

The Oregonian

Biketown bike-share launches today: Five things to know

By Elliot Njus

July 19, 2016

Portland streets have taken on an orange tint in recent weeks in preparation for the Tuesday launch of the central city's new bike-share system.

A hundred Biketown racks have popped up across 8 square miles. Crews planned to distribute most of the system's 1,000 bikes overnight Monday into Tuesday.

"We're going to have many elves hard at work tonight," Portland Bureau of Transportation spokesman Dylan Rivera said Monday.

The system goes online at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday after a celebration near the Tilikum Crossing in the South Waterfront.

How to try it out: Biketown has to this point focused on recruiting users willing to shell out for one-year memberships, but there are options for more casual riders looking to test the waters.

The first step will be to create an account. The easiest way will be to go to biketownpdx.com or download the Biketown smartphone app for iPhone or Android.

You'll be assigned a six-digit account number and asked to create a four-digit PIN. You'll need to punch in both numbers to rent a bike. (Yes, that's 10 numbers to memorize.)

Another option is to visit one of 20 Biketown stations equipped with a computerized kiosk. For \$2, they can also dispense a reusable member card which you can tap instead of entering the member number, though you'll still need to enter the PIN.

You can reserve a bike online or on the app, or you can simply walk up to a bike that's not in use and rent it with your member ID and PIN.

A single ride, capped at 30 minutes, will cost \$2.50. A day pass, good for 180 minutes of ride time distributed among unlimited trips, is \$12.

What the bikes are like: Bike-share bikes are a different ride from most personal bikes.

At about 45 pounds, the eight-speed bikes are heavy, and they're not particularly fast. They're also built so the rider sits upright. Both take some getting used to, but they help make the bikes a little safer.

The bikes are also equipped with front and back lights, which turn on automatically. They have a bell, activated by turning the left handlebar grip.

They don't come with helmets, however, so users who prefer to use one will have to bring their own.

The bikes use a shaft drive rather than a chain, which protects pant legs from grease stains and catching.

The Oregonian/OregonLive took a prototype bike for a spin around the South Waterfront and back to our downtown newsroom.

More than 1,000 users had signed up for annual memberships by Monday evening. Nearly 400 signed up in the first 24 hours they were available.

Program organizers had hoped to sign four digits of members by launch day, and they offered incentives to do so. Each of the first 1,000 members were promised a "Founding Member" identification card and T-shirt, and the first 500 got one month of their membership for free, courtesy of a sponsorship from the Metro regional government.

Annual memberships are key to keeping the system self-sustaining. The \$12-a-month annual plan — priced at equal cost to a day pass and less than five single-rides — are meant to be alluring to people who use the system with any frequency, but they'll pay for the system year-round, even in the cold and rainy months.

And annual members typically account for well over half the ridership in other markets with similar programs.

"In general, member revenue and sponsor revenue are the two legs that are going to be covering the operational costs," Rivera said.

The standard livery for the bikes features the orange color Nike uses for its shoeboxes.

Get ready for tourists on bikes. Even though members make up the bulk of ridership, bike-share systems elsewhere have proven popular with out-of-town visitors.

Among non-member riders in Washington, D.C., two-thirds were visiting from out of town. While Portland might not have the tourist draw of the nation's capital, some visitors to "America's Bicycle Capital" might have a bike ride on their to-do list right after (or as part of) a stop at VooDoo Doughnut.

To help acclimatize unfamiliar riders, the city is installing maps of bicycle-friendly routes at Biketown kiosks. The Biketown app also includes maps of bike routes and trip-planning tools that direct tourists to those routes.

Stations near streetcar tracks will also warn riders to stay clear, and to cross them at a 90-degree angle to avoid getting caught in the ruts.

Some people are upset that Biketown displaced parking for cars — or other bikes. Residents of some neighborhoods started posting angry notes near new Biketown racks that displaced on-street auto parking, while frequent cyclists found some bike corrals had been replaced by off-limits Biketown racks.

In many areas, the city is looking for alternatives to displacing parking. For example, it's decommissioned reserved spaces that are no longer used. In Northwest Portland, the city says the new spaces unlocked through those efforts means there will be no net loss of on-street parking.

