

## **The Oregonian**

# **Editorial: Earthquake Warning Signs Provide Portlanders Basic Safety Information**

*By The Oregonian Editorial board  
January 22, 2019*

Last fall, the Portland City Council passed an ordinance requiring warning signs on about 1,600 brick buildings likely to collapse in a major earthquake. Supporters argued that residents in Portland, where a massive Cascadia subduction zone earthquake is overdue, are entitled to information about buildings in which they live, work or regularly visit.

It was a sound argument.

Now Portland NAACP leaders, renters' rights groups and building owners are calling on city leaders to rescind the rule, claiming it creates a "lien" on the properties and could disproportionately hurt communities of color. They worry the signs will scare customers from businesses, children from schools and parishioners from churches. They argue building owners won't be able to sell at market rates or secure loans for improvements, meaning developers could buy them at deep discount and displace low-income renters.

Despite those concerns, city leaders should stand firm in the decision they made. The signs are about sharing basic information about the safety of a building – information that's been publicly available for years in a city database, incidentally – to help customers, families, parishioners and renters understand potential risks.

This is the painful part of living in a city preparing for a catastrophic earthquake. Portlanders haven't had to worry about tornadoes or hurricanes or other natural disasters since Mt. St. Helens erupted in 1980. We've been lucky. But it's time for us all to get better prepared and that process will be difficult, both with changes needed at home and with increasing government policies.

The new ordinance does include fines for building owners who don't post signs that warn: "This is an unreinforced masonry building. Unreinforced masonry buildings may be unsafe in the event of a major earthquake." But there's no lien for failing to post the sign. And while it's true that the signs could be off-putting to a buyer, that's not a defensible reason for hiding information about the safety of a building. Besides, the list of such seismically shaky "unreinforced masonry" buildings is one that bank appraisers, insurance adjusters and real estate inspectors likely already consult.

California has had a similar law requiring warning signs on certain buildings for nearly 30 years. A few cities, including Berkeley and San Francisco took the law further, mandating costly retrofits on buildings – a requirement that Portland leaders have put off for 20 years.

In hopes of easing the transition, Portland officials plan to lobby state lawmakers this legislative session in hopes of securing grants or loans to help owners pay the high cost to stabilize the buildings built between 1870 and 1960.

Yet Rev. E.D. Mondainé, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Portland chapter, claims he and dozens of other pastors never received notice that theirs were among the 38 churches on the list. That is concerning, considering city officials maintain they sent letters to all building owners in 2015.

Ultimately, Mondainé says many black residents don't trust the city, which indeed has a long history of racist housing and zoning policy. He says the requirement should be shelved until more conversations happen that include members of Portland's African American community. There is time, however, as churches and nonprofits have until 2020 to post the warnings.

Other building owners must put up signs by March. A group of building owners has sued, seeking to block the new rule. John DiLorenzo, who represents the owners and also owns an affected property, says the different deadlines for owners of buildings with the same issues is unfair. He also argues the city should be responsible for notifying residents with a flier or brochure.

A massive earthquake would likely devastate much of the inner city, where Portland's oldest and architecturally significant buildings are more common. All residents would be affected in various ways. As we prepare, the city must continue to focus on including a broad swath of residents and community leaders.

And the signs are a good start. It's not a letter, flier or email that can get lost in transit. The ordinance, which also requires notifications for new and existing tenants, is the best assurance that residents will be alerted to potential risks.

To be sure, the City of Portland has a long way to go to earn back the trust from communities hurt by redlining and numerous other racist policies of the past. The city has made many mistakes. And, more than likely, it will again.

But requiring that Portlanders have information to help make important decisions for themselves and their families isn't among them.

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Sears Center Overhaul Stalls**

*By Jim Redden*

*January 22, 2019*

**City wanted site to serve as crisis center, but planning and funding issues keep work from starting at the former Sgt. Jerome F. Sears U.S. Army Reserve Center.**

The long-promised city emergency response center in Southwest Portland is on hold because of planning and funding issues.

