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Bob Stacey
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Volume No. 21, Issue No. 6

www.swportlandpost.com

Portland, Oregon

Complimentary

April 2013

New plan for regional ped/bike trail upsets Miles Place residents

SELLWOOD BRIDGE

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

There are parts of Southwest Portland where the prospect of getting a new sidewalk with a curb, at public expense, would have neighbors jumping for joy. Those are the plans for Southwest Miles Place, yet many residents are distinctly unhappy.

Last year City of Portland and Multnomah County planners determined that Miles Place should be part of a regional trail for bicyclists and pedestrians connecting downtown Portland with Lake Oswego and points south; they rejected alternate routes along Southwest Macadam Avenue and along the Willamette Shore rail right of way.

However, as County spokesperson Mike Pullen, and City transportation planner Mike McGee told a gathering of residents last month, they now propose to install a sidewalk with curb on the west side.

This will probably eliminate five

parking spaces on a street where parking is at a premium. They also plan to cut down a mature walnut tree growing in the right of way.

Currently Miles Place is a substandard street, without sidewalks. It works largely due to low traffic volumes; the City says there are no more than 120 auto trips a day on the west end, and residents say that on the east end the figure is closer to five.

However, officials say that when the regional trail is complete, and the new Sellwood Bridge opens, the street will see as many as 6,000 bikes a day, much more than the current maximum daily volumes.

"Pedestrians need a dedicated pedestrian corridor," McGee said. "This doesn't meet everyone's needs, but it's the best fit."

In response one woman said, "You said you couldn't please everyone,



Residents who live along Southwest Miles Place are concerned that a regional trail carrying 6,000 bicyclists per day is coming along with the new Sellwood Bridge. (Post photo by Lee Perlman)

but all but one or two people said they didn't want a curb. We're frustrated that we weren't heard at all." She added, "The biggest problem is bicyclists

who come screaming through and yell at cars when they try to pull out."

Carl Larson of the Bicycle Trans-
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Willamette Shore Trolley right-of-way future questioned by neighbors

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

During Metro Commissioner Bob Stacey's visit last month, the South Portland Neighborhood Association discussed the potential future of the Willamette Shore Trolley right-of-way.

Once an active rail line of the Burlington-Northern and Southern Pacific railways, the Willamette Shore track from Johns Landing to Lake Oswego was abandoned until the 1980s.

At that point the right of way was re-established – at some public effort and

expense and despite the resistance of many adjacent property owners – and was used by a non-profit corporation for excursion rides.

In 2010, Portland and Lake Oswego city planners pursued an extension of the Portland Street Car along the Willamette Shore route. However, in the face of massive public opposition, a divided Lake Oswego City Council abandoned their support of the effort.

Last month Kerry Chipman, a South Portland board member and Johns Landing resident, suggested seeking other uses for the right of way. Stacey agreed, "There doesn't appear to be a

strategy for a streetcar line. Lake Oswego is not a willing partner, and without that you don't have an end destination."

However, Stacey continued, "I don't want to give up on rail transit in that corridor. I'm not confident we can continue to preserve the right of way without rail use."

Board member Jim Gardner agreed. "I was a Metro councilor when the right of way was acquired," he said.

According to Gardner, "There was a crucial question of whether it would be used for rail purposes or not. A trolley, running intermittently, qualifies as a rail purpose. It doesn't take much to preserve the right of way, but it does take something. Someday it may be used."

"And someday Santa Claus may visit," Chipman retorted. "Jim, I'm arguing that we're there. There's no rail line operating now. This is a pipe dream."

In a separate interview, Anne McLaughlin, a retired City planner, who worked to re-establish the right-of-way, told The Post, "The land in the corridor wasn't owned outright by [Burlington Northern-Southern Pacific] when they

abandoned it.

"What they owned was an easement for rail purposes, so if the rail line is no longer operative, the easement no longer exists, and the full ownership reverts to the owner of the adjacent property.

"There needs to be active rail use, not just planning for some future rail use. A lot of people would have preferred not to have a rail use in that corridor, but to have it still remain a public corridor for use by peds and bikes. But that never looked like a legal possibility, according to the attorneys working on it."

McLaughlin added that she could not be sure if the easement's legal status remains the same today, and people curious about the matter should seek a current legal opinion.

Editor's Note: According to Mary Fetsch, TriMet media relations manager, "There are rail tracks on the (Willamette Shore) alignment, and the consortium continues to improve the track and operates passenger rail on these tracks, therefore the easement rights are preserved. Ownership is a mixture of fee parcels and rail easement."



A vintage trolley car travels between Portland and Lake Oswego near the Elk Rock Tunnel. (File photo courtesy of Willamette Shore Trolley)

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