

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler ‘Fully Supports’ Studying Passenger Ferry for Columbia, Willamette Rivers

*By Andrew Theen
November 27, 2018*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler wants to contribute city money to study bringing passenger ferries to the Willamette and Columbia rivers and shuttling commuters between Oregon and Washington.

Michael Cox, Wheeler’s chief of staff, made the announcement Tuesday at a news conference aboard the Portland Spirit.

Backers of the up-start project, which they are calling the Frog Ferry, organized the event aboard the river cruise ship to drum up support and put pressure on public agencies to help pay for an in-depth study.

Susan Bladholm, president and founder of the nonprofit Friends of Frog Ferry organization, said she has asked Portland, Vancouver, the Oregon Department of Transportation and TriMet to help pay for the study.

“If the studies don’t bear out,” Bladholm said, “then we’re not going to go ahead and implement this.”

But the former marketing leader for Erickson Incorporated, the Portland-based aviation giant, said after spending the past 18 months diving into the issue, she has no doubt a ferry makes sense between Portland and Vancouver.

“This is more than doable,” she said. “This is way past time.”

Many questions remain unanswered – such as how much money it would cost to build terminals, docks and buy boats. But Bladholm said it’s time to act now.

“We can go ahead and play around with this for the next decade or the next 50 years,” she said, “but when we do have the ability to pull this together rather quickly to provide a new transit mode for our locals, let’s do it, especially when we have so much private sector support backing us.”

She said Portland could have a ferry system running between the Port of Vancouver’s Terminal 1 west of the Interstate Bridge to downtown Portland in four years. A one-way trip could take 38 minutes, she said, adding that’s a conservative estimate. Bladholm said the ferry service, which would require a public subsidy, would be scaled up to include other stops in Portland, Lake Oswego or Oregon City.

The news conference came one week after Bladholm and Portland Spirit owner Dan Yates lobbied the state’s top transportation decisionmakers for money for the study, which Bladholm estimated may cost \$625,000. She has private sector support, she said.

Cox said Wheeler “fully supports” funding a portion of the study, adding the Willamette River could be one of the city’s “true resources” to bring everyone together. “Portlanders want a vibrant waterfront,” Cox said, “and the mayor does too. Ferry service serves both of these needs, transit and water access.”

But it's unclear how much money Portland would be asked to contribute and where that money would come from. Wheeler would also need a majority of the City Council's support, and discussions could pick up during budget talks this spring.

Cox said the mayor's office was excited to "lead a conversation with other jurisdictions to get all the money on the table," adding that conversation is moving forward "with some urgency and some excitement."

TriMet confirmed the ferry supporters had asked for financial help.

Chad Eiken, Vancouver's director of community and economic development, said in a voicemail that city officials met with Frog Ferry representatives several weeks ago. "We didn't make any commitments," Eiken said, but he added the city was "obviously supportive of their efforts," but he said it was early and Vancouver was waiting to see that it's "in fact a real project."

Bladholm said backers are hoping Clark County planners include the ferry project on Southwest Washington's long-range transportation project list, which is expected to be approved in mid-December.

Meanwhile, Tuesday's gathering occurred with the empty Willamette River as a canvas behind it.

Yates, the Portland Spirit owner, said that sadly is an everyday occurrence, unlike freeways and roads, "which are full."

After Industry Pressure, Portland May Pare Back Tax on Big Trucks

*By Gordon Friedman
November 27, 2018*

Portland's City Council is poised to water down its tax on big trucks, a step that would bow to industry pressure and buck elected leaders' promise to voters to ensure truckers pay their share for road upkeep.

As part of a successful campaign to win voter approval of a local gas tax, city leaders including then-mayoral candidate Ted Wheeler pledged to give truck drivers a share of the bill for roads.

They settled on collecting \$10 million over four years from operators of heavy trucks who use city streets, with the tax rate to be adjusted each year to ensure the full total was collected.