City officials first announced plans to convert the former Sgt. Jerome F. Sears U.S. Army Reserve Center into a heavy equipment staging area nine years ago. In January 2011, then-Mayor Sam Adams told neighbors that basing such equipment there would help the west side of Portland recover faster from a natural or man-made disaster.

Then and now, all of the city's heavy equipment is stored on the east side of the Willamette River. The bulldozers, dump trucks and other pieces of equipment will not be able to reach west Portland if the bridges across the river collapse.

The City Council voted to turn the armory into a Bureau of Emergency Management response center that May. Portland acquired the nearly 4-acre facility at 2730 S.W. Multnomah Blvd. from the U.S. Department of Defense the next September.

But no significant changes have been made at the building or adjacent parking lot since the first announcement. It was only used as a temporary homeless shelter between November 2015 and February 2016. Since then, Portland Fire & Rescue has occasionally held training exercises in its large parking lot, where the Portland Water Bureau is storing some trailers. Parents of students at the nearby West Hills Christian School also use the parking lot to pick up their children after classes.

Mayor Ted Wheeler's office now says city officials have not yet decided which bureaus to locate there, or how to pay for the renovations and ongoing operating costs.

In fact, according to Kyle Chisek, Wheeler's director of bureau relations, nothing might happen there unless Portland voters approve a public safety property tax bond, and no vote on such a ballot measure is currently scheduled.

"There are a lot of unanswered questions," Chisek said.

### **Neighbor disappointed by lack of use**

Multnomah neighborhood resident Beth Omansky said she's disappointed by the lack of progress. She supports using it for an emergency response center, but also believes it should be opened as a homeless shelter in the meantime.

"The building looks dark and lifeless and useless now. It does not have to be that way, especially because the city is still in a state of emergency regarding homelessness," said Omansky, who organized neighborhood support for the temporary shelter by hosting the "Multnomah Supports the Shelter" Facebook page.

"Every time I walk past it, I recall the hundreds of homeless neighbors who found shelter there, and the neighbors and volunteers who made sack lunches, served hot meals once a month, held donation drives for warm items and delivered them to Sears," Omansky said. "It could be used for overnight stays, as it was before, and building upgrades could be done during daylight hours, readying it for the future emergency staging facility while making good use of the building to shelter our homeless neighbors."

Planning for the center is being done by the emergency management bureau and the Office of Management and Finance. The lack of apparent progress is surprising because the bureau has repeatedly urged Portlanders to prepare for the Big One — the expected Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake that could hit the region at any time, toppling buildings across the city and collapsing the bridges across the river.

On its website, the bureau describes the former armory as "the future home of the City's west side emergency operations facility." It says that, once improvements are made to the site, "the Portland Water Bureau, Portland Bureau of Transportation and Portland Bureau of Emergency Management will begin using the center, enabling the City to better respond to emergencies on the west side of the Willamette River."

### **Master plan prepared, delayed**

Although Chisek said planning is well underway, the City Council essentially sent the project back to the drawing board last year.

A master plan for a Westside Auxiliary Emergency Operations Center was completed in June 2013. Its cost was estimated at around \$11.4 million. Detailed feasibility studies were started to finalize the plan for council approval. A contract with MCA Architects to manage the project was signed in June 2016.

But in March 2017, the council authorized a new contract to study adding a Portland Fire & Rescue training center to the facility. It would replace a fire bureau training center in the Clinton Triangle in Southeast Portland. That put the rest of the planning on hold until the study is completed.

The Portland Police Bureau has also expressed interest in the former armory. It wants to study moving Central Precinct from the downtown Justice Center into it. Although the council did not fund such a study in the current budget, Chisek said the idea is still being discussed.

Without first knowing who will use the facility, it is difficult to finalize the master plan for the facility, Chisek said, let alone estimate the total renovation and ongoing operating costs. But even when those decision are made, Chisek said the city does not have enough money to move forward.

Chisek said officials are beginning to discuss asking voters to approve a public safety bond measure similar to the one former City Commissioner Randy Leonard successfully introduced and championed in the November 2010 general election. Among other things, the \$72 million measure paid for a new emergency communications center, new fire stations and equipment and a new digital radio system.

