

Politicians make speeches at MAX Green Line grand opening at PSU

By Lee Perlman and Don Snedecor
The Southwest Portland Post

The ceremonial Green Line train pulled into the PSU Urban Center station welcomed by PSU President Wim Wiewel and Mayor Sam Adams, along with members of the Last Regiment of Syncopated Drummers and PSU cheerleaders.

The grand opening September 12 of the MAX light rail Green Line, linking Clackamas Town Center to Portland State University, was a time for celebrations and speech making by many area politicians, including two with a South Portland constituency.

As a band and PSU cheerleaders lent the gathering a victory rally atmosphere, State Rep. Mary Nolan (D-Portland) was very much in the mood.

"There are places where transit is considered fringe, not really grown up, not something you can count on," Nolan said. "But here in Portland, in the 21st century, transit is a fundamental part of how we define ourselves. This is the coming of age of our communities. This is how we will grow, how we will create neighborhoods, communities, industrial areas and parks."

In keeping with other speakers, Nolan noted MAX's role as an economic development tool, and said that the system has been a catalyst for \$8 billion worth of private development along its route. "That's how we do things," she said. "We will continue to show the rest of the country."

Part of the funding for the first MAX line, from Gresham to downtown, was



State Rep. Mary Nolan (D-Portland) speaks at the MAX Green Line grand opening September 12 at PSU. (Post photo by Lee Perlman)

obtained during the 1970s when the City officially abandoned plans to build the proposed Mount Hood Freeway through southeast Portland.

In those days, "Killing a freeway was not a popular thing to do," State Senator Ginny Burdick (D-Portland) recalled. Critics called MAX "Whoops on Wheels," a reference to Washington State's disastrous experiment with nuclear energy development, she recalled.

At one point the decision to tunnel through the west hills seemed "technologically impossible." "Baby, things have changed!" Burdick declared.

The next MAX project, now in final planning stages, will bring the rail line south from PSU, through the South Waterfront, across the Willamette River via a new bridge, and southward to Milwaukie.

The next after that, in early planning stages, would be a line along Southwest Barbur Boulevard to Tigard. Referring to this latter, Burdick said, "The odds are looking good."

She added, "We're buying into not just cars on rails, but a vision of a community where we're not so car-dependent. It's a miracle! We've come a long way." And, although rail development

still has a long way to go, "This is a very important landmark," she said.

In addition to Nolan and Burdick, speakers at the PSU grand opening event included Congressman Earl Blumenauer, FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff, Metro President David Bragdon, Clackamas County Commission Chair Lynn Peterson, and a representative from Governor Kulongoski's office. Dancers from the Cami Curtis Performing Arts Center wrapped up the celebrations with a dance to The O'Jays "Love Train."



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