. Out almost immediately. Tested, the market didn’t work.

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I can’t read on the train – it makes me carsick. So I was looking for people to watch.

It was probably in May, early in the morning. I was going out to meet with the assistant superintendent of Gresham-Barlow School District.

It was kind of a crowded train; most of the seats were taken. I was in the middle of the train car, in one of the side seats that face the other side.

Everyone else was pretty uninteresting, and I think that’s why those two really stood out.

They were facing each other at opposite ends of the train, and I could see both of them from my vantage point. They were both probably between 25 and 45, but both kind of ambiguously within that age group.

One of them had a black Batman hat on with the yellow bat symbol – curled brim, like a sports hat. I think he was with a woman; they were going somewhere.

The other guy, was, like, lumberjacky. Dark blue or black button-up shirt. He had short dark hair but one of those really long Portland beards.

What I noticed was that he had noticed the guy in the hat and was waiting for him to look up.

He wasn’t motioning in any way. It’s hard to know intention when you’re doing people watching – he could have just been staring into space. It’s hard to say how long it took, because he could have been staring him down for quite a while, and I just sort of came in at the end of it.

But then the guy in the hat looks up. And they make eye contact. That’s when the guy with the big beard unbuttons the top button of his shirt – really, really subtly – to pull it aside. And you can just make out the black shirt. And then the top of the yellow Bat Signal. And then they both, just so subtly, nod at each other.

As told to editor Michael Andersen.

What’s your favorite TriMet story? Write onlyonthebus@portlandafoot.org.

Electronic mail.

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