

## The Death And Resurrection Of Light Rail



Portland Light Rail stops a Convention Center for commuters

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

It is the 10th birthday of Portland's highly-touted light-rail system and, indeed, "MAX" is credited with keeping 2000 cars an hour off the Banfield

freeway during rush hours; this translates into "about 27,000 people a day," we are told.

And it is a remarkable coincidence (if later to prove embarrassing), that

the centennial of America's ebullient auto industry is celebrated this year - in many of the very same cities that are boasting of yet a "new" advance in urban transportation. But who was

it that "sat on a wall" and ingeniously proclaimed, "things are what I say they are?" (Humpty Dumpty, "unbirthday").

The fast and efficient people-mov-

ing systems provided by electrically-powered urban mass transit are far from being a "new" or modern concept. In fact, this mode of transportation is older than the automobile industry. Readers of the Portland Observer and many teachers who, nation-wide, have introduced the facts from my book, "Black Inventors of America" are very much aware that the black engineer, Granville T. Woods, began patenting "Electro-Motive Railway Systems", June 26, 1888 No. 386,282 (over 90 total).

This prolific African American genius was described by the 'American Catholic Tribune' in 1888 as "the greatest electrician in the world" after he demonstrated his latest invention before an assemblage of engineers gathered in New York to see a "real-time demonstration. This device was the famous "third rail" which carried the electrical current that made underground light-rail practical all over the world, e.g. The Subway!

"So, what in the world has been going on for a hundred years" ask smog-bound Americans with reddened eyes, malfunctioning lungs, an ozone-depleted sky and a steadily-warming climate euphemistically described as the "Green House Effect." The residents of many an American city are wondering "why did we ask for all this pollution by tearing out those street car tracks and bringing in tens-of-thousands of fossil fuel-burning people wagons? To export mountains of steel scrap?"

Some of the more naive among the populace thought, perhaps, that recent and widely heralded series in the Philadelphia Inquirer news paper -- "America: who stole The Dream" --

would explore just such critical issues that threaten the health and economic welfare of the nation at the threshold of the 21st-Century.

But not a word on the peculiar demise and resurrection of "Light Rail" -- nothing on the almost religious fervor of a wondrous apotheosis driven by federal funding, e.g. paid for by the same cash-exhausted taxpayers who financed the concrete webs of freeways in the first place. The very same who bought tens of millions of Detroit's gas-guzzling splendors and hundreds of billions of barrels of Middle East oil to expedite a frantic exodus from the cities, leaving the urban infrastructure in economic and social shambles.

Avoiding for the moment the very unpleasant realization that there is some connection here to the trillions spent over the decades on "defense of our vital interests in the Persian Gulf", some of us may indulge in a bit of nostalgia. If you think that new MAX light rail car at Tri-Met's Elmonica operating facility is pretty, then you should have seen the beauties Made In America 60 years ago.

These "streamlined projectiles" as they were described by the newspapers in my hometown were manufactured by the 'St. Louis Car and Foundry Co.' and did not help fuel a negative balance of trade (Portland's light rail is made in Germany and assembled in Sacramento, California). I remember that as teenagers in the late 1930's we would watch at key intersections for unwary motorists who couldn't believe the acceleration of the new cars. Light rail made converts of those who survived, but the foundry didn't. Why? Continued next week.

## TRADE UNIONS IN THE MODERN BLACK COMMUNITY

Now is a good time to recall how much the relationship between the trade union movement and the black community has changed over the past hundred years. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most labor unions--like almost all institutions in America--kept blacks

out. That being so, blacks often became replacement workers when white union laborers when on strike. And who could blame them? Why should they respect the picket lines of organizations that denied them memberships?

All that began to change, though, when A. Philip Randolph organized

the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the 1920's. Blacks scored the first major breakthrough in their struggle for admission into the ranks of organized labor in 1930, when the American Federation of Labor (AFL) recognized the Brotherhood. As the leader of an AFL Affiliate and later as a member of the AFL-CIO's

Executive Council, Randolph led the fight against discrimination with the trade unions.

Today, almost three million blacks belong to unions, about one out of four black workers, in comparison, only one out of six workers overall is organized. So

while once blacks couldn't get into unions, today they are "over represented" in terms of their proportion of the total American population.

Trade union memberships has meant a great deal to black workers. In 1992, the average non-union black

worker earned \$322 a week, while the average earnings of black union members were \$468, or 45 percent higher. Besides wage increases, a union card also means added benefits, including better health insurance, pensions, and other on-the-job safeguards.

## State to help businesses on MLK

The state of Oregon wants business development in northeast Portland, and they're open for business locally to make it happen.

Lailly Cully of the Oregon Economic Development Department is available every Wednesday at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs facility at 4134 N. Vancouver Ave. to advise on and market five business assistance programs. Together, they offer \$1.9 million in loans and grants for business startups and expansion, in some cases under terms available through no other program, and in few other places in Oregon.

