

The Oregonian

Stress-related disability claims filed by Portland police, firefighters expected to increase under new state law

*By Maxine Bernstein
October 16, 2019*

Portland's public safety disability fund expects to receive 10 new claims a year from police or firefighters seeking benefits for two types of stress disorders as the result of a new state law that went into effect last month.

Lawmakers this summer approved Senate Bill 507 to define post-traumatic stress and acute stress disorders as occupational diseases for full-time police, firefighters, 911 emergency dispatchers, corrections officers and emergency medical service providers.

"There's a lot of work we need to do in the mental health field," said Alan Ferschwiler, president of the Portland Fire Fighters Association. "The city needs to take care of our members in a way we haven't in the past."

Ferschwiler cited examples of past rejected claims that he said should have been approved: a firefighter's stress claim after being pulled out from a collapsing building and a firefighter who raced into a fire wearing no mask to rescue a woman.

He recently addressed Portland's Fire & Police Disability and Retirement Fund board, which oversees the city's unique taxpayer-financed system covering active and retired Portland police and firefighters. Each year, the city levies a property tax in an amount equal to the fund's administrative expenses and benefit costs.

While the new law is expected to lead to more stress claims, the number is expected to remain relatively small, said Sam Hutchison, director of the city's disability and retirement fund.

The fund currently approves two to three stress-related claims a year, Hutchison said.

The new law sets up more stringent diagnosis requirements: only an Oregon-licensed psychiatrist or psychologist can diagnose the stress disorders and a diagnosis must meet medical standards approved by the American Psychology Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

In the past, general practitioners or even nurse practitioners were allowed to make stress diagnoses, Hutchison said.

He also pointed out that stress claims cannot result from discipline -- a common problem in the past that was halted through reforms adopted in 2007 -- or discomfort from, say, an anti-police climate, as one claim alleged.

"Your reaction to the politics of the situation is not PTSD," Hutchison said. "We had someone here trying to claim stress because they had a strong reaction to anti-police activity. That is not trauma. If they're a police officer and they're involved in a shooting, the PTSD would be caused by the trauma of a shooting."

The new law's presumption of work-related stress applies in two circumstances: when an officer or firefighter has been working for at least five years and claims cumulative trauma, from perhaps seeing too many dead bodies or people with severe burns or cites a single traumatic

event, such as a shooting or building collapse while fighting a fire, with no length of service requirement. Retirees also can file such claims within seven years of active duty.

But he estimated that 90% of the PTSD or acute stress disorder claims likely will be approved. More challenges to the diagnoses may arise, but it will be hard for the fund to show clear and convincing evidence that such a diagnosis wasn't work-related under the new law, he said.

"The diagnosis is not presumed," Hutchison said. "We've had people with no expertise in mental health diagnosing after a 15-minute office visit. That's not sufficient...the doctor has to show us how and why."

If fund staff or an independent medical examiner refutes a claim and the fund denies it, the officer or firefighter can appeal, Hutchison said.

Officer Brian Hunzeker, the police bureau representative on the fund's board, asked why the fund would deny a claim from an officer who may not have been present at a shooting yet is suffering from PTSD because a partner was involved in a traumatic incident and a doctor diagnoses the disorder.

"The doctor has to follow what's in this book to diagnose it," Hutchison said, pointing to the medical manual. "We've had doctors prescribe PTSD to something that wouldn't even come close."

Just because a doctor writes the diagnosis down, doesn't mean it meets the criteria, Hutchison said. "If we have evidence the criteria wasn't met, we deny the claim," he said.

Costs per claim could vary significantly. Claims for two to eight months off on a stress disability could run between \$25,000 to \$75,000 per claim, but long-term disability claims that last 20 years or longer could cost from \$750,000 to \$1 million per claim, Hutchison said.

DISABILITY CLAIMS DOWN

Disability claims and costs overall are down for the public safety fund, largely because there are 100 fewer active Portland police members of the fund than 10 years ago – about 850 active officers compared to 950, fund representatives said. They also are younger and sometimes less likely to file disability claims.

Of the 298 disability claims filed by police and firefighters this fiscal year, the fund approved 84% and denied 4%. The remaining percentage included claims withdrawn or considered incomplete.

Disability costs for fiscal year 2018-19 dropped to \$6.5 million, down substantially from \$8.7 million in 2010. But fund managers cautioned that the costs are expected to creep up due to increased medical costs and an aging workforce.

Today, 3.3% of city police and firefighters are on disability, down from the 7% to 9% in fiscal 2009-10, largely due to aggressive efforts to get injured workers into therapy and back to the job as soon as possible, even in limited duty assignments, said Kim Mitchell, the fund's disability claim manager.

