

## The Oregonian

# Portland traffic deaths spike through first half of 2019 while statewide fatalities dip

*By Andrew Theen*

*July 11, 2019*

At least 28 people have died in Portland traffic crashes through the first half of 2019 and through the typically deadly Fourth of July holiday weekend, according to city records. It's a noticeable spike from the same period last year.

According to preliminary city figures, the death toll through July 5 this year is the highest of any period in the past five years. Last year, 18 people died in Portland traffic crashes during the same time frame.

Those figures don't include the two sisters who were struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver this week in Southeast Portland.

Dylan Rivera, Portland Bureau of Transportation spokesman, said every death represented a loss of a valuable community member, "irreparably changing the lives of their family members, friends and colleagues in a sudden, immense and permanent way."

The increase represents the difficulty in curbing traffic deaths, one year after Portland saw a significant decline year-over-year. Deaths include motorists, pedestrians and cyclists who died in incidents not known to be suicides. Just halfway through 2019, Portland is already rapidly approaching the 20-year average of 36 traffic deaths.

Last month, Portland City Council adopted a new Vision Zero action plan intended to speed up its plans to eliminate all traffic deaths by 2025. The Vision Zero plan includes redesigning streets, reducing speed limits and trying to educate drivers about the perils of speeding and driving while impaired. Within hours of that plan's passage, three people died in traffic crashes.

"We study each deadly traffic crash to understand the contributing factors, and we have adopted new rapid response protocols and accelerated safety improvements to address systemic safety challenges," Rivera said in an email. "While it takes years for trends to emerge, we can all commit today to following the speed limit, stopping for people walking and biking, and planning for a safe ride home instead of driving impaired."

Portland is seeing more people die in their cars or trucks (13 vs. 5) or walking (11 vs. 7) so far in 2019, while fewer motorcyclists are dying (2 vs. 5).

Eighteen people died in Portland city limits through early July last year, four fewer than the same period in 2017.

While Portland is seeing traffic deaths spike, statewide deaths are down through the first half of 2019.

Through July 8, an estimated 214 people have died statewide, 24 fewer than through the same period last year.

Fifteen fewer motorcyclists have died in Oregon so far this year than during the first half of 2018.

Tom Fuller, a state transportation spokesman, said the numbers were "encouraging."

“We’ll have to wait and see if the trend continues,” he said in an email. He said a lot of control came down to drivers’ choices. “We encourage them to make the right choice every time: put down the phone, put on the seat belt, and try not to get impatient. Aggressive driving is a huge factor in fatalities.”

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Mayor: Most protests aren't violent, city isn't 'lawless'**

*By Zane Sparling*

*July 12, 2019*

#### **Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler addresses misperceptions about Portland during news conference.**

Portland played host to more than 200 protests and political demonstrations last year, but only a small fraction turned violent.

That's according to Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, speaking during a 30-minute press conference on Monday, July 8. They were his first public remarks since a slew of three local rallies devolved into ugly street fighting on June 29, grabbing international attention.

Noting the "global shellacking" and deluge of death threats sent to his office, the mayor pushed back against what he deemed a misinformation campaign circulating about the Rose City.

"I want to address the perception that Portland is somehow a lawless city," Wheeler said. "People who live here, people who know Portland, know that is simply not true."

He then laid some of the blame on the president of the Portland Police Association, Daryl Turner, who sent out a July 1 news release calling on Wheeler to "remove the handcuffs from our officers." The claim was widely repeated online, and was sometimes attributed directly to the Portland Police Bureau, rather than the rank-and-file union Turner represents.

"He crossed a line," Wheeler said of Turner.

Saying he wants lots of options on the table, Wheeler declined to explicitly endorse the proposal floated on July 3 by Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, who called for a law making it illegal to wear a mask while committing crimes. Outlaw also suggested changes to a law that prevents authorities from filming a political rally unless a crime is occurring.

