

September 7, 2016

Word Count 221

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## QuickPoint! – MAX at 30: Portland Transit Needs a New Plan

By John A. Charles, Jr.

September 5 marked the official 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of TriMet’s light rail system. Like many Portland residents, I took a free ride that day and felt that this was a big step forward for transit service.

Unfortunately, actual performance never lived up to the hype. My hopes for “high-speed” transit were dashed when I discovered how many stops there were. The average train speed today is only 18 MPH.

My expectation that MAX would include five or six train cars was also incorrect. There are only two cars per train on MAX, and there will never be more than two cars because Portland has 200-foot blocks in downtown. Longer trains would block busy intersections.

The cost of construction also spiraled out of control. The Orange line to Milwaukie cost \$210 million per mile, making it hundreds of times more costly than simple bus improvements.

In short, MAX is a low-speed, low-capacity, high-cost system, when what we really need is just the opposite—a higher-speed, higher-capacity, low-cost system.

Regional leaders should pull the plug on any more rail and start focusing on the future of transit, which will feature driverless vehicles, door-to-door delivery, and private car-sharing services such as Uber Technologies.

The passenger rail era died a hundred years ago. It’s time for Portland to get into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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