

# The Oregonian

## WHIM! PROPOSES TRAVEL ADVENTURES

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Summary: The westside volunteer group is promoting new ways for people to fit the Washington Park station into their jaunts and work lives

The \$46 million Washington Park light-rail station has sprung a whim of a deal.

This is no ordinary whim. This is WHIM!, which stands for West Hills Intermodal Magic!

And it's hardly capricious. Just let WHIM!'s spirited coordinator start talking station-springing ideas.

**"Let's use it!" says Mike Sublett, also president of the Sylvan-Highlands Neighborhood Association. He makes a good spokesman for mass transit, although he's not an agency employee.**

He is a persuasive cheerleader for a core of 20 volunteers promoting travel connections by bus, rail, foot, bike, and wheelchair to connect westside neighborhoods and make the area easier for visitors to get around in.

They've been seeking how to make connections neighbor to neighbor and neighbor to region. They're asking how to increase trail and transit-line use and they're actively promoting future extensions -- maybe more bus routes or connections, for instance.

**Sublett** emphasizes that the Washington Park regional station is "the sole connection to a \$180-million tunnel and the only stop between Goose Hollow and the Sunset Transit Center." It's the only stop for 4.5 miles of line, he likes to point out.

**Sublett**, a 39-year-old man optimistic enough to wear walking shorts for a winter hike in Portland's hills, seems to think everything is possible.

"We paid for it. It's ours," he said of the station.

"There's a feeling in the (West Hills) neighborhoods that it's a part of the neighborhoods, an organic part . . . .

"We wanted to break out of this immediate circle" of visitor attractions and "promote use of this station outside this realm," he explained.

Maps show short treks Volunteers have created short trail maps and descriptions of places from roads in the hills on the west -- Canyon Court and Scholls Ferry Road to the north; north -- Fairview Boulevard and the Wildwood Trail into the Hoyt Arboretum; east -- above the station on Knight Boulevard and Kingston Drive, past the Japanese Garden and into the Northwest district, and south -- Fairmount Boulevard, Patton Road and Humphrey Boulevard.

When westside light rail started last September, WHIM! volunteers were at the station, passing out maps and route 63 bus schedules, encouraging urban hiking, telling people about underused recreation gems and inviting riders into the area's "back yard" beyond the many visitor attractions.

For the future, they're working on a millennium map of the Washington Park area and neighborhoods -- such as the Nob Hill/Northwest Portland and Powell's Books walking maps of connecting districts.

Advocating better signs "We see people lost," **Sublett** said of visitors arriving at the "world-class station." WHIM! supporters hope a map will help, and they're pressing for better station signs explaining connections with the No. 63 bus.

All the WHIM! ideas are not well-received. For instance, some folks at Metro are not keen on proposals for commuter-shared parking in the adjacent lots used by visitors to the Oregon Zoo, World Forestry Center, Children's Museum, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

And hiking or adding time to commuting is not an option for a lot of people.

But Ray Asbury, a Southwest resident who lives off the north section of busy Scholls Ferry Road, south of the Sylvan Interchange, decided to make the station work for him in his weekday commute to Hillsboro.

No buses run near Asbury's home, so he drives up Scholls and over the Sunset Highway bridge to Sylvan. He parks nearby, catches a No. 63 or 58 bus east to the station, and rides the train west to Hillsboro.

He has a few variations, depending on when he can make connections. It can be inconvenient if he wants to work late, and it has doubled his commuting time to 40 minutes.

"But it's much easier on me," Asbury said, noting that he reads on the light-rail ride. And the gas-cost saving is another reason to continue, he said, claiming he saved \$200 between September and December last year in the same months by using light rail.

"I would even pay some reasonable fee if they used the lot (near the station) for parking," Asbury said.

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**Caption:** Photo by BRENT WOJAHN of The Oregonian staff Graphic WHIM! WAYS