

Hard At Work

Jefferson students are television stars for Tahan Advertising.



See Metro, inside.



Cropper Scores For Tech

It's a winning basket and one point win for Benson over Wilson.



See Sports, page B2.

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THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Audit Attacks Portland Crime

Portland compares favorably with other cities around the county, but its crime rate is a little higher than average. That's according to City Auditor Barbara Clark's annual report, which also reports that services have helped make the city safer and cleaner than five years ago. The report also warns of declining street conditions and increased sewer bills.

Senate Ballots Go Out

Mail ballots in the race to succeed Oregon Sen. Bob Packwood were sent out last week. Voters must return the ballots to the county election's office by Tuesday, Jan. 30 at 8 p.m. The latest polls show Democrat Ron Wyden and Republican Gordon Smith locked in a fierce battle, each with 42 percent support.

County Eyes New Courthouse

Multnomah County is considering a new courthouse at a cost of \$115 million. Officials say the current downtown courthouse is too old and small to meet current demands.

Heroes Honored

Mayor Vera Katz honored several citizens and paid tribute to the Portland Police Bureau for their help during the recent hostage taking and shooting at KOIN Center. The mayor's first "Order of the Heroes" awards was presented in her office.

Environmental Challenge Launched

Portland was the national kick-off site for an environmental leadership challenge by several businesses and organizations. Vice President Al Gore is one of the leaders behind the effort. The goal is to expand technologies in order to create more livable communities.

Salvation Army In Crisis

The government shutdown, proposed federal budget cuts and a critical reduction in holiday giving has jeopardized important social services for thousands of needy Oregonians. The Salvation Army is concerned that the financial impact to its organization will reduce its ability to provide services.

Tri-Met Upgrade Announced

Tri-Met has adopted 13 changes to enhance the transit agency's customer service. The \$2 million program includes computer upgrades, additional staff to investigate and track complaints and displaying employee numbers in the front of buses for passengers to identify the driver.

Rights Bill Supported

Low wage workers and their supporters called on the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission last week to adopt a Workers' Bill of Rights. The document would outline fair employment standards for workers in the Portland area, including livable wages, health insurance and safe and healthy workplaces.



The Portland Metropolitan Youth Mass Choir led by Director Terry Davis performs during the opening ceremony of Living the Dream: A Tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. The 11th annual event was held Monday at the Jefferson High School Performing Arts Center.

(Photo By Tony Washington)

Momentum Builds Against Median

BY PROMISE KING

Mounting voices are demanding that the concrete medium give way on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Phyllis Gaines of Vessels Tableware and Vicki Jack of McCoy Plumbing and many other businesses who have offices along the streetscape are asking for the removal of the center divide.

"The median is bad for business" says Gaines. "It is really hard for drivers to park and that drives potential customers away."

The same concern was echoed by James Posey of the Association of Minority Contractors.

"(The medium) is strangulating business here," screamed Posey. "Traffic flow is not the issue. The whole idea, that we don't have on-street parking is pathetic. The issue is there is no real plan for the vitality of this community."

"The median is an economic spoiler and should be removed from our back yard," demanded O.B. Hill, a business owner. "It is a control mechanism to keep this community perpetually dependent on outside malls, because the median takes one straight to other shopping centers in other communities."

Hill is the co-owner of Reflections, a coffee house, bookstore and gift shop at Walnut Park Center at Martin Luther King Boulevard and Killingsworth Street.

"Nobody really like it in this community," said Hill.

Even the Portland Development Commission believes the median stands in the way of economic development.

"The lack of left turns has constrained opportunities for business growth and expansion," says Michael McElwee, the commis-

sion's project coordinator.

"We think it's an important issue. We will be glad to be part of the discussion on the modification of the median," McElwee said.

But Fred Sawyer, a traffic specialist with Oregon Department of Transportation, is not convinced that the concrete divider is responsible for economic woes along the boulevard.

"They can say that, but I don't think they can prove it" argues Sawyer.

He said the median has enhanced traffic safety and improved traffic flow.

State Transportation Department spokesman Ron Scheele said removing the median could open the boulevard to traffic gridlock and a floodgate of accidents.

Statistical data shows that in 1976 there were 158 accidents on the boulevard, with an average daily traffic load of 17,245 vehicles.

In 1994, daily traffic loads increased to 22,245 vehicles, but the number of accidents dropped to 123.

