

PORTLAND SAFOOT

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



June 2012:

THE UNION ISSUE

- *A closed election catches light*
- *iPhone's bus snub catches heat*
- *A collision on the 6 catches fire*



MAX and Porter photos: © The Oregonian

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Pay up

Central Portland transit riders will take TriMet's troubles on the chin this fall, the agency's board agreed June 13. When free rail and fare zones end in September, **adult TriMet boardings will cost \$2.50**, and monthly passes will rise to \$100 – the nation's 2nd-highest price for an entry-level bus pass, after NYC.

WHY IT MATTERS

Eavan Moore, one of 40 transit riders who skipped other engagements to testify against the hikes on a Wednesday morning, said she **loves TriMet so much she once embroidered a bus on her shirt**. She suffers from asthma, she said, but plans to switch to a bike.

WHAT DID TESTIFIERS SKIP?

<http://pdx.be/WeAsked>

2

Rail stop?

Will the 2015 Orange Line to Milwaukie be **Portland's last MAX expansion**? Most new transit plans "are not going to end that way for a long time," Metro's Elissa Gertler told the planning agency's internal reporter May 17, saying the agency is looking at **"lean and mean" options like high-quality bus lines** instead. With suburban rail measures headed for November votes in Clackamas and Clark Counties, this year could reaffirm the region's love for trains – or break it.

MAX ON THE BALLOT

<http://pdx.be/LightRailVotes>

3

iPhone switch

Does anybody still have Steve Jobs's email? A year after the death of the car-free Portland punk who grew up to be Apple's CEO, the new set of iPhone maps **won't have transit planning built in** – users will have to download apps themselves.

Auto directions? Still free. "Apple apparently **does not consider their transit-using customers (like me) to be as important as motorists**," PDX transit developer Aaron Antrim wrote June 14. "This is a major oversight."

LET 'EM KNOW

<http://pdx.be/ApplePetition>

4

Good news

When TriMet drivers see a crime, they're supposed to radio it in and keep rolling. But operator Larry Porter **saw a woman being beaten in a field off SE 96th May 16** and decided he couldn't follow that rule. As cars rolled past, the 320-pound driver **hit his brake, warned the attacker to stop and finally wrested him off her**. "I have six sisters and daughters, man," Porter, who wasn't punished, explained to *The Oregonian* later.



Save the date.

Two years after Portland's strangest journalism project launched, we're delivering 10 minutes of low-car life to 1200 households a month and reaching thousands more by blog, wiki, tweet and podcast. The celebration's Thurs., July 26 at Backspace. More soon.

Published monthly by Portland in the Round, which consumes at least one toasted bagel at every Monday night team meeting, under a CC-BY-SA license. Printed at Eberhardt Press on SE 11th.

924 NE 65th Ave.
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503-On-A-Bus-1

Two words: ice cream cone.

Easy riding

One trick to optimize your commute

The problem

Your bike needs some work. Sure, you've got a copy of The Tuneup Issue (May 2012), but who wants to pay \$60 an hour for bike service? Then you realized all the little jobbies look the same. Also, they keep rolling away.



The tip

Get an ice cube tray and a piece of paper. Draw a 16-cell grid on the paper. As you remove hardware from the bike, mark on the paper where it came from and put it in the corresponding cube mould.

For example

"Left front brake." "Outside washer - curve faces tire." "3/16 bolts - rear fender." "Center screw from that little wheel that folds forward." "Car keys, for when I run over to the Bike Farm for help." 🗑️



Cause of the month: Each month, we give 2% of ad + subscription revenue to a charity picked by a random paid subscriber. For June, Bjorn V. sends \$7 to JOIN, which uses street outreach workers, post-placement support, free laundry and showers and immersion experiences to fight homelessness in Portland. pdx.be/JOINpdx

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/june12



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Craigsbest *Our favorite missed connections*

There's a story of Portland written in the stolen glances and secret longings of public transit commuters. A really strange story. Each month at portlandafoot.org/blog, facebook.com/portlandafoot and occasionally in print, we marvel at the weirdest and wonderfulest TriMet-related missed connections on portland.craigslist.org. All posts reprinted as typed; the titles are ours. Keep connecting, kids. 

Oops

pink/orange hair and hiccups. – m4w (the max.)
 (May 22) well... i don't think your mirrored shades are as reflective as you think they are. but you are cute.

A couple with a history

Bus #9 Powell to Downtown – m4w (The Bus on Powell Blvd.) 40yr
 (May 22) I got to see your pretty face again. Dark beautiful eyes, curly hair, velvet boots?
 We fought the Mc Donalds clown together about a year ago, and just noticed you again on the bus. We kept exchanging glances and smiles. Damn you are gorgeous!
 I wanna atleast kiss you.