But Portland Bureau of Transportation officials now say the tax, called the Heavy Vehicle Use Tax, will not meet that target, in part because so many truck drivers got out of paying it. At the current tax rate, the city would collect about \$8 million, officials say.

Rather than raise the tax rate for the final two years of the tax's four year lifespan, transportation staffers want city commissioners to delete the \$10 million goal from city law. A City Council vote to do that is scheduled for Wednesday.

The tax works by tacking a 2.5 percent city surcharge onto a state tax truckers pay. Money it generates funds road upgrades in Portland, with a focus on projects that improve safety and benefit truckers. For example, the tax paid to repave parts of North Columbia Boulevard, a road often used by freight trucks.

The city council adopted the tax in 2016 as a way to level the playing field between trucks and cars after voters approved a 10-cent city gas tax, which truckers generally do not pay because diesel fuel is exempt.

At the time, the mayor, city commissioners and Wheeler signed a voters pamphlet statement promoting the gas tax. They highlighted that a yes vote would require the city to study “how to get heavy trucks to pay their fair share.”

City council members also made clear their intention to raise \$10 million via the heavy truck tax. The city law that created it says officials “will adjust” the tax rate every year to meet the \$10 million goal. But they have not done that.

Explaining the decision to not exercise that power, city revenue chief Thomas Lannom said the rate would have to be increased 60 percent to meet the target. Revenue collection fell far behind projections, he said, because officials worked with “imperfect information and had to make assumptions.”

Far more truckers than anticipated got out of paying the tax by submitting paperwork to show that, although their business operates in Portland, their trucks rarely use city-owned streets, he said.

The city also had only 682 eligible trucking businesses to tax rather than the more than 2,500 as projected, said Bureau of Transportation spokesman Dylan Rivera. The problem was only discovered this summer, Rivera said, because it took that long to finish collections for the 2016 tax year.

City officials also faced industry pressure not to raise the tax rate to collect all \$10 million. In September a city committee of freight industry representatives voted unanimously to do away with the \$10 million goal. (Another city panel overseeing spending of the tax said it found the truckers’ arguments “less than convincing” but nevertheless agreed the city should keep the tax rate as is.)

Truckers generally view the city tax as cumbersome and unfair, said Jana Jarvis, president of the Oregon Trucking Associations. She said it’s right for Portland to axe the revenue goal because the city will get additional money for transportation from the state owing to an infrastructure bill passed last year.

“Our perspective has been, ‘Let this thing die its death and move on,’” Jarvis said of the city tax.

The council had scheduled the same vote last month but did not go through with it after Commissioner Amanda Fritz criticized the idea. Fritz raised concerns about paring back the tax after a phone call from Steve Novick, a former Portland commissioner who headed the Bureau of Transportation.

Novick, the architect of the truck tax, had been alerted to the vote by a reporter for The Oregonian/OregonLive who was seeking comment. Fritz’s chief of staff, Tim Crail, said the vote to scale back the tax was “sailing through” prior to Novick’s call alerting Fritz.

“Council members signed a letter saying the trucks would pay their fair share. ... That was basically a promise to the voters,” Fritz said during that October meeting. “I think this is something we need to be very careful about.”

Fritz told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Tuesday that the city should uphold its commitment to voters.

“What we should be doing is adjusting the rate” to meet the \$10 million goal, Fritz said, “not doing away with the target.”

Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who until September was commissioner-in-charge for the Transportation Bureau, said Monday he believes bureau officials have “solid reasons for doing what they’re doing.”

But he cautioned that gutting the truck tax could backfire when the city asks voters to renew the gas tax in 2020 because voters could perceive it as unfair.

“This could be an action that would come back to haunt us,” he said.

The Portland Tribune

Montavilla Residents Raise Livability Issues at Town Hall

*By Zane Sparling
November 28, 2018*

Mayor Ted Wheeler, Commissioner Amanda Fritz attend town hall at Portland Community College.

Folks fed up with crime and lessened livability crashed a recent town hall — bringing their concerns directly to the mayor and other Portland officials.