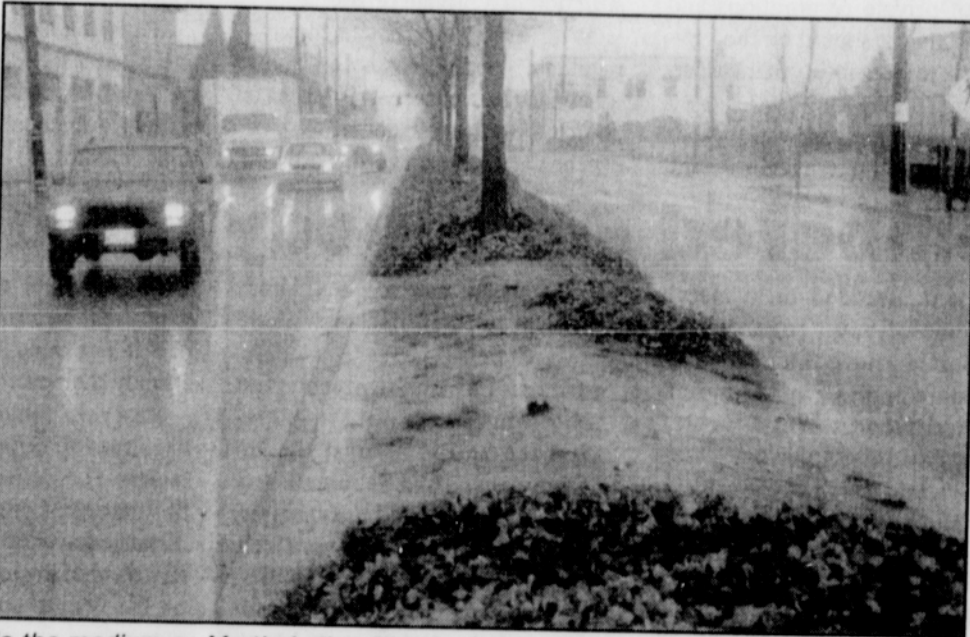
The Portland Observer has learned the state is in the process of doing a study with Portland State University on the effects of the median on business and its immediate environment.

Details about this study are still scanty, according to Scheele.

Ultimately, the city, Scheele said, dictates what's to be done as far as the median is concerned.

"If the city calls for any action and it fits within our guidelines. We're going to do it," the state official said.

The question of who will pay for the cost of reconstruction is uncertain and no one at this point is ready to pay the bill. Besides, the



Is the medium on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard an unfriendly barrier? Many residents are saying yes, and point to the many places that vegetation is worn away by pedestrian traffic where no crossings exist.

(Photo By Tony Washington)

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Minority Work Honored

Kiewit Construction, Inc. and its minority contractors were recently cited for work on Tri-Met's Elmonica project, a \$16.7 million operations facility for Westside light rail.

Kiewit exceeded a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal by two percent, finishing the construction with 18 percent of the work performed by minority and women-owned businesses, Tri-Met officials said.

The subcontractors included Joe Building Maintenance, photographer Cathy Cheney, Westlake Consultants, Inc., Edmunds Trucking and Excavating, MRC Co., Northern Cascade, Northwest Concrete Pumping, Inc., Northwest Boring Co., Rebar Interna-

tional Inc., Woodburn Masonry, Inc. Moore Commercial Interiors, Bilenco, Inc., Brainard Sheetmetal, Inc., Pacific Cascade Controls, SAS Balancing Services, Tri-County Concrete Pumping, Inc., Pro Landscape, New Dimensions Landscape, Inc. and Capitol Concrete.

Tri-Met also cited the contractors for an outstanding safety record. The two-story, 70,000 square foot building was completed with no accidents reported.

The structure is the first maintenance facility in America designed to serve the easy boarding low floor light rail cars that are being introduced with expansion of the Max light rail line.

Cooperation Sought For Discrimination Study

A study to determine if race and gender bias restricts minority and woman-owned firms from competing for public contracts needs business owners to participate in research efforts.

Last February, seven state and local government agencies established a consortium and commissioned an independent research study of public contracting in the tri-county Portland area.

Local officials are urging minority and women business owners to cooperate with the research firm, Mason Tillman Associates Ltd. of Oakland, Calif., and to contribute to the study by sharing accounts of their experiences.

"The study is imperative if we want to continue many of our minority and women-

owned business program activities, much less create new approaches," said Portland Mayor Vera Katz.

Over 300 personal interviews will be conducted with local business owners, public administrators and construction trade apprentices and journeymen.

Mason Tillman President Eleanor Ramsey said one of the key purposes of the study is to determine if discrimination exists in the marketplace.

"The average minority or woman business owner will likely never have a better opportunity to contribute to the public policy decisions that affect his or her business," Ramsey said.

To participate in the study or to get more information, contact Mason Tillman Association at (800) 346-2811.

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