Most police officer disability claims resulted from injuries during altercations or assaults, motor vehicle accidents, slips and trips, or over-exertion, according to the fund. Most firefighter disability claims resulted from various injuries sustained during lifting, pulling or pushing on fire or medical calls, or over-exertion, according to the fund.

The City Council on Wednesday is set to consider a resolution and ordinance to tweak the City Charter and approve rules to conform to the new state law on the stress disorders.

The city tax levy - the property tax issued to city residents to pay for the fund's administrative and benefit costs - is now \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed value and anticipated to rise to \$3.26 in five years, fund managers said.

Portland police retirements hit record number, pension fund managers say

*By Maxine Bernstein
October 16, 2019*

Portland police retirements this year have set a record, a city public safety pension official said.

Portland's Fire & Police Disability and Retirement Fund reported a significant increase in retirements, with 64 retirements so far this fiscal year. Stacy Jones, the fund's pension manager, called it "the most we've ever had," with police accounting for the "massive" spike in recent years.

In the 2018-19 fiscal year, 47 officers retired, compared to 17 firefighters.

There were a total of 167 police and firefighter retirements in the last five years, nearly double the 86 retirements in the prior five years, Jones said.

Jones cited a number of potential factors for the police retirements: a good economy that makes other jobs available for officers after retirement, uncertainty around their union contracts, changes in management, changes in the City Council make-up, changes in their day-to-day working environment, such as the U.S. Department of Justice settlement over excessive force used against people with mental illness.

Aside from the retirements, the bureau is struggling to fill vacancies. As of Tuesday, it had 110 sworn officer vacancies.

The public safety fund's pension costs are at \$15.5 million this fiscal year, up from \$13.3 million in 2017-18, and \$2.2 million in 2009-2010.

The costs are rising because more people are retiring, the retirees are living longer and the final salaries the pensions are based on are higher due to recent union contracts.

The public safety fund, which covers active and retired Portland police and firefighters, is unique in that it is not fully funded, but financed by taxpayers through annual property taxes. Each year, the city levies a property tax in an amount equal to the fund's administrative expenses and benefit costs. The fund's tax levy is now \$2.70 per \$1,000 of assessed value, fund managers said.

Under vote-approved reforms passed in 2006, Portland officers and firefighters hired after Jan. 1, 2007, have been enrolled in the Oregon Public Service Retirement Plan, which is funded through investments

"We are beginning to see the impact of funding two generations of pensions simultaneously," Jones said.

The transition from the older pay-as-you-go plan to the newer, pre-funded public employee retirement system plan for newer hires will ultimately reduce pension costs for future generations of taxpayers, she said.

The Portland Tribune

Safe passage: Barbara Walker Crossing to open

By Joseph Gallivan

October 15, 2019

30-year effort results in footbridge above street linking Forest, Washington parks

The new bridge carrying the Wildwood Trail across West Burnside Street was lifted into place and secured over the weekend.

The 180-foot-long steel Barbara Walker Crossing was built in a workshop at Supreme Steel in Parkrose, cut into three pieces, and trucked to the site just east of where Northwest Barnes Road meets Burnside over five days last week. Burnside was closed for 48 hours while the pieces were lifted into place on pilings and welded back together.

Named for a parks activist, the Barbara Walker footbridge will make it possible to use the Wildwood Trail between Forest Park and Washington Park without crossing Burnside at street level.

The \$4.05-million project is a coming together of multiple stakeholders and changing circumstances over time. The will of a core group of park activists kept the project going over almost three decades.

Randy Gragg, director of the Portland Parks Foundation, which raises money for Portland Parks & Recreation, has said the project unites two things Portlanders love: bridges and trails.

The bridge will connect "two great civic urban traditions to make an experience hikers, runners and drivers can love together," Gragg said. "Designing a work of public infrastructure is hard under the best of circumstances." Gragg added,

"But from his first advocacy efforts that got the crossing off the ground, all the way through a very complicated public-private partnership, Ed Carpenter, the footbridge's designer, held on to his vision for a span that would be a fitting and visually exciting addition to the Wildwood Trail."

The bridge is striking for its green spikes, which vaguely resemble ferns or evergreen needles. But other parts of the bridge will change over time.

"What people don't yet get to see is that, over the winter, the crossing will gain a deeper level of beauty and fit into the surrounding nature as the unpainted steel seals itself with an earthy reddish-brown rust," Gragg said.

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Pedestrian warning

But one person who lives in a nearby neighborhood is concerned about public safety. They pointed out that the Pittock bus stop, used regularly by tourists, does not provide direct access to the bridge. People who plan to use the bus to access the bridge may need to cross Burnside Street on foot at Barnes Road and walk about a quarter of a mile to access the bridge.