The Montavilla Initiative made headlines in September after they unfurled banners proclaiming "Enough is Enough" on an Interstate 205 overpass.

These protesters are still upset, but they weren't carrying signs, banners or wearing masks during a recent legislative town hall held at Portland Community College's southeast campus, 2305 S.E. 82nd Ave., on Tuesday, Nov. 27.

"We've seen a lot of changes, and the changes that are happening now are not so good," explained Julie McConnell, a member of the Montavilla group who has lived in her home near Montavilla Park for 33 years.

"I'd like to see more police, and I'd like to see the police empowered to enforce the law," she said.

McConnell says local anti-littering laws aren't being enforced in her neck of the woods.

Maria Sworske owns two duplexes on 81st Avenue, just north of the Halsey Street overpass on Interstate 84 in the Madison South neighborhood. It's a spot where tents and other signs of homeless encampments frequently appear.

"Every time there are people camping there, crime increases in the neighborhood," she said.

Sworske says the no trespassing signs she's posted on her properties aren't working, and says her tenants are becoming worried.

The legislative town hall is designed so regular citizens can bring their concerns to local lawmakers preparing for the trip to the statehouse in Salem. Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Amanda Fritz sat in the audience while legislators such as Sen. Michael Dembrow and Rep. Diego Hernandez sat at the dais.

The Montavilla Initiative's chairwoman, Angela Todd, says the group wants the laws already on the books to be enforced "regardless of people's housing status."

They also want the Oregon Legislature to erase a loophole in state law that allows car thieves to avoid serious charges, as long as they remember to tell police they didn't know the car was stolen.

"I've talked to countless minorities and refugees," added Benjamin Kerensa, "they're being victimized by people who are service resistant, who are committing thefts to support their drug habits."

Mayor Ted Wheeler pledged to listen to the concerns of those in attendance regarding trash, stray needles and graffiti.

"This is something that is very important to me. My administration is addressing this with a sense of purpose and a sense of urgency," he said. "This is why we're going full bore on getting people off the streets."

Sources: Parasite Again Found in Bull Run Water Supply

By Jim Redden

November 27, 2018

Plus, e-scooter pilot project data is being studied and an interactive map of the energy efficiency of commercial buildings in Portland is now online.

Cryptosporidium was found in Bull Run water again, the Portland Water Bureau announced last week. Bureau officials insist the water is still safe to drink, although they advise people with compromised immune systems to consult their doctors.

Crypto, as it is commonly called, is a potential disease-causing organism found in animal feces. Only some strains are harmful to humans, and they are not believed to be widely present in the Bull Run Watershed, the primary source of water for much of the Portland region.

The City Council has approved the construction of a filtration plant to remove crypto and other contaminants from Bull Run water by 2027.

You can track the PWB's test results at: portlandoregon.gov/water/article/628763.

E-scooter data being studied

The Portland Bureau of Transportation ended its e-scooter pilot program on Nov. 21 and is now studying the results before deciding whether to allow the small, motorized vehicles to return to city streets.

According to PBOT, 698,880 e-scooter trips were taken between July 25 and Nov. 20. The total distance ridden was 801,887.8 miles and the average length was 1.2 miles. The total number of scooters in service was 2,049.

The City Council authorized the pilot program to learn whether e-scooters could reduce congestion and emissions caused by motor vehicles.

Despite the popularity of the e-scooters, many riders disregarded laws such as not traveling on sidewalks or in parks, and always wearing helmets.

Building energy use map online

The public now can compare the energy efficiency of 800 commercial buildings in the city on an interactive map posted on the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's website.

The map was created using information required by the City Council in 2015 to be reported on buildings that are 20,000 square feet or larger. Buildings are the single largest contributor to carbon emissions in Multnomah County, and reducing their emissions is critical to Portland achieving its climate action goals.

The map shows the location and types of buildings, but not the names of the businesses in them. The same information also can be viewed in a sortable spreadsheet.

You can find the map and learn more at: portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/704047.