Instead, Wheeler announced plans to seek input from business leaders, civil rights advocates and the community at large as he mulls new strategies to address protest violence, which he said was less prevalent now than when he took office two-and-a-half years ago.

"I don't believe Chief Outlaw and I are in a position to singularly or independently resolve this question without the community," Wheeler said.

The Portland Police Bureau is preparing an after-action report regarding the June 29 demonstration that should be completed within 10 days. Wheeler said he held a "brainstorming" session with Billy J. Williams, the U.S. attorney for the District of Oregon, as well.

The mayor and his advisers may not have much time to implement new ideas, whatever they may be. The right-wing Proud Boys already have set the date for their next demonstration here on Saturday, Aug. 17 — an event sure to draw a swarm of counter-protesters.

But here's one idea that won't be revisited: Wheeler's protest safety ordinance, which was voted down by the City Council 3-2 last year. Wheeler says the votes haven't changed.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, one of the no votes, sat silently in the audience during much of the press conference.

## **Task force to recommend Portland street tolls**

*By Jim Redden  
July 11, 2019*

### **City Council approves appointment of advisory group to help develop policy to discourage driving.**

The City Council approved the appointment of an advisory group to help the Portland Bureau of Transportation develop a plan to charge motorists to drive on some streets and bridges to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions on Wednesday, July 10.

The Pricing for Equitable Mobility task force is expected to begin meeting later this year and offer preliminary recommendations in the summer 2020 and final recommendations in the spring of 2021.

"Both the population and congestion are growing in the city of Portland. With this growth comes increased costs of congestion. There are economic costs to businesses and individuals, negative health impacts, and carbon pollution. Low-income communities and communities of color are often most negatively and disproportionately impacted by these hidden costs of congestion," said an impact statement accompanying the resolution approved by the council.

The appointment will be part of ongoing city, regional and state efforts to reduce congestion and emissions. According to the resolution, other cities around the world are successfully using road tolls to manage traffic and emissions.

"[P]ricing for mobility, the practice of pricing road use according to demand, has reduced congestion and vehicle emissions in cities around the world and is now being implemented in New York, and considered in Seattle, Los Angeles, Vancouver, and other North American cities," it reads.

The resolution does not designate specific streets or bridges, or suggest exact tolls to be charged. They are expected to eventually be recommended to the council by PBOT for approval.

The Oregon Department of Transportation is also working to toll portions of Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 in the Portland area to reduce congestion and emissions, and to generate revenue for improvement projects.

[You can read the resolution here.](#)

## Willamette Week

# City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty Fears Vision Zero Traffic Stops Will Be “Weaponized” Against People of Color

By Hannah Chinn  
July 11, 2019

**The City Council member took criticism in June for suggesting that distracted pedestrians were to blame for traffic incidents.**

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty waded into controversy last month when she questioned the Portland Bureau of Transportation's efforts to reduce traffic deaths and suggested that "distracted walkers" should take more responsibility for traffic accidents in the city.

On July 9, she released a thread of tweets retracting her initial statement and emphasizing her key concern: that police traffic enforcement disproportionately targets people of color.

In a year where traffic deaths have spiked in Portland, Hardesty's remarks were particularly fraught.

At least 28 people have died in car crashes in the first half of 2019, making this year's death toll the highest of any period in the past five years. PBOT's Vision Zero program, which began in 2016, is supposed to reduce traffic deaths. It focuses on redesigning streets and refocusing city resources in order to prevent traffic fatalities. But the recent spike shows that it's still got a long way to go.

Hardesty says she supports the program. But in a City Council meeting June 13, she voted against it. Before doing so, she voiced concerns about the ways that two of Vision Zero's four key priorities—"shared responsibility" and "pedestrian protection"—would be implemented.

Her comments on "distracted pedestrians" sharing the blame came under fire.

"I have noticed there are lot of individuals who move through streets and sidewalks never actually looking up," Hardesty said on June 13, as first reported by Bike Portland. "They are on some electronic device that apparently is more important than whether or not they survive crossing the street."