Rivera said numbers weren't available Monday for other parts of the city.

As for the bike parking, Rivera said some corrals were removed, but that they might be replaced in the coming months. In the end, he said, any net loss of bike parking will likely be less than 1 percent, or the equivalent of 30 standard "staple" racks.

The Portland Tribune

More bikes for Portland as Biketown rolls out

By Joseph Gallivan

July 19, 2016

Last week, in the hot July sunshine, two young workers on Northwest 19th Avenue were revealing the purpose of the orange metal loops that have been appearing in trendy Portland neighborhoods recently. Emily Leuning and Alena Almquist-Heater were removing yellow caution tape and applying decals to the steel bike racks which are reserved for the 1,000 shareable Biketown bikes which become available to the public July 19. They had been riding around all day on Biketown bikes, which are equipped with GPS units and solar rechargers so the bikes can always be tracked.

A thousand of the orange bikes will be available in the Biketown bikeshare system as of Tuesday July 19. The effort is a joint venture of Portland Bureau of Transportation and Motivate Co., a Brooklyn-based company that also operates bikeshares in many cities, including New York, Toronto, Seattle and the Bay Area. The electronics are by Brooklyn-based Social Bicycles (SoBi).

Station to station

In echoes of the retail outlet, Niketown, Biketown is sponsored by Nike. (In New York the Citi Bike system is sponsored by Citi, formerly known as CitiBank.)

The workers pressed on stickers, removing every last air bubble with a scraping tool. The stickers and gel pads protect the enameled metal, and the bike frames, from scratches. They say LOCK BIKE HERE so people don't cause a confusing cluster of bikes on the minimal orange paddles, which each have a small hole. Three such teams have been going out to hit the one hundred racks six at a time.

Orange is the new bike

As they worked, squatting by the side of the road, passers-by stopped to see what was going on. Such systems rely on buzz and high visibility branding to get them started. Nike's \$10 million sponsorship over five years increased the number of bikes in the bike share program from 600 to 1,000.

Not all the bikes are orange. Nike has created a branding opportunity beyond merely adding swooshes. The shoemaker has wrapped 10 per cent of the bikes in color schemes representing their classic sneakers, the Nike Air Max 95, Nike Air Trainer 1 and Nike Air Safari.

Some residents have already complained of losing parking spaces to racks or stations. Some just find them garish, but they do need to stand out.

And they will provide a few jobs. Dorothy Mitchell, Motivate's general manager, told the Tribune in June that they will hire 12 positions for operations, including mechanics and "rebalancing" duties — returning the bikes to the proper stations by van and trike/trailer combo.

PBOT also removed bike parking – the traditional blue corrals or bars – in places to make way for Biketown stations. For example at Northwest 21st and Johnson (City Market) and Northwest Thurman and 24th (Dragonfly Coffeehouse).

Money matters

Money though: will the Biketown bikeshare system make any? According to John MacArthur of the Transportation Research and Education Center at Portland State University, transit is taxpayer subsidized, and it's best to think of bikeshare programs as an extension of public transit.

“With transit there has always been a first mile/last mile problem. This will really help,” MacArthur told the Business Tribune. “In other cities they're not just being used by tourists. The locals are using them.”

He says “I think the intent is to move people around and then at some point to break even,” referring to the administrators making money, rather than the city.

One of the benefits he sees is the Car2Go model, where the customer searches for a vehicle on the app's map, reserves it and walks to it. That electronic technology is built into the bike, not the docking station, which is just steel plates on a rubber mat.

Unlike Car2Go, you cannot park the bike almost anywhere. “One can lock a bike to another bike rack but they are discouraging it with fees and they have rules about when and where you can do it. They really want people to use the orange racks but there are options.”

Portland slow off the mark

In contrast to how Portland usually rolls, Portland has come after other cities in starting a bikeshare. MacArthur thinks the city has benefited from waiting for new bikeshare technology. “This technology allows it to be more flexible. Other cities are station-based, you had to find a station then walk to your destination. Here you can dock it at a normal bike rack.”

MacArthur is an engineer and city planner by trade. He lives in a one-car family and commutes to PSU from the Mt Tabor neighborhood. Although his nearest bike station is 39th and Belmont, he says he will get a \$12 a month membership and use it for quick trips around downtown, say from the campus to a meeting with ODOT.