No tentative date has yet been set for such an election, however, and other governments in the region already are considering large money measures for future ballots. They include Portland Public Schools and Metro, the elected regional government, which is working on a transportation funding measure for the November 2020 general election to help finance the Southwest Corridor MAX line and other projects.

In the meantime, Chisek said the city could open the former armory as a temporary overnight severe weather shelter when temperatures drop if requested by the city-county Joint Office on Homeless Services.

## **Expanded Multnomah County Homeless Count Begins Wednesday**

*By Jim Redden  
January 23, 2019*

**The most ambitious homeless count ever undertaken in the Portland area will be conducted through Jan. 29 by an unprecedented number of researchers.**

The most ambitious count of homeless people ever undertaken in the Portland region will begin on Jan 23 and continue through Jan. 29.

The every-other-year Point in Time count is required by the federal government. In the past, it has mostly been conducted on one night. This year it will last a full week and be undertaken by a record number of outreach workers, service providers and volunteers, coordinated by Portland State University and the city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS).

JOHS Director Marc Jolin says the count is important, even though the information it produces is limited.

"The count doesn't provide every answer. It doesn't tell us why someone became homeless or what it will take to help any particular person end their homelessness. But it's a critical tool for

helping us understand the current level and nature of the need in our community. It's vital data that helps guide our community's investments in ending homelessness," says Jolin.

The previous Multnomah County count was in early 2017. It tallied 4,177 people experiencing homelessness.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recently combined that finding with 2018 homeless numbers from around the rest of the state to conclude that Oregon ranks second for the total number of homeless people living on the streets.

According to the department's 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 62 percent of the homeless population was found to be living in unsheltered conditions at last count — including everything from makeshift camps to parked cars or crowded city sidewalks.

This year's Multnomah County count is part of an ongoing effort to improve the information available about the homeless population in the Portland region by making it as comprehensive as possible. For starters, it will stretch over a full week, not just one night, like all previous counts.

According to JOHS, more than 130 outreach workers from 34 outreach teams, representing 27 agencies, will head out, with surveys in hand, to campsites from the Columbia Gorge to Forest Park, and from the Columbia River south to Johnson Creek. Partner governments and agencies such as Metro, Portland Parks and Recreation Rangers, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office and the City of Gresham will also be part of the effort.

At the same time, JOHS says, an unprecedented number of public volunteers — 136 — will join service providers at nearly 89 day centers, meal sites, shelters and other locations, including schools, libraries, places of worship and culturally specific providers, to administer surveys and collect responses.

This year, coordination of the count is being led by the Regional Research Institute at Portland State University, through a contract with JOHS. The PSU group has added team leaders across different geographic areas of the County, including people with lived experience, to guide the work. They've also worked to increase outreach opportunities in east Multnomah County, to better capture population shifts among people experiencing homelessness, JOHS says.

The results of the count will take months to comply, review and release.

[You can read a Portland Tribune story on HUD's 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report here.](#)

## **Willamette Week**

### **Car Thefts Slightly Down In 2018 After Prosecutors Cracked Down On Repeat Offenders**

*By Katie Shepherd  
January 22, 2019*

**The Portland Police Bureau attributes the 4.6 percent decrease to aggressive enforcement in car-theft hot spots and increased prosecutions for repeat thieves.**

The number of stolen cars in Portland dropped by 327 in 2018 after hitting a 20-year high the year before.

There were 6,835 vehicles stolen in 2018. The Portland Police Bureau attributes the 4.6 percent decrease to aggressive enforcement in car-theft hot spots and increased prosecutions for repeat thieves.

"DAs have really gone to bat and tried to prosecute the chronic offenders," says PPB spokesman Sgt. Stephen Yakots. "That's really what drives the numbers; it's the chronic offenders that steal multiple cars."

WW found more than one-third of auto theft arrests between October 2016 and September 2017 involved repeat offenders ("Car Jack City," WW, Nov. 29, 2017).