"The flashing yellow light at Barnes and Burnside is already an extremely dangerous intersection," they said, wishing to remain anonymous. "Cars will be moving faster than ever, thinking there are no pedestrians. I am hopeful the city will consider putting in a crosswalk or a stoplight at the Barnes-Burnside intersection to ensure public safety."

Several neighbors have a collection of crash photos at this intersection, but the source said calls to the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Portland Bureau of Transportation have resulted in frustration.

The artist as activist

Designer Ed Carpenter's work can be seen all over the world — particularly in airports and public plazas. His large steel sculptures often resemble woven baskets or collections of straws tumbling through the air.

For the Wildwood Trail bridge, as it was first known, Carpenter set out to design a slender, graceful, almost transparent bridge. Along the way, he saw how extending some elements of the sides of the bridge might make them resemble sword ferns or vine maples, familiar from the trail.

But his goal was mostly structural. He worked with KPFF Consulting Engineers in Portland, and once they said the bridge could stand on one piling instead of two, the bridge became interesting in its asymmetry.

Carpenter said he thought the installation had gone very well, given how constricted the site was. At this late stage in the project, he has been acting as a design consultant.

"I'm like the guardian of the aesthetics of the bridge. I'm making the difference between it being something that sings and something that just mumbles," he said. "But, really, I have no role now other than to stay out of the way."

Carpenter explained that the other stakeholders were also guardians of the project. KPFF, the engineers, have overseen the structural integrity of the bridge and following the specs. PBOT has made sure the permit processes were followed, and R&H Construction carried out the installation. Shiels Oblatz Johnsen, a project management consultancy, is the coordinator of everyone. The Portland Parks Foundation is the client, and they are handing the bridge over to the Parks Bureau.

Complex collaboration

The final work being done this week includes attaching the railing ends and changing the Wildwood Trail to stop access to the roadway. Instead, the trail connects at either end of the bridge.

Carpenter readily admitted the structural design — a trichord truss — is "not particularly innovative." It's seen all the time on sign bridges across the freeway.

"It's been very exciting because of the complexity of the collaboration with all the different parties," Carpenter said, "and in my hometown, which is rare. I have a history with the trail as a runner, a real intimate relationship with the Wildwood. This is the only bridge I have designed where I was the design instigator."

Andrew Wheeler was the one who asked him to "have a crack at it," decades ago. Carpenter's process was to ask what all the stakeholders wanted.

Their response: a safe, continuous, delicate, iconic bridge that fits the site aesthetic, which could be constructed off-site, installed with minimal disruption, and prove cost-effective.

Carpenter designed several versions of the bridge, whittling them down to the current one. After that, the Portland Parks Foundation adopted it as a capital project, which meant people could donate to it (tax-free) as a nonprofit.

"They have the connections, clout, infrastructure and staffing to pull this off, and I became less involved," Carpenter said.

For him, the main thing is, "Portland gets a wonderful new bridge that solves a huge problem. It's just the way that it came about is unusual. I would not have had the knowledge or fortitude to carry it out had I not already had 40 years of experience in public art and be connected in Portland to people who could provide the resources."

Barbara Walker Crossing grand opening

What: Bridge Opening Celebration

When: 8:30 a.m.-noon Sunday, Oct. 27

Details: The event will feature a tribal blessing, plus a special "ribbon-tying" ceremony (at 9:30 a.m.) choreographed by world-renowned theatrical set designer Michael Curry and performed by dance troupe BodyVox.

There will be a fun run presented by Foot Traffic, all-you-can-eat pancakes, beverages, and a first crossing.

West Burnside between Northwest Hermosa and Barnes roads will be closed during the festivities.

Online: barbarawalkercrossing.com

Project Information

What: Barbara Walker Crossing

Where: Wildwood Trail/West Burnside Street

Client: City of Portland

Dimensions: 180 feet by 12 feet by 8 feet

Materials: Welded painted steel and CorTen steel structure, fiberglass deck grating, stone paving at north landing

Design: Ed Carpenter 2012

Engineering: KPFF Consulting Engineers, Portland

Renderings: Curtis Pittman

Project administration: Arleen Daugherty

Willamette Week

Portland Police Officers Work Overtime for Private Employers—Sometimes Over the Objections of Bureau Brass

*By Nigel Jaquiss
October 16, 2019*

One commander objected to officers working as security at the Apple Store. But the police union calls the shots.

As commander of the Portland Police Bureau's Central Precinct, Mike Krantz, a 26-year veteran, is one of the most powerful people in the city's costliest bureau.

Yet when Krantz objected to officers working at the downtown Apple Store during their spare time, he didn't stand a chance.