“Sometimes you don't want to wait for the bus or the MAX and a bike is the best way.”

He also saw the light recently when his son asked to get Adobe Photoshop, which seemed like a big investment until McArthur senior realized it's now done on a monthly lease basis.

“The technology moves so quickly, why would you want to get stuck with an old version and have to upgrade? Why not have the latest, best version?”

BaaS: Biking as a service

So although the technology of the bicycle has barely changed in a century, the tech attached to the rack on the back has changed a lot in just a year. There is better mapping, billing and onboarding software, than when say Citi Bike launched in New York. McArthur thinks people will pay for that up to date tech, by the month.

He adds that Los Angeles is taking the next logical step and having the bike share program run by the metro rail system, so all subway and bike rides can be billed to one ticket or account.

As an academic he is looking forward to the data that reveals how the bikes are used. In the future, just as Car2Go users have to answer some onscreen questions before they drive away, bike riders could be electronically surveyed about their habits too.

FuelBand reborn?

Ten million dollars over five years should be enough to see if Bike Town USA, as Portland likes to be called, needs another thousand bicycles. The bikes could be like Nike's doomed fitness wristband project, Nike FuelBand. Who will control the trip data?

The bikes will be owned by PBOT, while the trip data will be jointly owned by PBOT and Motivate, says PBOT Communications Director John Brady.

"We'll use the data to optimize the system's performance and also to do research about such things as usage patterns. The data will be anonymized, so we will have no personal information about the users," he said in an email to the Tribune.

Hales: Homeless campers to be swept from Springwater Corridor Trail

By Jim Redden

July 15, 2016

Mayor Charlie Hales said Friday that an estimated 500 homeless campers would be cleared from sections of the Springwater Corridor Trail, beginning this month.

Responding to increasing criticism from nearby residents and businesses, together with reports of growing environmental damage, Hales said July 15 that homeless camps would be cleaned up and future camping would be prohibited.

It is not clear where the campers will go. Although Portland and Multnomah County are working to open more homeless shelters, not that many beds are expected to open so soon. County officials have also ruled out using the unopened Wapato Jail in North Portland to house the homeless, even though it was designed to accommodate 500 people.

"We have resisted removing campers from the area because we don't yet have good options for all the people living there. But public safety and environmental issues have reached a tipping point," Hales said in a press release. "Through partnerships with social service providers and public safety, we will clear the area humanely and compassionately. Then we will clean the area to restore it to the public park it was intended to be."

Beginning Monday, July 18, until Monday, Aug. 1, social service providers will talk to homeless campers, trying to find out what they need and how to connect as many as possible with available services. There will be a particular focus on the most vulnerable people on the trail.

On Friday, July 29, the corridor will be formally posted for cleanup. Then, on Monday, Aug. 1, work crews will begin clearing belongings, garbage and biohazards from the trail.

"We are committed to helping our social service partners connect as many people as possible with short-term shelter options. But we also have to be realistic: many of these displaced people are going to have to sleep outside," Hales said in the release. "For those who have to

sleep outside, we will continue to support their need to do so safely. But large, entrenched encampments that we see in the corridor are not acceptable.”

According to the mayor's office, the action demonstrates an urgent need to move quickly to expand shelter and permanent housing options for homeless people. More than 400 shelter beds will open during the next few months, beginning with the Hansen Shelter in East Portland, which opens on July 22. The new City-County Joint Office of Homeless Services will "continue to ensure services are available for those sleeping outside," according to the mayor's office.

Willamette Week

The BikeTown Backlash Starts With Handmade Signs From Southeast Portland Malcontents

By Julia Comnes

July 16, 2016

Not everybody is happy to see Portland joining the roster of cities with a bike-share program.

WW has received at least five calls and letters of complaint about bike share over the past three days, most of them from homeowners who wish the city had asked their permission before installing bike racks near their houses.

But how do you protest the perfectly legal installation of bright orange BikeTown racks in the public right-of-way?

With a bright orange felt-tip pen.