She said new policies came down hard on drivers but failed to acknowledge a lack of safety-related infrastructure investment, particularly in areas like East Portland, where she resides. She also asked that PBOT collect demographic data about who was being penalized and where.

"I think it's a good vision," she concluded. "I just think it could be a better vision."

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees PBOT, responded that traffic enforcement was critical in changing behavior. She says drivers need to take increased responsibility for their actions in crashes.

In a Twitter thread this week, Hardesty rehashed her concerns over Vision Zero, but also acknowledged her political misstep. "Tomorrow I will be voting yes to form a task force for Pricing for Equitable Mobility... Conversely, I'd like to explain my Vision Zero 'no' vote," she began.

"I have been requesting more thought be put into the demographics of who is ticketed and stopped with this strategy," she continued. "Throughout the country and PDX, we have seen time and time again how traffic stops are weaponized against communities of color and low-income

communities... While I am appreciative of the much-needed infrastructure improvements finally coming to East Portland, I am also weary of a program that simultaneously over-polices East Portland."

However, she says she's "absolutely committed to working with Commissioner Eudaly and PBOT to talk through these issues... in crafting policies we need to hold equity at the forefront, not as an afterthought."

Hardesty voted yes on Wednesday for a number of traffic improvements, including a committee to explore road tolling.

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **See the Portlanders who joined Mayor Wheeler for a dip in the Willamette**

*By Hannah Sievert  
July 10, 2019*

On Monday evening, more than 200 people — including Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler — lined up along the Willamette River and, one by one, dove in. Some wore bright orange swim floaties. Others wore goggles and flippers.

The event was the annual Mayoral Swim, where swimmers and kayakers can join the mayor in a swim across the Willamette. The day is organized by the Portland nonprofit Human Access Project.

It's a popular belief among Portlanders that the Willamette River isn't safe to swim in. That's been the widespread view since the early 1900s, when raw sewage and treatment plant waste were dumped in the river.

Thanks to several cleanup initiatives and the completion of a sewer overflow control program in 2011, the river has been named safe to swim in most days of the year by the Department of Environmental Quality. The Human Access Project aims to get people swimming in the Willamette by organizing events and operating river conservation and beach construction efforts.

The Human Access Project's biggest event is the Big Float, which last year pulled in more than 5,000 participants. The Big Float will take place Saturday at 10 a.m.

## **The Skanner**

### **Hope for Historical Preservation in Portland's Black Neighborhoods**

*By Sandra Sorensen  
July 11, 2019*

Portland is shifting how it prioritizes architectural preservation, and Black history advocates have reason to hope this means better protection in historically African American neighborhoods.

“It’s not just about pretty architecture,” Peggy Moretti, executive director of Restore Oregon, told The Skanner. “It’s ‘What of significance took place there? What did it mean to the community?’”

Moretti said the current preservation movement is about shifting focus to the preservation of cultural heritage sites.

“With all the growth in Portland and the density and gentrification in many neighborhoods, a lot of cultural history is being demolished,” Moretti said. “That’s something we’re trying to rally our attention to and see where we can help play a role in making sure the rich heritage of, for example, Albina neighborhood is not lost. There’s a lot of opportunity around Oregon, not just Portland, to take a more proactive role and advocate for people thinking about the places that matter.”

That brought a number of stakeholders together recently, with representatives from Restore Oregon, Oregon Black Pioneers, Prosper Portland, Albina Vision, the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, and academics from the University of Oregon’s School of Architecture & Environment meeting at the Billy Webb Elks Lodge in North Portland last month to compare notes.

“I’m excited about what’s happening,” Kimberly Moreland of Oregon Black Pioneers told The Skanner. She said culturally significant landmarks around North Portland are often “modest and humble, they get missed often, but they have important history to African Americans.”