Krantz's objections mattered less than the wishes of two powerful forces: Apple Computer, the world's second-largest company, with a stock market value of about \$1 trillion, and the Portland Police Association, a labor union whose members will soon begin negotiating a new contract with the city of Portland.

While off-duty cops have worked as Apple guards for three years under a contract the association has with Apple, Krantz objected to the 2019 contract because he thought it benefited just Apple, not the public.

But Apple and the police union wanted the contract to continue—so it did.

A police spokeswoman, Lt. Tina Jones, says now-retired Deputy Chief Bob Day overruled Krantz, but the transcripts of several interviews city auditors conducted for a review of police overtime released earlier this month make it clear how the union calls the shots on private contracts like the one with Apple. (PPA president Daryl Turner declined to be interviewed for this story.)

That kind of work—using one's public position and public resources to earn extra money—is unavailable to other city employees because of state ethics laws. But the city allows police to work for private companies on "pass-through" contracts: The companies pay the city and the city passes the money along to officers.

Dan Handelman of Portland Copwatch says his watchdog group has repeatedly complained to City Hall about the deal, which places a uniformed officer at the downtown Apple Store most days.

As the Portland Police Association and the city prepare to negotiate a new contract, one of the flashpoints for the union is the large number of vacancies in the ranks—nearly 100. Yet officers and sergeants still managed to put in many thousands of hours for private employers such as Apple last year.

Handelman says the fact that Apple and other private companies continue to have uniformed officers onsite reflects the union's might.

"They usually get what they want," Handelman says.

A 2017 national study conducted by Seth Stoughton, a former police officer and now associate professor of law at the University of South Carolina, found that about 80 percent of police agencies allow some kind of outside work, although the terms of that work vary considerably. Stoughton found that police moonlighting can contribute to burnout, exhaustion and performance problems, as well as raise equity issues. (Like many of the key players around the issue of police moonlighting, Stoughton declined to be interviewed for this story because he may soon be involved in litigation concerning the city.)

In Oregon, public employees are allowed to moonlight, with their bosses' permission. But under Oregon's government ethics laws, they can't use public resources—such as uniforms, guns and vehicles—or their public positions to obtain such after-hours work. Except for police officers, because of a deal the city struck with the union.

Portland parks employees, for instance, can't use city lawn mowers and trucks to run landscaping businesses after hours. Bureau of Environmental Services plumbers can't use city power washers to run a private cleaning business.

But Portland police officers regularly use their public positions and city resources, including uniforms, guns and vehicles, to earn money they wouldn't get except for their positions as officers with the bureau.

City Attorney Tracy Reeve says the arrangement is kosher because moonlighting officers are paid through the city rather than privately and only work on city-approved contracts.

"The officers undertaking the special-duty employment remain employees of the city of Portland and are paid by the city for this work," Reeve wrote in an email. "Because officers performing special-duty employment remain employees of the city and are paid by the city, there is no issue of them using their public positions for private gain."

As a recent city audit found, moonlighting police work lots of hours and earn lots of money.

Last year, officers and sergeants worked nearly 19,000 hours at what the Police Bureau calls "secondary employment." That's down from the previous two years, auditors found, when they averaged 25,000 hours a year.

Officers and sergeants get paid well to work for outside contractors—they earn an overtime rate of 1.5 times their normal hourly pay, or about \$74 an hour. About 90 companies hire officers under the program.

Police are supposed to work no more than 20 hours a week of secondary employment. But auditors found 39 violations of that limit last year. In total, Portland cops took home an extra \$1.4 million last year for doing work that ethics laws prohibit nearly all other public employees from doing.

In interviews with auditors, Krantz said he didn't always like the practice, which according to bureau directives is supposed to provide "community benefit."

Krantz told auditors "some people think the Apple and [Gateway] Fred Meyer contracts provided community benefits, but he personally did not think it benefited the Police Bureau," auditors wrote in a report of a Feb. 20, 2019, interview with Krantz. "He noted he had rejected the Apple contract for 2019 but he had been overruled." (Krantz was traveling this week and unavailable for comment. Chief Danielle Outlaw declined an interview request.)

Assistant Chief of Operations Ryan Lee provided auditors with some history of secondary employment for officers, explaining the union is the primary point of contact for private employers and makes staffing decisions about which officers get assignments at Apple or Moda Center.

"In contrast to the way it works now (union then-commander), [Lee] said that the contracts should be routed through the chief before the union review to see if there is public benefit," the auditors wrote. "We asked why the PPA played such a prominent role in approving contracts. [Lee] said it had been that way for a long time."