Disgruntled residents in Southeast Portland's Sunnyside neighborhood are posting signs expressing their discontent with the BikeTown rack installed on their street earlier this week.

The gripes are posted on at least two handmade flyers taped to signposts near the Southeast Taylor Street rack near Cesar Chavez Boulevard. The complaints range from the reduction of parking spaces on their street to Nike's "branding of our city."

Both were posted to Twitter by eagle-eyed photographers this morning.

The signs illustrate the view held by some Portland residents that the Nike-sponsored bike share program, which is launching on July 19, was approved by the Portland Bureau of Transportation without sufficient public outreach or approval.

Tony Jordan, president of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association, photographed one of the signs this morning. He's not impressed by the argument.

"It's like a bioswale or a bus stop," he said. "We got the same kind of notice that we would for any other infrastructure of this nature."

While he says PBOT could have saved itself some headaches by doing more intensive outreach—such as speaking about the program at neighborhood association meetings—he says that plenty of public comment went into the program before the bike rack locations were decided.

Five BikeTown open house meetings were held throughout March and April to discuss the locations of the stations, and Portland residents were surveyed online about BikeTown locations. The final locations of the station were based on over 4,500 responses.

Jordan, who plans to use BikeTown once it launches, thinks that plenty of people are excited for the program. Opposing flyers have been posted underneath the originals, including one that says "The Street Belongs to All!"

"I think this is probably going to be an amenity that some people will be happy to have in front of their residence," Jordan says.

Remember How Sam Adams Wanted to Recycle the Sauvie Island Bridge as a Northwest Portland Bike Crossing?

By Beth Slovic

July 15, 2016

Next week, the Oregon Department of Transportation is expected to bring to a close one of the more interesting chapters in recent Portland City Hall history, by tentatively approving about \$3 million in lottery funding for a new bicycle and pedestrian bridge over Interstate 405.

The idea of connecting the Pearl to Northwest Portland with a bridge closed to cars traces its origins to a 2002 Portland Bureau of Transportation plan that also envisioned turning West Burnside and Couch streets into a pair of one-way streets.

The so-called Burnside-Couch couplet went nowhere. For years it looked like the bridge plan would, too. That plan called for a dedicated crossing for only bicyclists and pedestrians to give people options other than the busy bridges at Northwest Everett and Glisan streets.

In 2008, then-Commissioner Sam Adams championed the idea of a Flanders Street crossing—with a characteristically big idea that seemed to anger as many people as it excited.

He wanted to repurpose the Sauvie Island Bridge at U.S. 30 (which was about to be decommissioned) as the new pedestrian/bike bridge—a feat that engineers deemed possible at a cost of \$5.5 million.

"Of all the harebrained ideas to come out of City Hall lately, the Sauvie Island Bridge caper takes the cake," Glenn Gillespie of Southwest Portland told *The Oregonian*. "Three big spenders on the Portland City Council have foolishly agreed to squander more than four or five million taxpayer dollars to 'recycle' the old bridge and move it to a new location as a pedestrian/bicycle crossing. It would make a lot more sense to earmark that money as a down payment on a new Sellwood Bridge, before that venerable and worn-out structure falls into the Willamette River."

Meanwhile, supporters of the bridge wrote in an op-ed that it would be foolish to back away: "I-405 needs a pedestrian and bike bridge. The city of Portland has a tremendous opportunity in its hands, which looks very much like the Sauvie Island Bridge, and it would be a tragic loss if we failed to take advantage of it. The construction of I-405 tore apart the fabric of our community. This project would begin to stitch it back together."

Then-Mayor Tom Potter hated the idea, saying the bureau didn't have that kind of money and, if it did, it should go to repairing streets and building sidewalks. Potter was preparing to leave office, but Adams was running to replace him as mayor.

Adams' opponent, Sho Dozono, highlighted the bridge project as an example of Adams' zeal for splashy, legacy-cementing projects over more mundane, fiscally responsible endeavors.

But the real obstacles to the project went by the names of Walt and Jean—also known as the north and south cabins of the Portland Aerial Tram.

Completed in 2006, the tram project was supposed to cost \$15 million, but ended up costing closer to \$55 million. That bill was still stinging when Commissioner Dan Saltzman—the crucial swing vote— said no to Adams' project, which would have required using a specific contractor due to certain limitations. That also gave Saltzman pause.