I always knew this skill would pay off

Rubics cube – Incredible! – m4m (Max green – I think) 46yr
 (May 4) You are a younger blue-collar guy. Around 1:30pm today you solved your rubics cube twice between Gateway and Lloyd, mostly without looking. Wow! I was impressed and told you so before I got off. You said it was mostly memory. You have a great smile and very pretty eyes.

A match made in Asgard

Dear Larper – w4m (Orchards Park (Vancouver, WA)) 20yr
 (May 16) I was on the #72 bus going in the opposite direction, while you were waiting for another bus. I don't know if you will ever see this but your yellow circle shield and your colorful sword made me smile, thanks for that.



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GOT A PRODUCT?

Portland Afoot is looking for awesome **low-car raffle prizes** for its second birthday party, at Backspace on Thursday, July 26. Support transit-oriented journalism and introduce your product to our community: write lane@portlandafoot.org if you'd like to donate.

And save the date. It's going to be our best event yet. 





The race to lead TriMet's union might be the most important vote you'll never get to make. As what's left of the U.S. labor movement fights for its life and TriMet managers pledge to slash service without benefit cuts, we covered ATU Local 757's election on our website as no outlet has before – and asked the contenders a few questions on behalf of riders, too. Meet the man who might decide the future of public transit in Portland. (Then see pdx.be/UnionPrez to find which he is.)

interviews by Michael Andersen



Why are you running for TriMet's union president?
Nine years ago, when we voted for the past contract, you weren't allowed to study it – you had to go through all these 20-odd pages in the room where we voted. This isn't a democracy.

You also think the union be stronger if it were smaller.
Our local union has become an unwieldy monster, with 20-some different units from Walla Walla all the way down to Medford. If you've got to drive more than an hour to get to a union meeting, it ain't local any more. One of my ideas is to help these other locals spin off, become their own. My brothers and sisters here at TriMet want our leadership to be focused on our needs.

the
REFORMER

*Since launching his campaign in January, **Tom Horton** has been calling for sweeping changes to the union he's served for 17 years – reversing its 20-year expansion by breaking the union into truly local units. He's also critical of the recent priorities of the U.S. labor movement, warning that unions risk losing everything without better engaging their communities. Horton is also an Eagle Scout, a former crack addict, and a onetime winner of a full vocal performance scholarship to the University of Texas.*

TriMet has a fantastic health-care policy – \$5 copay, \$0 deductible, \$0 premium, retirement with full medical and a small pension as early as 55. Can you tell riders, 'It is worth cutting service so we can save most of these benefits'?

We make our job look easy, but there's more to it that you don't see – stress issues, health issues. And we need to get union people interested in programs of social uplift, to use Martin Luther King's words. Charitable causes, book clubs, bake sales, barbershop chorus, good social things that people want to get involved in. Why aren't we having a float in the Memorial Day parade?

TriMet's management says they've failed to save enough money to cover your future retirement benefits, so there's no option but for you guys to cover much of the difference.

Well, this is the trend in state, federal and world politics. Labor leaders have been resting with our feet up on the desk for, what, 70 years? The ruling class has been pulling these tricks on us, the masses, who are busting our butts to get the jobs done, to make them profitable, since the beginning of human history. It's not going to end.

You started out driving vans for people with disabilities, in Eugene and then at Holladay Park Plaza here in Portland. What did you learn from that?

I wasn't always this liberal, you know. I was a Young Republican in college. (Laughs.) I came across this job driving paratransit and I really came to understand the value of this public service in my neighbors' lives. This means freedom for them – to get to the places where they need to get to, to interact with the people they want to interact with.

Qs & As edited.
transcripts + results:
pdx.be/UnionPrez



You say TriMet isn't truthful with the public. Got an example?
I think right now they're crying wolf with the financial status. They are hiring nonunion members of upwards of \$100,000 a year, but yet they're saying they're broke.

the
WORKHORSE

***Bruce Hansen** is a union worker's union worker, literally. An ATU official for years, he's reported to the office during his off time (for extra pay) to represent countless operators in disputes large and small with TriMet management. Hansen's problems with the current union leadership revolve around his work advocating for TriMet employees on the job, and so is his criticism of TriMet management: He once filed a formal complaint against TriMet CEO Neil McFarlane, who he said was creating a hostile work environment by disparaging the union in public. Hansen's still waiting for a reply.*

Well, management will tell you those are important positions. They need to handle lawsuits, keep the website accessible, let people know when the bus is coming.

If we don't have a bus fill in that route, how is that important?