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, an outspoken critic of the Police Bureau, also declined to be interviewed for this story, citing the sensitivity of upcoming union negotiations. But Hardesty did speak to city auditors earlier this year. She made it clear she's skeptical about police moonlighting.

"She doesn't like that uniformed officers are working for the Apple Store and questioned how that was at all appropriate," auditors noted. "She said if businesses need extra assistance, they should hire security staff."

Nkenge Harmon Johnson, president and CEO of the Urban League of Portland, was less reticent.

"The Portland Police Bureau and the Portland Police Association have told the public Portland has too few police officers," Harmon Johnson says. "Now we hear through audit findings that they have plenty of staff available to work 20,000 hours a year for contracted entities and private events [and] we learn Portland police officers are eligible to make thousands more each year, by working in uniform, on outside contracts. What kind of system is this? PPA demonstrates again that it is like no other public employee union in the state. Which other workers are allowed to use public resources in this way?"

Six Ways Portland Can Kill the Car

*By Rachel Monahan
October 16, 2019*

E-bikes offer Portland a path to banning autos from city streets. Radical? Sure. Possible? Definitely.

Portlanders love cars.

That's not the city's reputation. Conventional wisdom says Portland seeks to discourage the motor vehicle—with road diets, replacing highways with MAX trains, and turning city streets into bike avenues.

It's somewhat of a façade.

This month, the city saw its 41st death in traffic in 2019—more than in all of last year. That's just one symptom of a city hooked on driving.

Carbon emissions from transportation in this city have risen 8 percent since 1990, even though the city has pledged to cut them by 80 percent. And the percentage of bicycle commuters has dropped—from 7.2 percent in 2014 to 5.3 percent last year.

Portland drivers are like smokers with a pack-a-day habit promising they're going to quit really, really soon.

"We don't live in bicycling utopia," says Jonathan Maus, editor of BikePortland.org. "Anyone who comes here from Europe just laughs."

But the city has a chance to break the habit. That opportunity? The personal electric vehicle. Lately, the machines have undergone rapid technological advances: in batteries, which allow them to go farther, and in motors, which means the pedal assistance matches up with the natural pedaling of the rider.

Suddenly, e-bikes, e-scooters and other battery-powered transport offer means to get around the city without breaking a sweat.

"It makes it possible to replace a whole lot more vehicle trips with bike trips," says Jeff Allen, executive director of the Portland-based electric vehicle trade group Forth.

That's because riders can take an e-bike much farther than a conventional bicycle, without discomfort. The e-bike is a democratizing force: It makes cycling possible for the elderly, riders who aren't in peak physical shape, and parents transporting small children.

"In a survey that we did, many people using e-bikes were doing typical trips up to 9 miles," says John MacArthur, a Portland State University researcher on cyclists.

The average trip in the Portland area is 5 miles—a distance many people can travel comfortably on an e-bike. MacArthur calculates that if 15 percent of the area's trips were on e-bikes, Portland would reduce its carbon emissions by 11 percent.

But for that change to happen, Portland must act more aggressively to get people out of cars and onto e-bikes and scooters—what are known, in industry parlance, as "micro-mobility devices."

The steps city and state officials can take don't have to be radical. Here are six changes—some simple, some massive—the city and state could make, as others have before, to ease the transition away from the automobile and help make e-bikes Portland's next ride.

1. Flood the streets with e-bikes.

Cycling is often seen as a vegetable-eating chore. But people who try e-bikes like them.

"I've never seen anyone get on an e-bike and say, 'This is horrible,'" says Tom Breedlove, who is organizing an exposition for electric bicycles called Ebike PDExpo. "This really changes the transportation paradigm."

One problem: Most Portlanders haven't encountered an e-bike. There's not a single e-bike available in Portland as part of a short-term rental fleet.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation instead decided to wait on debuting e-bike rentals until they could be integrated into the city's bike-sharing network, Biketown. The city is seeking a single contractor to oversee e-bikes in the Biketown system.

Micro-mobility industry experts say that was a mistake. Instead, they argue, the city should let private rental companies compete in a free market—like e-scooter companies do.

Austin, Texas, currently has 2,000 e-bikes available for rent, while Portland has none.

William Henderson, CEO of Ride Report, which works to provide cities with micro-mobility data for policymaking, says Portland City Hall has been cautious about e-bikes and scooters because the scofflaw behavior of Uber left officials leery of tech companies invading the market.

"We don't have electric bikes at all," says Henderson. "The city needs to figure out how to move as quickly as possible on an opportunity like this."

PBOT says it shares that goal—but stands by its current approach.

"We want this service to be around for a long time, and we think an exclusive contractual arrangement has the best chance to ensure the most number of Portlanders access to a high-quality, reliable service," says bureau spokesman Dylan Rivera.

