

The Portland Tribune

SW neighbors: 'No way' to removing Barbur lanes for MAX

*By Bill Gallagher
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TriMet is considering reducing Barbur Boulevard to just two lanes to save money on the SW Corridor MAX project.

Don't remove traffic lanes from Barbur Boulevard.

That's the message from the people who represent Southwest Portland neighborhood associations to Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. She sits on the steering committee that is considering proposals to take away one lane in each direction on Barbur to accommodate a potential light rail line.

TriMet needs to cut the proposed budget for the light rail project and is studying how much money would be saved by "skinnying" Barbur.

At the board meeting of Southwest Neighborhoods Inc., Wednesday, Sept. 25, leaders from more than a dozen neighborhood associations voted unanimously to send a letter of opposition to Eudaly, who also is the commissioner in charge of the Portland Bureau of Transportation. There was no debate.

"The proposal to narrow SW Barbur Blvd. to one motor vehicle travel lane in each direction is a broken promise that will create serious motor vehicle congestion issues, both on SW Barbur and in our neighborhoods," the letter reads.

The Southwest Corridor Project Steering Committee is supposed to vote on whether to remove lanes from Barbur Boulevard in late October or November. It also will be deciding if the proposed light rail line would go to Bridgeport Village in Washington County or only as far as downtown Tigard.

The project's proposed budget is at least \$400 million more than the \$2.375 billion TriMet believes it can raise to build the light rail line through Southwest Portland.

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor: Seeing Red

*By Alex Zielinski
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The moments before Hannah Ahern's arrest on August 17, caught on cell phone video, have a cinematic feel: A woman in a red dress and heels emerges from a chaotic crowd of black-clad activists and police officers. She coolly crosses the street and walks toward the camera, pausing only to turn her head and spit on the pavement a few feet from a cluster of heavily armored cops.

The reality of the incident is somewhat less poetic: As Ahern was leaving her restaurant job in downtown Portland, she stopped to observe a large anti-fascist protest that had spilled into the streets from Tom McCall Waterfront Park. The protest was held in opposition to another rally taking place on the waterfront organized by the Proud Boys, a right-wing extremist group.

“My intent was to see what was happening,” Ahern says. “I was just planning to do a walk through and then catch my bus.”

Then she saw a woman thrown to the ground by police, yelling in pain as officers handcuffed her. Officers yelled at Ahern and others to back away, so she crossed the street.

“I wanted to express my general disagreement with what was going on,” says Ahern, who was rattled by the woman’s arrest. “I felt compelled to show disgust.” As a vehicle carrying riot cops parked in the middle of Southwest 3rd, Ahern spit on the ground and kept walking to the other side of the street.

Ahern then heard a man yell, “Which one?” And a response: “That one!” Within seconds, she was surrounded by cops on bikes, who grabbed her arms and kicked the back of her knees, forcing her to the pavement as they snapped handcuffs on her wrists.

“I kept asking, ‘Why are you doing this? What is happening?’” Ahern recalls. She thought the officers had mistaken her for someone else. No one answered her questions. She wasn’t given a citation or any other documentation of her arrest. Only when she began having an asthma attack in the back of the police van—and was taken away in an ambulance—did paramedics notice the note taped to her back that read “DIS CON II,” short for Disorderly Conduct in the Second Degree.

Ahern was charged with obstructing vehicular traffic with an “intent to cause public inconvenience, annoyance, and alarm.” The court’s offered a sentence of community service hours if she pleads guilty. She’s not interested.

Ahern says she was following police orders when she stepped into the street—which was already clogged by law enforcement and other protesters. Ahern believes she was arrested because she hurt a cop’s feelings, and the Multnomah County District Attorney’s office found a way to punish her for it. Ahern and her lawyer are certain that if her charges go to trial, the DA’s argument will crumble.

It’s not uncommon for Portland officers to make hasty, questionable arrests the midst of chaotic protests (another woman was arrested on August 17 for revving her motorcycle), but the charges are usually dropped after review by the DA.

That’s not the case for Ahern.

This shift could be coming from outside pressure. In past months, law enforcement in neighboring counties have distanced themselves from the Multnomah County DA’s office, accusing the community’s “anti-police attitude” of tainting prosecutors’ ability to defend officers, especially in protest-related cases. It’s a sentiment shared by local police unions, who’ve accused leadership of barring cops from using force to enforce the law during violent protests.

County prosecutors might be working to regain law enforcement’s respect by taking charges against people who piss off police to trial. But it’ll be the public who pays the price.