

PORTLAND SAFOOT

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

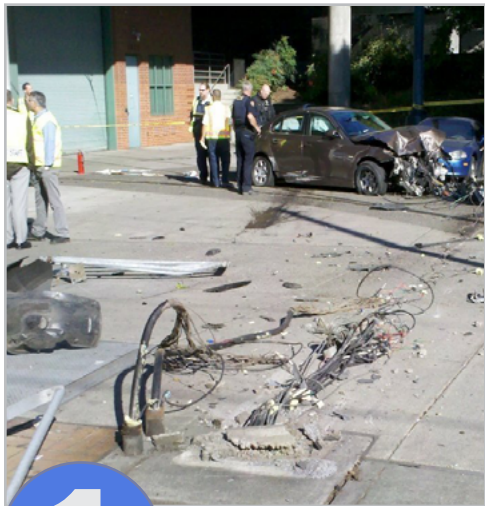


October 2012:

THE RENT ISSUE

How to:

- **Cut the rent** by \$100 a month
- **Eat lunch** for \$5
- **Eat breakfast** for nothing at all



1

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.

photos: TriMet, *Rantings of a Former TriMet Bus Driver*

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>



2

Bus stabbing

Three Oregon City bus 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>

3

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 im-

portant, we're here to help by Nov. 6.

OUR PODCAST VOTER'S GUIDE

<http://pdx.be/LowCar2012>

4

Good news

Ten years after **two grown men dressed as a squid and a vampire set up on a Hawthorne Bridge sidewalk** to serve free breakfast to bike commuters, one of Portland's tastiest & longest-lived low-car life organizations is giving its own horn a rare toot. **Breakfast on the Bridge celebrates its birthday** Oct. 30 at Velo Cult Bike Shop with a 7 pm event that'll recount stories from 120 mornings on the Hawthorne and Steel on the last Friday of the month. Bring a mug. ☺

JOIN THE FUN

<http://pdx.be/FreeDonuts>



photo: Michael Schoenoltz

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 superblook project is owned by American Assets Trust of San Diego. Langley is its local partner, but not itself an investor.

Published monthly by Portland in the Round, a nonprofit journalism startup, under a CC-BY-SA license. Printed at Eberhardt Press on SE 11th, 8 blocks from a streetcar stop.

924 NE 65th Ave., PDX 97213
\$14 a year: pdx.be/subscribe

Hold still. Up a little. Perfect.

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-Prado is the real deal.

If it were a haiku:

Someday, you'll tell the grandkids: "I couldn't spend ten dollars if I tried."

Cause of the month: Each month, we give 2% of ad + subscription revenue to a charity picked by a random paying subscriber. For October, Katie L. sends \$6 to Leach Botanical Garden, a "wonderful, cultured, natural oasis in Outer SE Portland. A good reason to take the bus up (or down) Foster Rd to SE 122nd." pdx.be/LeachGarden



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 an online list of all the month's goodies: pdx.be/oct12links



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 to be 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 Moreland, "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.

This is what a "massive shortage" of rental housing looks like, said Lisa Bates, a PSU professor of housing policy. Portland's vacancy rate of 2.2%, second only to New York, lets landlords in high-demand areas rapidly raise rents – up 9% this year – and reject tenants for the slightest of reasons.

"You show up to an open house and there are 40 other people there and they're ready to outbid you," said Justin Buri of the Community Alliance of Tenants. "You basically have to be

ready with your checkbook."

"You have to have like two, three times the rent," said Williams. "If you don't make that, you can't move in."

Though she wishes she could live closer in, Williams hasn't even bothered looking for a home east of 82nd Avenue. If living on the urban edge is what it takes to keep her family under a roof, she said, she can tolerate it.

"You can't complain," Williams said. "Cause it's a place."

At SE 170th

\$726 median rental price per unit

61% of residents are white

63% of nearby residents rent

36% of renters own no car

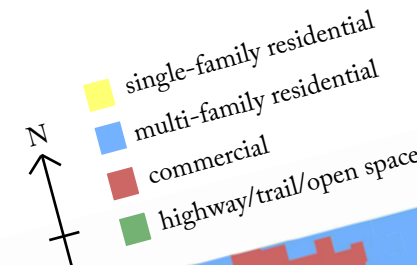
1 supermarket within 1 mile

0 bike-friendly greenways within ½ mile

41% of metro jobs within 90 min by transit

Sources: Census (first four items), Brookings Institution (final item)

DIVISION STREET



is leading the way again – thanks to a team of young developers who **changed the unwritten rules** that have helped lock low-car renters out of a neighborhood built, long ago, for them.

At SE 38th

\$833 median rental price per unit

85% of nearby residents are white

44% of nearby residents rent

25% of renters own no car

6 supermarkets within 1 mile

4 bike-friendly greenways within ½ mile

65% of metro jobs within 90 min by transit

Julie Handsaker stood up from her seat in the Multnomah County hearing room, long gray-blond hair around her shoulders.

Southeast Portland, she said, "is getting a Toronto, Vancouver, almost" – her voice began to shake – "Capitol-Hill-like environment," she said. "That, to me, is like a rape."

She was talking about a 4-story apartment building proposed a block from her home.

...

Forty years after activists blocked the proposed Mount Hood Freeway and redirected the money to build the first MAX line, the bulldozers

UDP's Eric Cress.
Photo: Michael Schoenboltz.

\$20,000 cost of real estate + construction per new auto parking space

\$100 additional rent per month required to finance \$20,000

Source: UDP

have returned to southeast Portland. But this time, the battle is different.

Instead of a highway to serve the suburbs, the big rigs now tearing up Division Street are building a thick hedge of apartments that will, for the first time in years, expand the supply of rental housing on Portland's inner eastside.

It's not just density, though, that has people like Handsaker vowing to pack a Nov. 13 city meeting. It's that 22 new eastside buildings will have something very unusual in common:

Unlike almost every new development in the city for 50 years, they won't have on-site auto parking.

This means different things to different people.

To some neighbors accustomed to free street parking – many homes lack driveways, because

the area was built for streetcar commuters in the 1910s and 20s – it's a blight.

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."

And 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?

But as Eric Cress could tell you, here's what this remarkable trend isn't: a coincidence.

...

Cress was 34 when he moved to Portland to retire.

It wasn't quite that simple. Cress's business

partner Steven Pontes, a Portlander since the 1990s, "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.

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 first new apartment building 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. And that, Cress said, was that. Wells Fargo approved the 26-unit project, which rented out almost immediately. Tested, the market exploded. Copycat proposals began to pile in.

For good or bad, low-car apartments were coming back to central Portland. ?

Should Portland require auto parking at every new home?

Weigh in by Nov. 13:

pdx.be/MandatoryParking

ONLY ON THE BUS



LeeAnne
TriMet Blue Line

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

It was beginning 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 was when the other guy opened the top button of his shirt and revealed his secret.

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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