2. Make e-bikes more affordable.

The biggest downside of an e-bike? The price: \$2,000 to \$5,000.

So Portland needs to find a way to make them available to people on a budget. That means pulling them into a rental network—like Biketown or other vendors—or subsidizing their purchase.

"Making them part of our micro-mobility fleets—that is the big thing we recommend," says Jonnie Ling, director of programs and enterprise for the nonprofit Community Cycling Center.

Another option: bringing down the price of an e-bike for private ownership. Think rebates, like the ones that already exist for electric cars.

The number of electric bicycles sold in the U.S. is roughly the same as the number of electric car purchases—but incentives mostly apply to the cars. Some places are catching on: As part of a clean air initiative, California has approved \$1,000 vouchers for e-bikes for anyone who turns in an old car.

"In some countries, like the Netherlands, if you have a flexible health savings plan, you can use that money to pay for a bicycle, just like you'd use it to buy a pair of eyeglasses," says Forth's Allen, arguing that if Oregon adopted that approach, it could increase the number of e-bikes sold.

3. Make e-bikes a seamless part of public transportation.

In Pittsburgh, public transit riders can use their ticket to hop on a bike-share bike at no extra charge.

That bonus solves a big problem for bus and train systems: transporting passengers the "last mile" from transit stops to their homes.

"That should be seamless," says PSU's MacArthur. "More people would be using transit if they had first-mile and last-mile transportation."

TriMet says it's not currently exploring the idea. But a year ago, the agency added a way to unlock rental bikes through the TriMet app if the rider had a Biketown account. "TriMet has already started the journey toward expanding how we help people move through the region," says spokeswoman Tia York.

4. For that to work, the region needs to build faster, more reliable public transit.

In June, City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly introduced the most dramatic proposal in Portland transit in a decade: dedicate miles of traffic lanes and parking spaces as bus-only routes ("Paint the Town Red," WW, June 12, 2019). She calls it the Rose Lane Project, because the bus-only lanes would be painted red.

Traffic congestion costs TriMet, the regional transportation authority, millions each year. Getting buses to move faster would mean they'd be more reliable and more frequent and attract more riders.

TriMet is now tweeting love poems about the red-painted lanes: "Rose lanes are red/They let buses through/We're pretty excited/And hope you are too." They are certainly the cheapest radical way to provide quicker public transportation.

5. Build bike avenues.

The city's planning documents count on reaching a point where 25 percent of commuters go to work by bike.

That won't happen until doing it feels safe. Surveys show concerns about auto traffic discourage people from cycling.

"Those fears are broadly fair," says Jillian Detweiler, executive director of the Street Trust, which advocates for all forms of "active" transportation, meaning any method that doesn't include cars.

Detweiler says she's concerned about safety, and it "is going to be limiting" for e-bike riders, too.

Portland set the standard for American cities in 2015, when then-transportation director Leah Treat called for protected bike lanes on all major streets. But progress stalled.

A 2014 PSU study of five cities found that cycling increased 72 percent along streets where protected bike lanes were installed. Portland has just 10.5 miles of protected bike lanes. Another 30 are already funded and will be completed within five years.

Other cities have pushed ahead. Cambridge, Mass., recently passed an ordinance requiring protected bike lanes on every street that undergoes renovation. New York City has significantly expanded protected bike lanes in the past decade and pledged to add 30 miles per year. But model cities with at least a quarter of their populations riding bicycles are international. Bremen, Germany, where a quarter of all trips are by bike, has 418 miles of separated bike paths.

PBOT says it recognizes the challenge.

"As population increases, and the roads become more congested, and gas prices rise," Rivera says, "bicycling will increasingly be seen as a better option than driving for the short trips that comprise the bulk of people's travel."

The bureau wants to do even more, he adds: "It also entails creating safer conditions on streets by getting people to drive slower, making intersections safer with bicycle signals and bicycle intervals, reconfiguring roads to add bike lanes and reduce car lanes, and lowering speed limits around the city and reducing right turns on red."

6. Remove cars from downtown streets.

This is the radical part. But everything else leads to this.

And it's already being done elsewhere: In Paris, a socialist mayor decommissioned a highway and has instituted car-free days on the Champs-Élysées. Barcelona is moving toward a similar ban on many of its streets.

A challenger to Mayor Ted Wheeler, Sarah Iannarone, doesn't call for getting rid of cars, but she does call for limiting them in certain parts of the city.

In releasing her Green New Deal proposal, she called for e-bike incentives for low-income communities and "'zero emission zones' in critical areas citywide, including pedestrian streets, transit corridors and town centers, around parks and schools, and the central city."