Lead Danger Still Lurking in Portland Water, Experts Say

By Shasta Kearns Moore
November 27, 2018

Some say Portland Public Schools' plans to mitigate lead contamination in drinking water don't go far enough.

A trio of water quality experts consulted by the Portland Tribune are not impressed with Portland Public Schools' plan to mitigate lead in drinking water sources.

In fact, they say, unborn babies, infants and young children are still at significant risk of lead poisoning in the city — and not just at its aging schools.

That is mostly because the pristine Bull Run water that supplies our system is great at pulling lead out of old plumbing.

Portland Water Bureau is working to implement an Improved Corrosion Control Plan by 2022, but meanwhile high lead levels are still found in too many households and schools.

After citywide outrage, PPS took all of its water sources offline in mid-2016 and has been slowly reopening them in recent months — after testing to make sure the water has less than 15 parts per billion of lead.

Even so, several drinking water sources still marked high amounts of lead even after the district replaced the fixtures. John Burnham, the school district's interim senior director of Health and Safety, said the next step on those still-offline taps will probably be to replace the pipes in the wall to try to eliminate the source of lead.

Lead-free advocates say the issue is far more complicated and dangerous than that: The taps considered safe may not be and the danger may come from the water itself.

Paul Schwartz, who has worked on water quality issues for 40 years, is now with the Campaign for Lead-Free Water. Schwartz said that lead releases can be random. Say a big truck rumbles by and shakes a tiny speck of leaded solder loose, he said. Then a tap considered safe could suddenly deposit a particle of lead in a child's body.

"You could test 20 taps in the school today," Schwartz said. "If you tested those 20 taps in a day, a week, or a month, they could all be different, either higher or lower."

Schwartz advised against exhaustive and expensive testing and retesting. But he said the school system doesn't need to spend a busload of money replacing all of its aging plumbing either. Schwartz said a good solution would be to set up drinking water stations in each school — either bottled water or bottle-filling stations with certified lead-free filters — then clearly mark all other sources as non-potable.

PPS has tried lead filters before — during the 2016 discovery of lead in school drinking water, some of them were found missing, uninstalled or out-of-date and critics said they weren't the right type anyway.

Marc Edwards, a civil engineer at Virginia Tech University, was more supportive of PPS' approach. Edwards said it made sense to test and remediate, though he agreed that lead releases could be random.

But he did not mince words when it came to the Portland Water Bureau, laying the blame for high lead levels in the city — not just in schools — squarely on their shoulders.

"They have been breaking federal corrosion control law forever," Edwards said. "How they get away with it, it's a mystery to everyone."

Jaymee Cuti, a spokeswoman with the Portland Water Bureau, said Portland is following the law, just in its own way. The city is unique in the nation for having never used lead service lines. Any lead in the system is from plumbing on a building's premises in Portland, not from water bureau-owned lines. So, the bureau successfully argued to the federal government that lead paint and soils were a higher contamination risk than water, and funds several education and mitigation efforts for paint and soil.

Portland Public Schools, for example, has used water bureau funding to paint over flaking lead paint.

The water bureau also offers free lead tests for its water customers. Cuti said "it is extremely rare to find elevated levels of lead in water from fixtures after 1985. Even when fixtures contribute to lead in water, there have not been any cases of lead poisoning where lead in water has been identified as the main source of exposure."

No safe level

But if lead releases can be random and if lead can be stored in the body and released years later, as Schwartz argues, it's possible that we will never know the true impact of lead in water. That's why the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency set guidance that 15 parts per billion is a water system's "action level" for lead. Systems must notify customers of the exceedance and take steps to lower the corrosivity of its water.

However, the EPA failed to adopt a health-based standard for safe levels of lead concentration in the water.

"It's total chaos," Edwards said. "Frankly, it would be nice to have a standard because each school system is having to invent (one)."

Under the 1991 Lead and Copper Rule, American water systems have to test a small sample of older households for lead. If more than 10 percent of the sampled houses come back with higher than 15 parts per billion of lead, the water system is out of compliance with the rule.