"The last thing I want to do is be in a position where the contractor feels like they have us over a barrel," he was quoted as saying in *The Oregonian*.

When Adams pulled the plug, in May 2008, he said he couldn't "responsibly proceed" given concerns around cost.

Eight years later, PBOT is proposing to build a new 24-foot-wide span for \$6 million, with \$3 million in lottery funding and \$3 million in city-funded system development charges. An Oregon Department of Transportation committee will weigh in on the city's request on July 21, which a final decision expected in August.

The NW Examiner says the project could be finished by 2019.

Mayor Charlie Hales is Evicting Hundreds of Homeless Campers from the Springwater Corridor

*By Rachel Monahan
July 15, 2016*

Mayor Charlie Hales made his plans official this morning: The city will start sweeping as many as 500 homeless people from East Portland's Springwater Corridor bike trail on Aug. 1.

WW reported on Thursday that Hales was preparing to clear out the nature area and bike trail, after a shooting on the trail last week.

But the mayor's official announcement expands the scope of the sweep, and bars campers from returning.

Hales announced Friday that the sweep will include the entire stretch of trail in East Portland, which has drawn the fury of neighbors as it grew over the past year, becoming one of the largest homeless encampments in the nation.

"We have resisted removing campers from the area because we don't yet have good options for all the people living there," Hales said in a statement issued today. "But public safety and environmental issues have reached a tipping point."

The mayor's office, citing police estimates, says "several hundred people" will be displaced.

It's unclear where they will go.

The press release notes that new homeless shelters will be opening beginning July 22 with the Hansen Building in East Portland, which will have space for 200 people.

But it fails to mention that the Peace Shelter, in the downtown owned by the Menashe Properties, will be closing the same date; that shelter has space for 267.

Full press release below:

Mayor Charlie Hales today announced that homeless camps along Portland's Springwater Corridor will be cleared and cleaned up, in an effort to address urgent public safety issues and environmental damage in the area.

"We have resisted removing campers from the area because we don't yet have good options for all the people living there," Mayor Hales said. "But public safety and environmental issues have reached a tipping point.

"Through partnerships with social service providers and public safety, we will clear the area humanely and compassionately. Then we will clean the area to restore it to the public park it was intended to be."

From Monday, July 18, to Monday, Aug. 1, social service providers will increase outreach along the corridor, assessing the needs of those camping and connecting as many as possible with available supportive services. Through existing relationships between homeless campers and police officers and social service providers, there will be a particular focus on the most vulnerable people on the trail.

On Friday, July 29, Portland's Springwater Corridor will be formally posted for cleanup. On Monday, Aug. 1, work crews will begin clearing belongings, garbage and biohazards from the trail.

Outreach and cleanup efforts will begin on the East Portland section of the trail, in the Lents and Brentwood-Darlington areas, where the highest-impact camping has been reported. Once the area is cleaned, signs will be posted notifying people that camping is not permitted, and that camps that may appear will be removed.

Police estimate several hundred people will be displaced from the trail.

"We are committed to helping our social service partners connect as many people as possible with short-term shelter options," Mayor Hales said. "But we also have to be realistic: many of these displaced people are going to have to sleep outside.

"For those who have to sleep outside, we will continue to support their need to do so safely. But large, entrenched encampments that we see in the corridor are not acceptable."

Mayor Hales emphasized that this action demonstrates the urgent need to continue to move quickly to expand shelter and permanent housing options for people experiencing homelessness. More than 400 shelter beds will be opening over the next few months, beginning with the Hansen Shelter in East Portland, which is set to open on July 22. The City-County Joint Office of Homeless Services will continue to ensure services are available for those sleeping outside.

Portland City Council unanimously declared a State of Emergency in Housing and Homelessness on Oct. 7, 2015. Since then, the Council has committed half a billion

dollars to affordable housing; has invested in rent assistance to prevent homelessness; has committed tens of millions of dollars to opening homeless shelters and mitigating the livability impacts of homelessness; and has launched several six-month pilot programs, including High-Intensity Street Engagement, Day Storage, One Point of Contact, Sanctioned Camping, Safe Sleep Guidelines, and Amenities, providing toilets, dumpsters and needle disposal containers across the city. For more information, visit the Homelessness Toolkit, portlandoregon.gov/toolkit.