For instance, the state Business Development Fund can provide loans of up to \$250,000 as up to 40 percent

of a financing package to pay for land, buildings, equipment and machinery for an emerging small business. They are intended for manufacturing enterprises and may not be used for retail or food service operations - unless the business is located on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

"The program was intended to promote manufacturing," Cully says. "The theory is that if you get that, the little delis will follow." However, MLK been targeted for special treatment as part of governor John Kitzhaber's Community Solutions program. Borrowers do need to employ one new worker for every \$15,000 of the loan, and to give preference to local residents through

first-source hiring.

Another program, the Entrepreneurial Development Loan Fund, provides small loans - not more than \$15,000 - to small companies that have been in operation for 15 months or less, and either has revenues of \$50,000 or less or is owned by a severely handicapped person. Originally conceived to help wood product-dependent towns, the loans are available for 10.25 percent interest and, as Cully points out, "You can't get that from any bank." "People need to know that the resources are here," she says. "This is a chance for northeast Portland to knock on the door and take advantage."

Cully can be reached at 249-7744.

## Ginger Ehn Lew Deputy Administrator



Ginger Ehn Lew, as Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, serves as the chief operating officer for the agency and is responsible for policy development, program supervision and the day-to-day management of agency operations.

Before coming to SBA, Ms. Lew served as the General Counsel at

the U.S. Department of Commerce and as a top advisor to the late Secretary Ron Brown. Lew's government experience also extends to the Carter administration, where she served as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia.

Immediately prior to joining the Clinton administration, Ms. Lew worked with a start-up, bio-mass technology small business based in San Francisco. As vice president and general counsel, she was involved in all phases of its operation including product development and licensing agreements, product patent and trademark registrations, regulatory permitting and site approvals.

Ms. Lew had spent the previous six years as a trade principal with Arthur Young and Company. At Arthur Young, Lew was a regulatory and business advisor to small, medium and Fortune 500 companies, with a primary focus on international markets. Her clients included large and

small computer hardware and software manufacturers, environmental technology manufacturers and distributors, consumer goods manufacturers, and professional service companies.

A native Californian from the San Francisco Bay area, Ms. Lew received her law degree from the University of California at Berkeley (Boalt Hall) in 1974, and her undergraduate degree in political science from UCLA. Ms. Lew has also practiced law with private law firms as well as with government agencies.

Ms. Lew has been active in civic and Asian American community organizations and was co-founder of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Washington, D.C. She has served as chair of the National Democratic Caucus of Asian Pacific Americans, and of the Judicial Council of the Democratic National Committee.

## Health director calls for partnership

BY SELLY KING

The executive director of the Center for Community Mental Health (CCMH) Carol R. Chism told participants at the 1st African American Wellness Conference to join efforts geared toward achieving a healthier community.

In this era of sky-rocketing health care cost, Chism says CCMH is willing and able to collaborate with other agencies in order to make health care affordable and available for all residents of North/Northeast and Metro Portland.

"CCMH is poised more than ever to be a partner in ensuring quality mental health care for the needy in our immediate community and we are not going to compromise this position as long as we exist," as-



Carol R. Chism

sured Chism.

Currently the non-profit mental health agency is championing efforts to educate the masses about solu-

tions to behavioral health care.

"We want to let folks know that it is alright to seek help if one feels too stressed to function properly in the society. In the coming months we will aggressively address this concern," says the Executive director.

CCMH serves the mental health need of N/NE Portland residents regardless of race, color, creed or sexual orientation. It relies on contributions and donations from well-wishers. For more information call 289-1167.

Organizers of the Wellness conference say, the overall goal is to improve the health status of people of color living in Oregon. Stats show that minorities in the state lagged overwhelmingly behind in health care coverage compared to whites.

## Spanish broadcasting in Miami

New Age Broadcasting, Inc., owners of Miami Spanish language radio stations WXDJ-FM El Zol 95 and WRMA-FM Romance 106.7, announce that they are being acquired by Spanish Broadcasting System Inc. (SBS) for \$110,000,000. New Age is owned by Russ Oasis (50%), Alan Potamkin (25%) and Robert Potamkin (25%).

SBS, the largest Hispanic-owned media entity in the United States,

owns and operates ten Hispanic radio stations in New York City, Los Angeles, Miami and Chicago (pending FCC approval). SBS is controlled by Raul Alarcon, Jr.

Earlier this year, SBS closed on the acquisition of WPAT-FM in New York City creating that markets first and only Spanish language FM duopoly. Last month, SBS entered into an agreement to purchase WYSY-FM in Chicago from Infinity Broadcasting.

The President of New Age, Russ Oasis, whose background in radio broadcasting dates to 1970, is being named Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of SBS and will continue to operate the Miami stations as well as SBS's other properties.

CIBC Wood Gundy Securities Corporation has been retained by SBS as its financial advisor and securities placement agent in connection with the acquisition.