The Portland Water Bureau has been out of compliance 12 times since the rule began, most recently in January.

In contrast, Eugene's water has never blown the federal action limit. Its concentrations have generally improved, from a high of 14.5 parts per billion in 1992 to a low of 3 parts per billion in 2015.

Dr. Bruce Lanphear, on the faculty at Canada's Simon Fraser University, said PPS and the Portland Water Bureau need to do better.

Lanphear said the health standard should be 5 parts per billion — and that only because it's currently infeasible to get much lower than that. He added that it should not be up to the school system alone to come up with the extra money to mitigate lead hazards.

"I'm sure that is not politically convenient, but safe water is at least important as having good medical facilities," Lanphear said, adding: "Safe lead levels in water is not really a debate. The science is clear: The EPA, the (Centers for Disease Control) and (the World Health Organization) say there is no safe level of lead children's blood. Thus, there is no safe level of lead in the water they drink."

Test your water

The Portland Water Bureau urges all of its customers to order a free lead-in-water test kit to test water at their tap from the Leadline at 503-988-4000 or www.leadline.org.

Metro Housing Bond Funds on Portland's Horizon

By Jim Redden

November 27, 2018

Portland likely to get lion's share of Metro cash for affordable units because it will easily contribute the largest amount.

Portland is on track to receive the largest share of the \$653 million affordable housing bond approved by Metro voters at the Nov. 6 general election, depending on how the money is distributed to the four cities that are eligible to receive it — Portland, Beaverton, Gresham and Hillsboro.

That should not be a surprise. Portland is the largest city, has the most assessed property value, and has the most people struggling to pay housing costs of any government within the elected regional government's jurisdiction. Exactly how much bigger Portland is than everyone else is still eye-opening, however.

Put simply, the bond will be paid by a tax on assessed property values, and Portland has nearly 38 percent of the assessed value within Metro's boundaries, which includes the urbanized portions of Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties. That's far more than anyone else.

In fact, Portland's share is 5 percentage points larger than the urbanized portions of Washington County, 16 percentage points larger than the urbanized portions of Clackamas County, and 30 percentage points larger than the remainder of Multnomah County — including Gresham.

This is important because discussions currently are underway about how to distribute the bond funds to the seven jurisdictions that are eligible to receive them. Metro officials already have promised to return the money to the three counties in proportion to their shares of the assessed value within its jurisdiction, minus up to 15 percent for administration and land purchases along transit lines.

Under that arrangement, Multnomah County will receive the largest share of the funds, approximately 45 percent. Washington County will follow with about 33 percent, and Clackamas County will receive around 21 percent.

In exchange, the housing authorities in each county are expected to pledge to produce an equivalent share of the 3,900 affordable housing units expected to be supported by the bond. For Multnomah County, that will be approximately 1,755 units. It will be about 1,287 in Washington County and around 819 in Clackamas County, which has no eligible cities.

But now, the housing authorities that serve Multnomah and Washington counties must decide how much of the money will go to the four cities. The cities are eligible to receive the funds because they qualify for U.S. Housing and Urban Development block grants.

"Metro will be working with the partners in each county, but we'll also be letting them collectively decide what's the best distribution method to meet the needs of their county," says Jes Larson, Metro's regional affairs manager.

Although no final decision has yet been made, Home Forward, the nonprofit housing authority that serves Multnomah County, has tentatively decided it will not actually redistribute the funds to Portland, Gresham and the balance of the county. Instead, it will help decide how the money should be distributed to them by Metro.

"Currently Home Forward, the public housing authority serving Multnomah County, will not be distributing funding from the Metro affordable housing bond. Metro will be working with the jurisdictions in the region we serve, the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and the City of Gresham, to figure out how the funds will be distributed," says Tim Collier, Home Forward's communications director.

If Metro distributes the funds based on assessed values, Portland would receive around \$211 million for affordable housing projects. Gresham, which only has about 5 percent of Metro's assessed value, would receive around \$28 million. The balance of Multnomah County, with only 3 percent of the assessed value, would receive about \$17 million.

