

# BES ditches to swales program not a substitute for sidewalks

By Polina Olsen  
The Southwest Portland Post

Jeff Hubbard didn't know he'd need survival skills when he walked to his mailbox each day. But over the three years he and his wife have lived on Maplewood Road, traffic has only become worse. "People use Maplewood Road as a bypass for 45th and don't pay attention to the school zone," he said, adding through traffic regularly zooms past his house at 45 mph despite speed bumps and 25 mph signs.

"A bus got so close to my wife when she was getting the mail that the wind from it knocked her over," Hubbard said. "Kids walk up and down the street, and there are skateboards. It's a question of time until someone is hit."

Vernon Krist, Maplewood Neighborhood Association transportation chair agrees. "Maplewood Road is narrow -- barely wide enough for two cars. People drive too fast and there's no place to walk," he said. "If cars come along, pedestrians need to jump into a ditch."

The ditches Krist referred to butt up against the hill which runs along one side of Maplewood Road. Built to col-

lect water, the neighborhood association has long hoped the city's "Ditch-to-Swale" program would convert the space to a pedestrian trail.

"They take a roadside ditch and fill it with piping and rock so the drainage takes place and gives people a safe place to walk," Krist explained. The solution does not narrow the road, but rather turns the curbside ditch into pedestrian space at a fraction of the cost of sidewalks. The city estimate for the Maplewood Road Ditch-to-Swale conversion is \$34,000.

While this sounds like a good idea, it may not be a quick solution. According to Amin Wahab, watershed manager for the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), Maplewood Road is medium priority on the list of Ditch-to-Swale projects. And, he said the budget for even high priority projects "will not kick in for three years. Then, it depends on how much money the city has allocated."

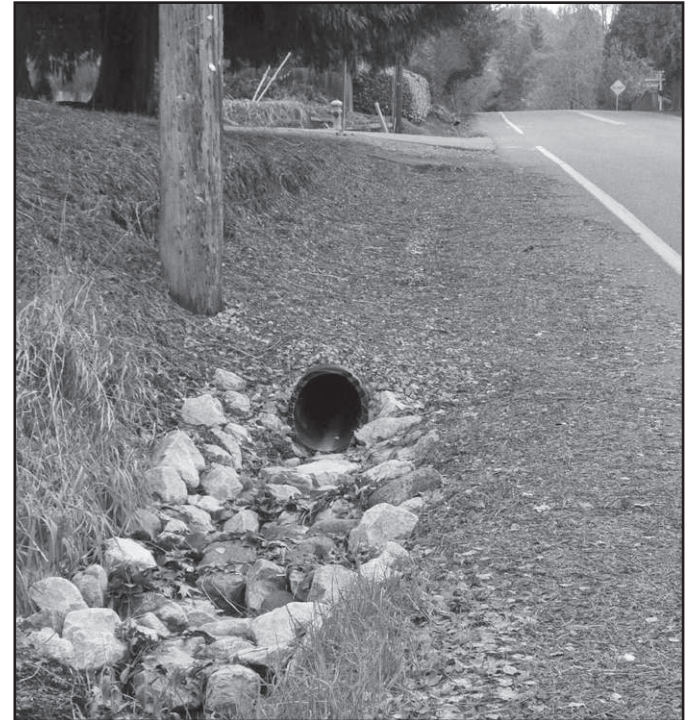
Furthermore, Amin explained, "a swale is not a trail. The [Ditch-to-Swale] objective is storm water management not to create sidewalks. We can make some modifications and do the design in a way to make pedestrian access easier but that's not one of the main

objectives."

Despite this, the project could speed up, Amin suggests, if "neighbors approach BES and the Portland Department of Transportation to say this should be given a higher priority- especially if the neighbors are interested in providing some support."

Meanwhile, Jeff Hubbard prepares to jump into the ditch whenever he ventures down his road. He hopes attention will speed up the Ditch-to-Swale conversion or at least encourage police or radar control to monitor traffic. "This is a neighborhood of kids," he said. "With a community like this, you'd like to make the school zone safe."

For more information about the Ditches to Swales program visit [www.portlandonline.com/bes](http://www.portlandonline.com/bes) and type in "ditches to swales" in the search box. To contact Vernon Krist at the Maplewood Neighborhood Association email [transportation\\_chair@maplewoodna.com](mailto:transportation_chair@maplewoodna.com).



A recently converted ditch on Southwest Hamilton Street just west of 42nd Place. (Photo courtesy Victor von Salza)

# South Waterfront Greenway construction delayed

By Lee Perlman  
The Southwest Portland Post

Construction of the central portion of the South Waterfront Greenway will be delayed until at least next summer.

Portland Parks and Recreation spokesperson Patty Freeman reported that the bureau had failed to properly complete the complex permitting process of the National Marine Fisheries Service, whose regulations govern construction near the shores of waterways such as the Willamette River that are fish habitat.

In such habitat work can only be done between July 1 and October 31, and it is already too late to obtain the permits in time to meet this deadline. Thus, the \$4.3 million project will have to wait until at least next year for implementation.


The effect of the delay? Freeman said

that the park bureau is calculating an eight percent cost increase due to inflation, "In a slower development market, contractors will frequently lower their bids in an attempt to get work."

Some community members have faulted the park bureau staff for failure to deal with the permitting in a timeline manner. One observer, requesting anonymity, told *The Post*, "They've known for years they'd have to deal with this."

Freeman said that the permitting process contained a new procedure for sediment testing. The park bureau was trying to balance federal guidelines calling for minimal use or riprap with a need to give the public access to the riverfront (without which they might not respect habitat areas).


Finally, there were delays in the transfer of land to the City by the developers. The Park Bureau is confident the work can be done in 2009, she said.



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