

Highway 5 in Santiago is a toll road; former streets replaced by pedestrian plazas

POSTCARD FROM CHILE

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Driving in the hot smoggy weather in downtown Santiago, Chile, suddenly a beep-beep goes off in the SUV. It happens again kilometers later.

The beeping, it turns out, records the freeway kilometers driven on Highway 5 and charged to the driver's "E-Z Pass" account.

This is a section of the Pan-American Highway which runs from the tip of South America to Prudhoe Bay in Alaska.

The tolls are meant to not only build and maintain roads, but it is also a way to decrease vehicular traffic in order to get a grip on the poor air quality. Some 5 million people inhabit this former Spanish colonial city.

Today's cost, as expressed on an overhead digital sign, is 119 pesos (about 17 cents) per kilometer.

The freeway is a marvel of engineering being underground for many kilometers with exits every so often. The main reason was that the growing city needed a more direct way through the city without disrupting the many businesses and homes above ground.

The driver, Alejandro, normally takes the Metro, micro buses, or colectivos (shared taxis) in order to decrease traffic and personal cost.

"Besides," Alejandro said, "if I want to have a few drinks at a friend's house or bar, I can take public transportation without the risk of being pulled over for driving under the influence."

There is zero tolerance for drinking and driving here. Oregon may have its limit of .08 percent but in Chile it's 0.0 percent. Fines are stiff.

Additionally, since January, all drivers must have a safety vest in the vehicle at all times. These neon orange or green nylon vests were the topic of many a news story.



Public workout equipment near the beach in Santiago. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

Whether a break down or fender bender, the driver is required by law to wear the vest when they exit the vehicle.

And although there are a lot of bikes for rent, not many cyclists are seen commuting just because it's just too dangerous. They can be seen all lined up in parks and painted bright orange so motorists can make them out.

Sunday Parkways is a weekly event where a long stretch of one of the busiest thoroughfares is closed to traffic. That is the day bicycling, jogging, and strolling is common. Chile still recognizes Sunday as a day of rest and most businesses are closed.

In its commitment to health, the government provides exercise equipment throughout a variety of outdoor locations. These consist of

pull-up bars, stretching machines or a place to do sit-ups. The equipment is made of solid steel painted with thick lacquer to protect it from the elements.

Tied into many of these parks and main boulevards, one can find walkways where motor traffic once ruled. The asphalt is replaced by brick and tile. Traffic signs have made way for trees. Retail kiosks, benches, fountains, and sidewalk cafés have been added.

As a result, businesses and the quality of life thrive. It's a win-win for all. Somehow Chile doesn't deserve the title of a third-world country.

Post reporter Erik Vidstrand spent nearly 40 days in Chile with his family this past winter. Traveling somewhere unusual or exotic? Send us a Postcard! Contact Don Snedecor at 503-244-6933 or news@multnomahpost.com for details.



Pedestrian plazas are replacing traditional streets in downtown Santiago. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

POST A-Z BUSINESS CARD DIRECTORY 503-244-6933



Family & Cosmetic Dentistry
503-246-2564

www.mvdentalcare.com

7717 SW 34th Avenue • Portland, OR 97219
(Multnomah Village • SW Capitol Highway & 34th Ave.)



9715 SW Barbur Blvd.
Portland, OR 97219-6097

Phone: (503) 246-3373
Fax: (503) 246-2767
Rx Hotline: (503) 246-0861

Open 7 days a week

www.pacificveterinaryhospital.com
Email: clientcare@pacvh.com

PRECISION HOME REPAIR & DRYWALL
JON A. GOSCH



Phone: 503-643-3517
E-mail: precision17@frontier.com

Quality work at affordable rates!
Mention this ad and receive 10% off your next job!

Licensed • Bonded • Insured • CCB #77073

ROBERTSON CONSTRUCTION & PAINTING LLC

- Interior/Exterior
- Commercial/Residential
- Powerwashing
- Wallcovering
- Patina Stained Concrete
- New Construction & Remodels
- Fences & Decks



James Robertson
PO Box 80897
Portland, OR 97280
(503) 516-1223
(503) 293-6586 (FAX)
robertsonpainting@gmail.com

CCB# 169852 Insured • Bonded

Your Ad Here

Just \$69 per month for a year!
Call Don at 503-244-6933 for more information or to place your ad.

Deadline for June is May 20.



SIGNS BY TOMORROW
SIGNS & GRAPHICS NATIONWIDE

The IDEA Today ... The SIGN Tomorrow!

- SIGNS
- BANNERS
- GRAPHICS
- MAGNETICS
- LETTERING
- LOGOS & MORE

503.244.0980

9220 SW Barbur Blvd. #111 - Portland - OR - 97219

Cultivating healthy gardens for over 20 years

Smiling Gardens

maintenance • design
consultation • renovation

• SmilingGardens.com • 971-275-4204 •

SUN DOG CONSTRUCTION .COM

REMODEL - RESTORE - REPAIR

Basements, Attics, Conversions
Kitchens, Bathrooms, Additions
Interior/Exterior, Moisture, Rot,
Maintenance/Handyman service
BIG JOBS, small jobs, Design...



LICENSED
BONDED/INSURED
CCB #173347

503.957.7559

AUTUMN SUN PARDEE
sundogconstruction@mac.com

MACKENZIE E. DOUGLAS, D.M.D.
Family Dentistry in Multnomah Village



phone 503-244-3712
fax 503-244-2122
e-mail office@villagedentalpdx.com
web www.villagedentalpdx.com

7615 SW Capitol Highway
Portland, OR 97219