"With a climate crisis looming," she says, "we need to implement stopgap solutions ASAP to reduce as many miles traveled by single occupancy vehicles as quickly and safely as possible."

Wheeler says he supports a similar concept "to make parts of our central city carbon-free by the year 2035." His office is looking to London, Madrid and Brussels as models for low-car streets.

E-bikes allow dreaming on that scale.

"I don't think building a bike path out to East Portland, for example, is going to change people's habits if they have to pedal 5 miles to get downtown," says Henderson. "The e-bike can really change that. There's a transformative power with these technologies."

The Portland Mercury

Mayor Wheeler Promises "Real Change" In Re-Election Launch Speech

By Blair Stenvick

October 15, 2019

For the first time in almost two decades, a Portland mayor is running for a second term.

Mayor Ted Wheeler officially kicked off his 2020 re-election campaign Monday evening, in a speech that played up his record on homeless issues, pushed back at his critics, and offered a rosy outlook for Portland's future.

"We are at a turning point," Wheeler told supporters gathered on the roof of Uncorked Studios in Southeast Portland. "This will either be a decade of innovation and action and progress, or it will be a decade of continued and perhaps even irreversible decline."

Wheeler's speech made clear he believes he is best positioned to guide Portland to a positive future. He acknowledged that the city is currently facing many "crises"—crises of mental health, addiction, and homelessness; crises of transportation and infrastructure challenges; and crises of wealth inequality, increased anger, and "way too much hate."

But despite these crises, Wheeler said, Portland is doing well by "conventional standards"—it's one of the wealthiest cities in the US, it is continually ranked as one of the most desirable places to live, and "travel and tourism are through the roof."

Portland's crises can be addressed, and its prosperity can be spread, with the help of "a type of leadership that builds bridges, not one that strives to divide us," Wheeler said, in a possible swipe at opponent Sarah Iannarone, who often positions herself as a more progressive, populist alternative to Wheeler—and blames Wheeler for a lack of vision at City Hall.

"I believe that despite a chorus of critics who often fill the halls at City Hall, we can make the changes we need to make," Wheeler added. "We are finding solutions to very real problems."

Among those problems, Wheeler acknowledged, is a homelessness problem that's exacerbated by a lack of stable funding for addiction treatment and affordable housing. Wheeler touted his inclusion of funding for addiction services in this year's city budget, and his "record year" for developing new affordable housing, as actions he's taken to ease the problem.

Wheeler also pointed to his support for the Portland Street Response, an idea championed by Street Roots and Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty. The plan proposes that social workers and doctors should respond to most 911 calls about unwanted people or people with possible mental health crises—rather than armed police officers.

At a press conference after his speech, Wheeler said that a decline in federal funding for affordable housing and Medicaid programs has made it difficult for Portland to make more of an impact on homeless issues. He said that in his second term, he plans to be "much more aggressive" in partnering with other West Coast cities, like San Francisco and Los Angeles, when lobbying the federal government for more assistance.

In addition to homeless issues, Wheeler's strong ties to the Portland business community was another theme at Monday's campaign launch. Before Wheeler took the podium, several supporters made opening remarks—including a construction union representative, Metro President Lynn Peterson, Rep. Janelle Bynum, and Andrew Hoan, CEO of the Portland Business Alliance.

Bynum, who is a small business owner, said Wheeler's "relationship with the Portland Business Alliance is incredible," and thanked him for helping Portland business owners navigate an "unprecedented economic boom." Hoan thanked Wheeler for his work on housing development—and for cleaning Portland streets.

"Picking up trash seven days a week downtown—that means something to the business community," Hoan said.

City Commissioner Nick Fish—the only other city commissioner in attendance Monday—introduced Wheeler. Fish noted that Wheeler is the first Portland mayor to run for a second term this century, and said that the need for continuity of leadership is one of the reasons he supports Wheeler's campaign.

"I have served with four mayors," Fish said. "The city has not been served well by serial one-term mayors."

Wheeler's first term in office has been marked by strong criticism, questions about his leadership decisions, and embarrassing gaffes. His speech seemed to acknowledge that his opponents' campaigns have plenty of fodder for disparaging him, but that he is "not interested in noise."
"I'm interested in real change," Wheeler added, "in positive change."

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Broadway Corridor planning cost grows

By Chuck Slothower
October 10, 2019

Planning for the 32-acre Broadway Corridor redevelopment in Northwest Portland has been lucrative for ZGF Architects. And it just got a little sweeter.

Prosper Portland's board on Wednesday approved a \$343,995 increase in ZGF's contract with the agency. That brings the total to a "not to exceed" contract cost of \$2,375,049.