After Portland, the next largest amount distributed in the region, \$116 million, would go to Clackamas County, which is not required to split it with any of its cities. Its housing authority is the county commission.

After that, the same amount would go to the Washington County Commission, which is that county's housing authority. If the commission follows Metro's model, It also would receive around \$116 million. Hillsboro, with 7 percent of the assessed value, would receive around \$39 million. Beaverton, with about 6 percent of the assessed value, would receive around \$33 million.

Distribution not yet final

Metro officials are quick to point out that none of these distribution decisions are final. According to the schedule released by Metro on Nov. 15, work plans currently are being written that will detail exactly how much revenue each jurisdiction is entitled to receive and precisely how many housing units are expected to be produced with it.

The Metro Council has set its first work session on the plans for Dec. 11, and the plans are expected to be adopted in late January.

Portland also could benefit by a provision in the bond measure that allows Metro to spend up to 10 percent of the funds to purchase land along transit lines for affordable housing projects.

Metro and Portland officials have promised to build such projects along the planned Southwest Corridor MAX line to help lower-income residents expected to be displaced by the resulting housing cost increases.

More will be learned about Portland's plans for the funds on Dec. 3. That is when the Oversight Committee currently supervising the spending of the city's previously approved \$258 million affordable housing bond will meet next. Those funds are being spent by the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB), which also will receive and spend the Metro bond funds.

There is no prohibition against PHB combining the city and Metro bond funds, creating a single pot of money for future projects. The City Council has only approved four projects to date, leaving the majority of the city's bond funds unspent.

Part of the delay is because city officials wanted to see whether voters would approve an amendment to the Oregon Constitution at the Nov. 6 general election allowing private businesses to partner on bond-funded affordable housing projects, the traditional funding arrangement that creates more units than otherwise.

That measure passed, increasing the number of units expected to be funded by the Metro bond from 2,400 to 3,900. The effect on Portland bond funds will be discussed at the Dec. 3 oversight committee meeting.

Early projects being planned now

The first projects to be funded by the Metro affordable housing bond are not expected to be announced until next spring, at the earliest. But one of the first could happen on a vacant lot near Beaverton High School. That is where REACH Development, an affordable housing provider, has been planning a 50-unit apartment building at Main Street and Second Avenue for several months.

The exact cost of the project has yet to be determined. But another affordable housing developer, Community Partners for Affordable Housing, completed a 47-unit project just a few blocks away in 2015 for \$10.6 million.

Even if everything goes smoothly, construction on the REACH project is not expected to begin until 2020, at the soonest — a reminder of how long it takes to get such projects financed, approved and started.

Two other potential projects outside Portland also are known to be in the works. One is a transit-oriented development on land Metro owns near the Elmonica MAX station at 170th Avenue and Baseline Road. The other is the redevelopment of an existing Clackamas County affordable housing development in Oregon City.

The bond funds also can be used to purchase and rehabilitate existing units, however. That means some housing could be saved or made available to low-income residents in the region sooner.

The advocacy group Housing Oregon has identified 26 potential locations through its affiliated organizations. The organization declined to release the list to the Portland Tribune, however, saying some of the properties haven't been purchased yet.

The bond will cost property owners 24 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed value. That amounts to \$60 a year for the owner of a home with an average assessed value of \$250,000. Assessed values are lower than real values.

Steel Bridge a 'Chokepoint' For 40-Minute Ferry Service

By Zane Sparling
November 27, 2018

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler wants to fund Susan Bladholm's Frog Ferry boat to Vancouver, Washington.

The low-slung Steel Bridge — and the looming possibility of bridge lifts — could be the snag in an ambitious plan to transform the city's main waterway into a new transit corridor.

The proposed Frog Ferry could move roughly 150 people and their bicycles (but no cars) between downtown Portland and Vancouver, Washington in about 38 minutes when traveling against the tide of the Willamette River, according to founder Susan Bladholm.