Multnomah County prosecutors changed their policies to crack down on suspects facing multiple charges in March 2018. The Oregon Legislature is considering a bill to close a loophole that has allowed chronic car thieves to evade conviction.

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **How E-Scooters Thwart Portland's Traffic Jams (Infographic)**

*By Brandon Sawyer  
January 22, 2019*

This week, the Portland Bureau of Transportation released its 2018 E-Scooter Findings Report on the pilot program it held from July 23 to Nov. 20.

The objective of the program was to see if the new devices — shared for a fee through mobile apps from three permitted companies — could help PBOT meet transportation objectives of reducing private motor-vehicle traffic, preventing fatalities and injuries, expanding access options for underserved Portlanders and reducing air pollution.

The charts below show the days of the week and times of day when e-scooter use during the pilot was most prevalent. During the 700,000+ trips of the pilot, there were only 176 scooter-related emergency room visits and 83 percent were related to users falling off the devices. Only 30 ER visits resulted from collisions with motor vehicles, pedestrians or other scooters.

However, PBOT noted that 90 percent of e-scooter users did not wear helmets, which was also the top community complaint received during the pilot. Nevertheless, the report believes e-scooters show true promise in helping Portland meet its transportation goals and recommends a second, longer pilot program to be launched this spring.

# PEAKS AND VALLEYS OF E-SCOOTER USE

**120**

Number of days in the pilot program (7/23-11/20/18)