Planning for the redevelopment is a big job. The amendment and budget increase call for completion of a development impact study, cultural and historic resources research, an updated baseline feasibility analysis and "vision documentation," according to a Prosper Portland report.

ZGF has worked with development adviser Continuum Partners of Denver, a Broadway Corridor steering committee and others to shape the physical layout of developable blocks, streets, the Green Loop and open space in the area. ZGF landed on a concept called "Play" that will necessitate \$50 million in public realm improvements from among three development scenarios.

Prosper Portland's board initially authorized a contract with ZGF in April 2018.

Prosper Portland officials also gave a broad update on the project's progress at Wednesday's meeting. Continuum Partners is focusing on developable parcels north of Johnson Street, in part because of ready utilities and transportation access, officials said. Parcels south of Johnson Street may be available to other developers for mixed-income residential development.

Prosper Portland plans to seek in late October the Portland Design Commission's approval for a master plan, said Lisa Abuaf, director of development and investment for the agency. A City Council work session is tentatively planned for December.

Prosper Portland is preparing to move forward simultaneously with intergovernmental agreements and land transfer, master plan land use approval, a community benefits agreement and a disposition and development agreement.

"All four of these planes would need to land at once," Abuaf said.

OPB

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler Officially Kicks Off Reelection Campaign

*By Rebecca Ellis
October 15, 2019*

On the rooftop deck of a trendy Southeast Portland design agency, Mayor Ted Wheeler trumpeted the news that had leaked out three days earlier.

“I am officially announcing my reelection campaign for mayor of the city of roses,” Wheeler, smiling, told the crowd Monday night. They proceeded to burst into a brief chant of “Ted.”

The news that Wheeler is running for a second term came out Friday after campaign staff sent out a press release with a widely ignored — and tricky to spot — embargo.

But Monday’s official kickoff presented Wheeler with a chance to outline his case for another four years.

Before rattling off recent victories Portland had earned in various online rankings — including the eighth most livable city by U.S. News & World Report, fourth healthiest city by CBS News and most foodie city by an uncited source — Wheeler said he believed serious social problems persist in the city he governs.

“Years if not decades of either inaction or misdiagnosing the problems has come to roost here, as elsewhere,” he told the crowd of supporters. “We have a homeless crisis. We have a mental health crisis. We have an addiction crisis.

“Our aging infrastructure is literally crumbling around us,” he added.

It’s more critical than ever, he said, for the city to elect a leader capable of seeking common ground and making tough choices that would bring about much-needed progress — a leader, he said, like him.

“You know what my record was when I served as the Multnomah County Chair and later as the state treasurer and now as your mayor,” he said. “I have always worked tirelessly to build a solid foundation beneath our community.”

Wheeler painted the city’s homelessness crisis as his No. 1 priority — a crisis he said that is rooted in housing, mental health, addiction and poverty “all rolled up into a very complex and challenging problem.”

“There are no other issues so in need of committed leadership as this one,” he said.

His opponents will likely ask why those problems persist four years into his administration.

But Wheeler said commitment requires hanging around, something he pointed out no mayor in Portland has done in this century. The three men that followed three-term Mayor Vera Katz — Charlie Hales, Sam Adams and Tom Potter — all declined to try for a second term.

“There’s a reason we haven’t had a two-terms mayor since Vera Katz,” he said. “We haven’t had someone willing to keep going because this job is hard, and it’s often thankless. But we need people who are willing to keep going.”

The argument was echoed by Commissioner Nick Fish, who said that after serving with four mayors, he was excited to see someone try and stick around.

“This city has not been served well with serial one-term mayors,” he said. “We desperately need continuity in office and I look forward to working with Ted in years to come.”

Other community leaders briefly spoke at the event to make their position — and that of their supporters — clear.

“I’m here to say labor’s here supporting labor champion Ted Wheeler,” said Willy Myers, executive secretary treasurer of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council, which represents a little over two dozen trades.

“Business is with Ted Wheeler,” said Andrew Hoan, the president of the Portland Business Alliance.

Such endorsements this early in a campaign cycle are unusual. Groups such as labor and the city’s largest chamber usually wait to make formal nods until closer to the filing deadline, which is next year.

Wheeler told reporters his campaign will soon be making an announcement on whether he plans on taking part in the city’s second attempt at public campaign financing, the new Open and Accountable Elections program, which is meant to encourage candidates to focus on grassroots fundraising and caps on donations of more than \$250 per person.

Wheeler faces at least three challengers: progressive activist Sarah Iannarone, who has said she will participate in the public financing program; Ozzie González, the director of sustainability and diversity for a construction company; and Don’t Shoot Portland activist Teresa Raiford.