"Do we think we can beat that time? Probably, we're trying to be conservative," she said during a Tuesday, Nov. 27 news conference onboard the Portland Spirit. "This is a point of being curious. Let's learn more. Rather than saying it's too hard or it's too expensive, let's equip ourselves with facts and data."

There would be a cup of joe available for morning commuters — and a bar stocked with microbrews for nightlife revelers traveling between docks at the Salmon Street Springs and the Port of Vancouver's Terminal 1, which is adjacent to the Interstate 5 bridge and a new waterfront development. Some people have even asked Bladholm if they can bring yoga mats.

But only a single-deck boat would be able to shimmy under the 100-year-old Steel Bridge during every season without snarling auto traffic, and the Frog Ferry group has not yet released exact specifications for its proposed starter fleet.

"It is possible to design a vessel that will not require the Steel Bridge to lift, which is the primary choke point on the Willamette going north," affirmed Dan Yates, owner of the Portland Spirit and several other sight-seeing cruise lines.

"I think it's absolutely critical... utilizing this great right of way, which currently there's not a single boat on, unlike the roads, which are full," he said.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler is ready to shoulder that weight, apparently, promising via an emissary that the city will chip in its share of the \$650,000 needed to fund the five feasibility studies required to qualify for a federal subsidy. Mayoral chief of staff Michael Cox says they "have not identified a specific dollar amount or pool of funds."

Other funding requests are going out to Metro, the state legislature, the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Portland Bureau of Transportation and the city of Vancouver.

Bladholm said Frog Ferry "1.0" would only include two stops, but she can envision future stations on Portland's east side, Milwaukie, Lake Oswego, Troutdale and the locks at West Linn. Boats can be added like buses, she noted, but the starter fleet would probably be three ships with only two in operation at a time.

"If the studies don't bear out, then we're not going to go ahead and implement this," Bladholm said.

Charlene Zidell, a scion of the shipbuilding family that seeks to redevelop 33 acres in Portland's South Waterfront, is an enthusiastic supporter of the ferry service. She hopes the river can be used as a museum, noting that the Willamette was designated one of 14 heritage rivers across the U.S. in 1997.

Daimler Trucks employs 3,000 people in its office building complex on Swan Island, but has to offer bus passes, van carpools and help planning bicycle routes to entice workers to the area.

Daimler real estate manager Matt Markstaller says his commute to West Linn can take an hour by car, but drops to just 30 minutes when he rides a Ski-Doo to work in the summer.

"I've got some tug boats and geese and rowing shells in the morning, and some recreational boaters in the afternoon," he said, "but while the roads and the rails are full, the river simply has a lot of capacity."

Frog Ferry continues to study ticket prices for the public-private service, and says there are no plans to add car ferries in the area.

Willamette Week

Portland Police Struggle at Clearing Rape Cases

By Katie Shepherd
November 28, 2018

National statistics show Portland's rate of clearing sexual assaults ranks well below the national average.

The percentage of rape cases Portland police marked as "cleared" in 2016 was the eighth-lowest in the United States among 64 cities with a population of more than 300,000, according to data [made public this month by ProPublica](#).

The Portland Police Bureau received 396 reports of rape in 2016, the most recent year available for study. They "cleared" just 53 of those cases—or 13 percent—meaning they identified a suspect and had sufficient evidence to make an arrest. Just 25 cases, or 6 percent, resulted in arrests.

Portland police spokesman Sgt. Chris Burley says the bureau uses a "victim-centered" approach to solving rape cases, so the bureau will often delay or suspend investigations until a victim wants to cooperate with police. He also says PPB does not declare cases cleared if officers cannot solve them—a tactic some departments use.

The bureau still has a long way to go to catch up to national leaders like Suffolk County Police Department in New York, which made arrests in 81 percent of the rapes reported in 2016.