One example: Dean’s Beauty Salon and Barber Shop on Northeast Hancock Street.

“It’s a very modest building. It’s been owned and continuously operated by a Black family and was built as a beauty and barber shop in the 1950s.

“It’s one of those buildings you would miss if you didn’t know the history of them.”

Moreland is also a government-appointed member of the Oregon Heritage Commission, which she says is currently looking at a more equitable approach to preserving historic sites in Oregon.

Moreland praised Restore Oregon for its work with the state Legislature to advocate for historic preservation funding.

“They really advocate for maintaining policies that will prevent demolition,” she said. “This organization’s been around for a long time, preserving significant relationships to communities of color. It’s really an interesting time, and an exciting time to be a part of this.”

Although Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church’s architecture was significantly altered in the 1950s, it was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places last year for its social history and importance in the Black Community. (Photo by Sandra Sorensen)

“Architecturally, the paradigm has shifted because we have changed our ideas about what is architecturally significant,” Denyse McGriff, who sits on the Architectural Heritage Center and is the first person of color to sit on the Oregon City Commission, told The Skanner. She was also present at the meeting. “It doesn’t matter if there’s been some alterations to the building. You have to ask, ‘Is this place important? Is saving this place important to me? If it’s important to me, it’s important to my community?’ and keep going on up the line.”

McGriff cited the Otto and Verdell Rutherford House, a single-family home on Northeast Shaver Avenue, as “a classic example of a place that is architecturally culturally important because of the people who were there.”

“It hits the home run of everything,” McGriff said.

“I was thinking of how they had all those NAACP meetings in the basement, and thinking of all those people huddled around in that basement is just phenomenal.”

According to Moretti, the current thinking on historic preservation is more inclusive and more practical.

“There are folks that think historic preservation is about creating little museum pieces of pretty architectural things, and that was true 50 years ago,” Moretti said. “It was very White and very oriented toward whatever the pretty Victorian mansion was. But nowadays preservation is really about community, and retaining the historic fabric of a community comes in different forms. It’s not about creating something and freezing it in amber and making it an elite thing.”

She argues that’s why the concept of adaptive reuse has caught on: to meet neighborhoods’ changing needs, and often to allow landmarks to sustain themselves.

“It’s not just the structural and repair needs,” Moretti said. “It’s also a question of how a building economically supports itself. How do you use it for multiple purposes that generate more revenue? You keep it going by taking these places and finding some new ways to use them.”

As an example, Moretti pointed to warehouses that have been converted to apartments, or historic single-family homes that have been divided into apartment units.

Key to all of this is documentation. In 1998, while at the Architectural Heritage Center, Moreland worked with her mentor Cathy Galbraith on the Cornerstones of Community survey to list African American historic resources throughout the city. Two decades later and with evolving criteria, the city of Portland is developing a new format for property owners and developers, called the Multiple Property Documentation Form.

“The city is hoping we can really make sure that potential tenants, or in some cases buyers, know about the history and significance of those places before they make development decisions,” Brandon Spencer-Hartle, historic resources program manager for the City of Portland, told The Skanner. “This project has been working its way through the academic research and documentation process for a couple years and is an umbrella history.”

Spencer-Hartle says the city hopes to have a full draft of the form completed by fall, and projects that the umbrella listing system will be adopted in early 2020.

A property might be eligible for historic designation if a prominent member of the African American community lived there, or if property was a place of worship or the site of civil rights or social justice activity, or if the property has housed businesses of note, Spencer-Hartle said. While architectural design is a consideration, a property “could be a building that from the street doesn’t meet the eye as remarkable, yet the story of the place might be critically important to preserving the role that the business or that person played in Portland over a certain period of time.”

McGriff said she is hopeful about the Multiple Property Documentation Form, and sees it as an auspicious start to a more robust historic preservation program in Portland.

“It doesn't help to just document it,” McGriff said. “It’s got to be, in my opinion, monumented in some way. That means letting people know something important happened here.”

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