Seems like the ideal is for TriMet to be held accountable by its workers and the public. You don't think that's happening?

Milwaukie light rail is the perfect example. How many of the public that we're interrupting down there don't want light rail to go through the district that it's going through? Are they listening? Obviously not.

Do you think it'd be a good idea to break up the local union into separate units?

I don't. They're our brothers and sisters. But do you understand why ATU is spread out to 23 different units? Ron Heintzman was president of the time. So he negotiated these outlying properties when he started losing votes within TriMet. He built his empire to surround him.

That's pretty clever.
No one says Ron's a dumb man.

What is it about driving a bus that's appealed to you personally?

The daily change. Out there, you're your own person. You're dealing with sometimes difficult people, but the majority of the time you're dealing with good people.



the
PROFESSIONAL

the money has to come from somewhere. Even if they cut retiree benefits in half, the deficit would still be three times the size of this year's huge fare hikes.

Are we willing to work to try and reduce some of the cost? Yes. But we're not going to be the scapegoat. If the public is saying they're not going to give the money to keep funding the service, what should be the next logical step?

Reduce the service.

What's best and worst about running a union?

Today, I think a bus driver can afford to send their kids to college. Years before, I don't think that was true. Worst part is you have 4,300 bosses.

Your opponents call you an undemocratic bully.

I don't believe in nonsense and I don't believe in wasting time. Also, there's

Would you dispute that the union's current contract is very good?

It is. But people who drive bus for 25 years tend to have lots of medical issues. Back problems, urinary problems. They don't live that long. So back starting in '88, our priority was benefits. Look at state employees – they got higher wage percentage increases than we did, because we chose to focus on health insurance for our people. Because they're going to need it.

I looked at cost per hour of the 25 U.S. bus agencies closest in size to TriMet. TriMet was a little below average in wages, a little above average in health care. But that didn't include TriMet's retirement package – that people can retire at 55 after 10 years. Those costs terrify me. TriMet's entire operating budget is \$400 million, and an audit says the annual deficit on those retiree benefits alone is \$75 million. It's not workers' fault, but

a faction that doesn't like me because one of the toughest things in this job is to tell somebody no. We have grievances filed all the time. A responsible union officer has to look an employee in the face and say, 'I understand your concerns, but it's not a grievance.'

Did you, as Willamette Week reported in 2000, have somebody forge former TriMet General Manager Tom Walsh's signature on an IRS report and make a lot of money?

No. I don't remember exactly right now what that form was, but it was all legit. If I had done something illegal, don't you think they would have done something?

ONLY ON THE BUS



Monica

TriMet #6

The Peacemaker is kind of thin, tallish, early 50s. And, um, grinning the whole time. He's just the kind of guy who walks down the street grinning.

It was 5:30 p.m., southbound at Killingsworth. Another guy's wheelchair was on the left already, so the second wheelchair guy was having a hard time moving his chair into the right side. Then the guy on the left, who's white, starts freaking out because he bumped his chair.

I'm in the very back, reading. Usually there's lots of yelling going on, so I tune it out. But as soon as I looked up, the guy on the left had his umbrella like this [*hoisted, ready to strike*]. I was like, *Woah. Gotta pay attention.*

For a good five minutes it would quiet down, then start up again. I guess the driver didn't really know how to handle the situation. Then the guy on the left said "you're all ganging up on me because I'm white and you're black!"

And then the Peacemaker runs up.

He has a really loud booming voice.

"ALL RIGHT! We're giving you room, and said, 'You have the best skin.' you just stay where you are."

He had a big grin. He was happy to do it. He really wanted to involve himself.

He stands there until one of them gets off the bus, then walks to the back, smiling, and says to everyone who's been watching, "I'm not racist, I just don't like anyone." And everybody laughed.

I'm sitting next to this 2-year-old Latina girl and her father, talking in Spanglish. The Peacemaker starts talking to them, too.

He was saying if you have any black in you, you're black. He said he was white and black and Indian, and that his daughter is blessed to look very white.

Then he looked at me, touched my skin

and said, 'You have the best skin.'

I think I just froze and said, 'Oh, I don't think that's true.'

This was the most intense bus ride of my life.

Then the Peacemaker asks the father "Does your daughter know about Jesus?"

The father says 'Well, I'm letting her make those decisions. You can ask her.'

She doesn't know what to say at first, and is sort of figuring everybody out. And says, "Yes." And starts grinning, because people like the answer.

As told to editor Michael Andersen. What's your favorite bus story? Write onlyonthebus@portlandafot.org. 📧

That was when the Peacemaker ran up.

Electronic mail.

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