The Portland Mercury

As Springwater Sweep Looms, Mayor Charlie Hales Says Camping Policy "Has Not Succeeded As We Hoped"

*By Dirk VanderHart
July 15, 2016*

Voicing the strongest misgivings we've heard about a comparatively lenient stance on homeless camping he introduced in February, Mayor Charlie Hales formally announced today he's planning to clear out homeless camps along the Springwater Corridor next month.

A press release issued this morning says that social workers will begin giving notice next week that sites along the path will be cleared beginning August 1. That news was first reported by the Oregonian.

"Once the area is cleaned, signs will be posted notifying people that camping is not permitted, and that camps that may appear will be removed," the release says. "Police estimate several hundred people will be displaced from the trail."

The move has been a long time coming. While Hales' office unveiled a controversial "safe-sleep policy" that allowed homeless camping in certain instances months ago, it specifically treated the thorny tangle of camps along the East Portland multi-use trail as a separate issue. The city has been working with a mediation group, Oregon Consensus, and other governments to try to arrive at a strategy for cleaning environmentally sensitive property off the trail. As we've reported, the city has also taken tentative steps toward establishing at least one camp nearby (on contaminated property).

But Hales tells the Mercury that the situation on the trail has worsened to the point the city must act.

"People don't think it's safe to be on a community trail," Hales said this morning. "That's not okay." He added that "camping in large groups tends to allow behavior that's unacceptable. There have been increasing problems, including victimization of some of the people who live there."

The mayor concedes it's unclear where the hundreds of people living along the Springwater will go. Some might find space in a new, 200-person shelter being created at NE Glisan and 122nd, but that's designed to replace shelter space being eliminated downtown.

"Some of those people are going to go to shelter," Hales said. "Some of those folks are going to camp elsewhere, and hopefully do so in a way that has less impact than what we've seen along the Springwater."

Perhaps most striking, the mayor is conceding that his safe-sleep policy—subject of a lawsuit by business and neighborhood interests—hasn't panned out as planned.

"It has not succeeded as we hoped—in part because the problem has overwhelmed the policy," Hales said. "There aren't enough police or park rangers or Clean and Safe officers downtown or Clean and Safe districts in this city."

The mayor says the policy is "still a good idea." And he thinks it's having an effect in parts of the city where homelessness is less concentrated. "Perhaps when the scale of the problem is more manageable we can tune it and make it work as it was intended," he said.

Given that sentiment, just what will happen when hundreds of people are no longer allowed to sleep near the Springwater Corridor is an open question. More basically, though, it's hard to imagine the city will be able to eliminate camping along the path. People have been living there since well before the city enacted a housing and homelessness emergency last fall, and past sweeps have only pushed them down the path.

Hales says much of the effort of keeping homeless campers away will fall to the city's park rangers, but he says the police will be called in when that fails.

Tim Crail, chief of staff to Parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz, tells the Mercury his office is still looking into ranger capacity for that effort, "but generally, yes we expect that rangers will better be able to enforce Parks' policies on the Springwater Corridor once the clean-up occurs."

Commissioner Nick Fish didn't respond to a request for comment. Fish oversees the Bureau of Environmental Services—which controls environmentally sensitive land up and down the trail—and has frequently voiced concern about camps.

It's unclear exactly how many people live along the trail. Willamette Week recently estimated the number could be as high as 500, though that number would be split among many discrete camps if it's accurate, and not all of them would be within Portland city limits.

For an idea of who's living along the trail, check out the results of a recent survey [PDF] carried out by Clackamas County employee (and frequent advocate for the homeless) Vahid Brown.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Chairman floats folding ECPC

By Garrett Andrews

July 19, 2016

Portland's Equitable Contracting and Purchasing Commission came close to dissolution Monday night, before members were able to convince their chairman to try to make the committee work.

Dante James, director of the Office of Equity and Human Rights and chair of the ECPC, had asked commissioners to consider rolling their involvement into the city's Fair Contracting

Forum, a longstanding panel with a mission similar to the ECPC's, though under a different bureau. But after hearing strong opposition from the four commissioners in attendance, James backed off.

