

QuickPoint! - Portland to Expand Streetcar, Riders Not Included

By John A. Charles, Jr.

In mid-November, the Portland City Council approved a 1.3-mile extension of the Portland Streetcar in Northwest Portland to service anticipated housing development near the Montgomery Park building.

Council members assumed that the streetcar is a critical mobility option for Portland residents, but the facts suggest otherwise. According to TriMet, monthly ridership in 2024 has been 39% lower than ridership during 2018, despite a rise in population during that period.

The Streetcar is simply irrelevant to most residents. It's a low-speed, low-capacity, high-cost method of travel that doesn't go many places. Even for those who love trains, the Streetcar is not practical for most trips.

Historically, Streetcar construction has been paid for by various sources including property owners, parking revenues, and grants. Federal money is always the linchpin. Portland expects to submit a large grant request to the federal government no later than June of next year; but with the election of Donald Trump, those subsidies might not be available.

Without federal cash, who will pay? Certainly not riders. They never pay anything for construction.

With few riders and disappearing money, this is a nostalgia trip that is doomed to fail. The Council should do future taxpayers a favor and cancel the expansion plan.

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November 27, 2024

Word Count: 203

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