

Portland Tribune

ODOT to pay Portland for homeless camp clean-ups

By Zane Spalding

December 22, 2018

A new clean-up contract will task Portland — not the state department of transportation — with sweeping up homeless camps built on the grassy slopes of bustling freeways or nestled among the trees of pedal and pedestrian paths.

The Oregon Department of Transportation will hand the reins to city cleaners at the start of the New Year, with a six-month-long phase-in that will gradually place interstates 405, 205, 84 and 5 under city jurisdiction, as well as several state highways.

"Our ODOT team looks forward to working with the city on providing a smooth transition period," said Ted Miller, a maintenance and operations manager for the state agency.

Officials say the interlocking layers of turf have long proved perplexing to locals, who deluged City Hall and police with complaints that only state authorities could answer. Others chafed at ODOT's clean-up style, which followed a set schedule and didn't include connecting campers with resources.

Terms of the intergovernmental agreement approved Wednesday, Dec. 19 by the City Council include:

- City workers will post notices at camps warning of a clean-up within the next 48 hours to 10 days. ODOT previously used a 10 to 19 day timeframe, while the city's old warning stretched for a week.
- By the end of the phase-in process, Portland will be responsible for cleaning up camps on the I-405 corridor, I-205 corridor and multi-use path, Southeast 82nd Avenue, westbound Highway 26, I-84, Highway 30, Highway 99-E/Southeast McLoughlin Boulevard and I-5.
- Those wishing to report homeless camps within the city's service area should use the form at portlandoregon.gov/campsites, by visiting pdxreporter.org or by calling 503-823-4000.

ODOT will reimburse the city for removing "personal property and trash associated with homeless camps" by an amount not to exceed \$2 million yearly, according to the Mayor's office. The Oregon Legislature passed a bill in 2018 that allowed the two parties to work together.

"We will continue to work with the city to ensure this partnership leads to improved coordination," said Miller, "a higher level of consistency and improved livability for the community and our houseless individuals in need."

[Critics](#) often claim that homeless encampments near homes, schools and parks aren't cleared quickly, especially in East Portland. Advocates for the unhoused argue that sweeps only push the problem around when there simply isn't enough shelter space to bridge the gap.

Willamette Week

The Dialogue: What Readers Think About a Plan to Use Tourism Tax Dollars to House the Homeless

"This plan won't solve the homelessness crisis, but it will alleviate suffering."

*By WW Staff
December 26, 2018*

A couple of weeks ago, WW wrote about a new tax deal, championed by Multnomah County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury, to use \$5.25 million a year from rental car and hotel room taxes to fund the Joint Office of Homeless Services (["Checking In," WW, Dec. 12, 2018](#)). Currently, the tourism tax dollars fund an expansion at the Oregon Convention Center and marketing at Travel Portland. Here's what readers think about spending some instead on housing the homeless.

Rekni McGuire, via Facebook: "As a business traveler, I love this idea."

Penny Woods, via Facebook: "What a concept. Utilizing revenue for community needs, not corporate profits."

David Barwick, via Facebook: "This is the cost of being a sanctuary city. Pay for your own homeless. Don't tax strangers that come from a state that cooperates with law enforcement."

Adrien Thebo, in response: "Being a sanctuary city has nothing to do with homelessness. Many of the homeless are displaced Portlanders that lost their houses due to financial disaster, others struggle with mental health."

Kevin Moore, via Facebook: "This plan won't solve the homelessness crisis, but it will alleviate suffering."

Twilight of the Streetcars

Hey, Marty: The last streetcar was in January 1958 [Dr. Know, WW, Dec. 12, 2018].

As a child, after coming to Portland in August 1955, I was privileged to ride the Oregon City Portland Traction Company line part of Rose City Transit that failed to pay its graft or fees in 1957 during the construction of the temporary east-end ramp for the Hawthorne Bridge (which was replaced some 40 years later). Thus, the curved section was not laid, so the line would approach the bridge but not cross it. I was privileged to remember a very scenic ride (one of many) from 96th and Flavel in December 1955 at age 4, when my mother, paying a thin, silver dime, would take my little brother and me to Meier & Frank (now the closed Macy's) to see Santa Claus. It was snowing! The conductor wore a duck-billed hat, shined. He also had a big, white-haired handlebar mustache and a smile from ear to ear. It was an open-air car, but all were bundled for the cold ride to town. For my 4-year-old mind, it was magic. For my mother, it was a connection to her childhood growing up in Tacoma with streetcars before they disappeared at the end of WWII. She went crazy that year of 1958. Or, at least, it was the first of her many bipolar episodes.

This is no hallucination, as it really happened before I even knew of LSD.

-Wesley Ellis | Southeast Portland

Marty Smith responds: *Thanks for writing. According to my sources, city streetcar service proper ended on Feb. 26, 1950. However, interurban rail service, a slightly different thing, did continue until 1958. I grant the distinction may not have been obvious to contemporaneous riders, especially since, in the early days at least, trips to such exotic destinations as Albina and Sellwood counted as "interurban."*

At any rate, it does seem most folks consider the end of electrified passenger rail writ large to be a more significant event than the end of streetcar service itself. Thus, you're probably right I shouldn't have tried to make such a hair-splitting distinction in a 350-word column. Derp on me.