"I listened to their comments and concerns, and they were persuasive," he said after the meeting. "I'm here to support them in trying to find the best way to move this workforce, so I'm going to give them all kind of ideas to do that."

The ECPC has experienced a rocky tenure since it started meeting last fall. Founded by ordinance to help the council improve diversity in workforce and contracting on city projects, the committee's monthly meetings have become the regular scene of venting against a perceived lack of buy-in by officials, and missing or incomplete data.

In February, commissioners voted "no confidence" in the city council – a meaningless vote that succeeded in getting an article in the Oregonian, and the attention of City Hall. Mayor Charlie Hales responded by sending key staff to meetings, before attending one himself. He convened a retreat to "hit the reset button," and last month, relocated the nascent board away from the OMF to James' OEHR. The reason, he said, was to provide it a "broader lens" through which to view its work.

But that didn't quite quell the frustration. This month, three ECPC members resigned – Andrew Colas of Colas Construction, Professional Minority Group's Rosa Martinez and Tony Jones of the Metropolitan Contractor Improvement Partnership. (Jones told the DJC he quit primarily because of James' dual role as commission member and bureau head, which he said calls into question James' independence; Martinez and Colas did not return phone calls seeking comment.)

With this drama and dissatisfaction as a backdrop, James on Monday floated an idea for ECPC members to begin attending meetings of the Fair Contracting Forum. He acknowledged the forum's attendance has diminished over the years, but said "that can change next meeting," if ECPC members become involved.

"I guess I'm unclear why this work can't be done by the forum," he said.

James' suggestion was met with forceful pushback from ECPC members. All four said they've attended FCF meetings in the past – one as a member – and all spoke negatively about their experiences.

ECPC commissioner Michael Burch said, "I don't know anyone in any of the circles I run in that has a very high opinion of it."

Commissioner Marcela Alcantar said that though it's not perfect, the ECPC represents a step forward.

"All these years we've been singing the same song. And after all these years, the data hasn't changed. But I think that the dynamic of this group – the asking the tough questions – has made a difference," she said.

James asked commissioners for suggestions for filling the three empty seats. The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing an upcoming presentation to city council.

“I think he recognized the error in his proposition,” Burch said following the meeting. “That Fair Contracting (Forum) has been around for 20 years with very little, if anything, to show for it in terms of results. And he says he’s all about results.”

Ultimately, if the ECPC is dissolved, it would come by way of a council vote.

“I guess it’s too soon to ask you to trust me that I can make a difference,” James said. “I was going to be pretty adamant about pushing this idea, but the more I listen to you, the more I appreciate and hear what you’re saying.”

ECPC commissioners have requested an hour-long hearing at the Aug. 10 city council meeting.

Blog: Portland’s new comp plan

By Brian Campbell

July 18, 2016

Last month the City of Portland did something it hasn’t done in 36 years – it adopted a new Comprehensive Plan.

For the ordinary citizen who doesn’t pay attention to the planning world, this may seem like a minor event. But every Portland resident should be aware of what this document says about the future direction of our city. It will guide how the city grows for the next 20 years, including how our neighborhoods are developed, where public improvements will be made, and much more.

The most important aspect of this new plan is its emphasis on outcomes for the city’s residents rather than just the usual focus on land use, transportation, the environment, etc.

The plan essentially works toward a “vision” statement – “Portland is a prosperous, healthy, equitable and resilient city where everyone has access to opportunity and is engaged in shaping decisions that affect their lives” – using the five specific “guiding principles” of economic prosperity, human health, environmental health, equity and resilience.

The advantage of this structure is that it makes very clear what kind of future the people of the city can expect as the plan is implemented. There are many more goals, policies, maps and projects that flesh out how the city intends to achieve the vision, to say nothing of the other plans (the Central City Plan for instance), codes and ordinances that will be developed over the next year or two to help implement the plan.

Even with all of that, however, there are still major questions about aspects of the city’s future – from long-range planning to major transportation initiatives to handle growth – that will need to be part of an ongoing discussion in the coming years.