The Portland Mercury

NW Neighbors Appeal City's Planned Affordable Housing Project Because It's Ugly

By Blair Stenvick
November 27, 2018

The Portland City Council will hear an appeal to an approved affordable housing development in Northwest Portland on Thursday. A neighborhood organization is complaining that the new project will not fit in with the area's aesthetics.

In September, the Portland's Historic Landmarks Commission approved a plan to transform the old Buck-Prager building on NW Hoyt into a 148-unit affordable housing complex.

Last month, the Northwest District Association (NWDA) filed an appeal to the city council claiming that the plan did not meet several planning guidelines put forth by the Historic Alphabet District. Buck-Prager is listed as on the National Register of Historic Places (it was built in 1918 and first used as a maternity ward), NWDA stated that the additions will not “retain historic materials” or be effective at “blending into the neighborhood.”

“Identity of the Historic Alphabet District [is] not reinforced when a unique and distinct urban character area is disrupted by placing incompatibly large new development in the middle of a nearly intact cluster of late 19th century houses,” the appeal reads.

NWDA’s complaint also points out that the commission did not include language requiring the development be affordable—though the plan did come from local nonprofit developer Northwest Housing Alternatives, which specializes in affordable housing.

The city council will consider NWDA’s appeal, as well as another appeal from Portland attorney Tony Schwartz that cites similar complaints, at 2 pm Thursday.

OPB

Backers Of Vancouver-Portland Ferry Looking For Financial Support

*By Molly Solomon
November 27, 2018*

Backers of a new project are making a bold pitch to Portland metro drivers: Leave your car at home and consider a commute by ferry.

The vision from the group Frog Ferry is for passenger ferries to run along the Columbia and Willamette rivers, carrying up to 149 passengers daily from Vancouver’s Terminal 1 to downtown Portland.

“We are truly looking at new transportation options,” said Susan Bladholm, president and founder of the nonprofit Friends of Frog Ferry.

Bladholm spoke to reporters Tuesday morning in front of the Willamette River and the Tilikum Crossing bridge to drum up support for the project. The organization is looking for money from public agencies and private donors to begin a series of feasibility studies.

“This is more than doable,” she said. “This is way past time.”

The ferry project already has one notable backer: Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. His chief of staff Michael Cox announced the mayor’s full support in using city dollars to fund a portion of the study.

“We know we’ll have to find funding,” Cox said. “The city is willing to step up and do our part and lead a conversation with other jurisdictions to get all the money on the table.”

It’s unclear how much the city of Portland would contribute to the \$650,000 feasibility study.

The Frog Ferry project is still in the early stages and will need significant financial support to progress. Bladholm says five feasibility studies and a financial plan are expected to cost \$1.3 million.

It's unclear how much the ferry service would alleviate congestion for Clark County commuters, but organizers estimate a single ferry would take 500 cars off the Interstate 5 bridge. According to the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, more than 135,000 cars cross the I-5 bridge daily.

Bladholm says she has reached out to city officials and state agencies in southwest Washington and has put in funding requests to the city of Vancouver, the Port of Vancouver and CTRAN, the second largest transit system in the region.

Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle said she wasn't invited to Tuesday's event but has had at least one meeting with organizers from Frog Ferry.

"The council does not have it in our strategic plan, it's not in our transportation plan, and it's not in our city budget," McEnerny-Ogle told OPB, explaining that Vancouver has made no financial commitments to the project.

"But we look forward to seeing how it progresses in Portland and having that conversation in the future."

Tuesday's event did include one person from southwest Washington, Port of Vancouver economic development manager Jim Hagar.

The port's Terminal 1 property is currently undergoing its own transformation, alongside the city of Vancouver's recently opened waterfront project. Port leaders plan to open a public market, a hotel and additional office and retail space. Organizers say the river ferry service could also serve as an alternative route for tourists visiting Vancouver's new waterfront.

But if the project does move forward, Hagar said there would need to be adjustments to the dock at Terminal 1 and more parking would need to be built.

"We don't know where this is going, but we're supportive of the concept," Hagar said.

If the money can be found, organizers say ferry service could start as soon as 2022.