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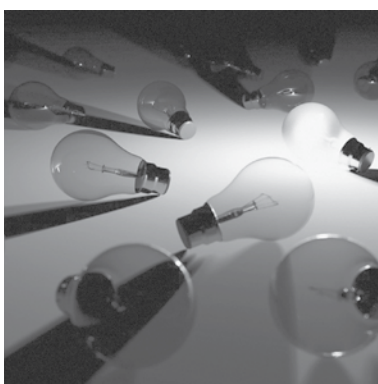
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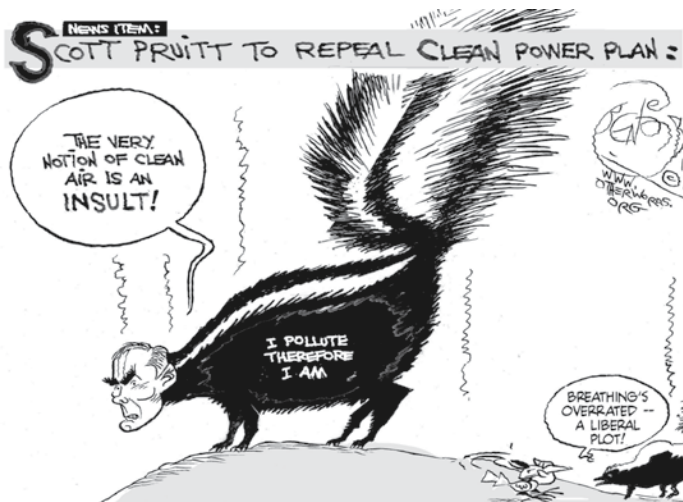
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What's on your list today?™



PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

TriMet is considering several service improvements, including splitting up the number 4 line for increased reliability and a low income fare option. Open houses to hear from the public are scheduled over the next two weeks.

Next Stop: Better Services

TriMet calls for input on service needs

BY DANNY PETERSON THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

TriMet wants to hear from you as it considers new service improvements, including 24-hour-bus service to the airport, rerouted bus lines to reflect workers' commutes, and splitting up the No. 4 bus, which often gets slowed down by heavy traffic, to improve reliability.

The No. 4 is the longest route in the transit system, running from St. Johns to downtown Port-

land and all the way to Gresham.

A recent report showed that TriMet's ridership is down overall since 2001 and even more so in north and northeast Portland, where the city's historic African American communities have lost population.

The report pointed to increased housing prices, which have sky-rocketed over the past two decades, as a possible culprit. Portland also recorded the sixth-fastest rise in rent prices in the nation. The high housing costs are thought to be a major factor for people not being able to afford public transportation or for being forced to move.

To combat this lower ridership,

TriMet is proposing a low-income fare, which was made possible by a \$678,000 federal grant from the Department of Transportation, part of a state transportation package passed by the Legislature. The proposed low-income fare would be the same cost as honored citizens' fare, which is currently \$1.25 per two and half hour ride, as opposed to the usual \$2.50 for a regular adult.

"We recognize the need for a low income fare—that some folks have to choose between paying for their bus pass or feeding their family," TriMet Communications Manager Roberta Altstadt told

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Healthcare Open Enrollment Begins

Gov. Kate Brown is highlighting the importance of health insurance and the local help available to Oregonians who wish to sign up for insurance in 2018 under the Affordable Care Act.

Beginning Nov. 1, Oregonians can sign up for, renew, or change their health insurance plans at HealthCare.gov.

"In Oregon, we want people to get health insurance," said Gov. Brown. "Already, 95 percent of Oregonians are covered and 100 percent of children have access. Now is the time to get health in-

surance if you don't already have it, and to re-enroll if you have coverage through HealthCare.gov."

Open enrollment -- for those who buy plans on their own because they do not have coverage through their employer runs through Dec. 15. It opens the door to change plans and, for those who do not have insurance, to buy a plan and avoid a potential penalty on their 2018 taxes.

Despite the ongoing debate about the nation's health care system on the federal level, health insurance and financial assistance,

including special plans with lower out-of-pocket costs when getting care for those who qualify, are still available to Oregonians through HealthCare.gov.

The Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace, a division of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services, provides local assistance over the phone and through a statewide network of health insurance agents and community partners. To get connected to free local help, visit OregonHealthCare.gov and click "Find local help."