**700,369**

Total e-scooter trips

**2,043**

Number of e-scooters permitted

**5,885**

Average trips per day

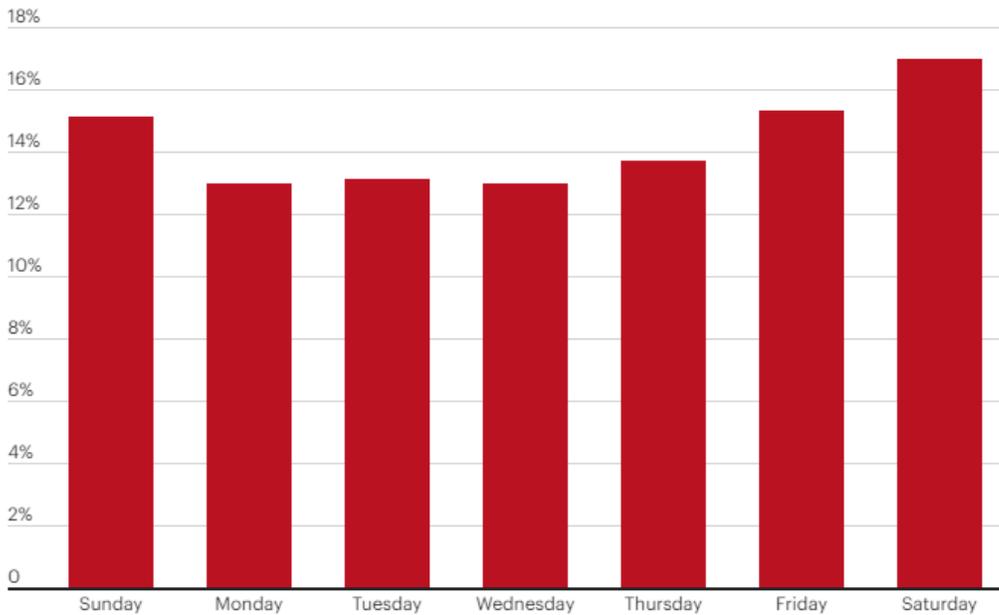
**1.15**

Average miles traveled per trip

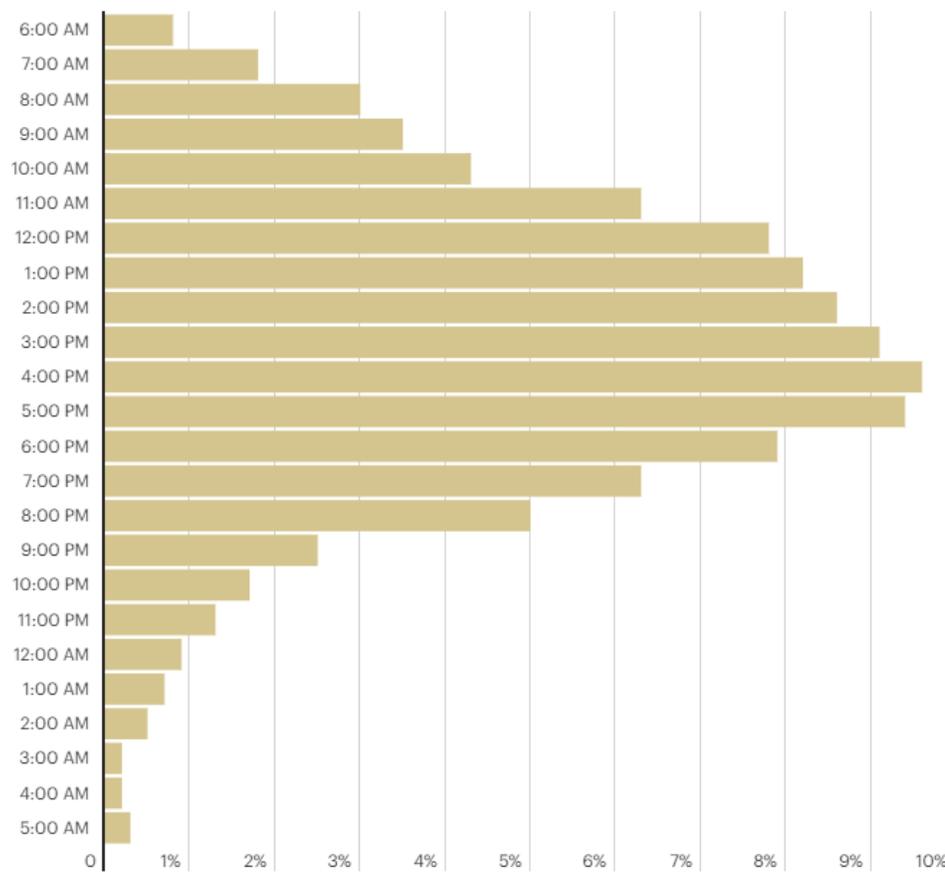
**145**

Square miles in city-limit service area

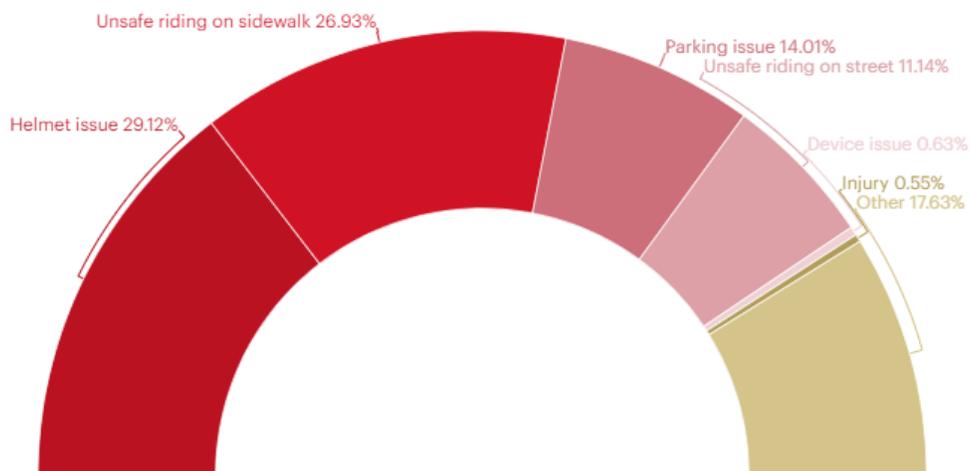
## E-scooter use by day of week



## E-scooter use by time of day



## E-scooter complaints by category (gathered online during pilot program)



SOURCE: Portland Bureau of Transportation.