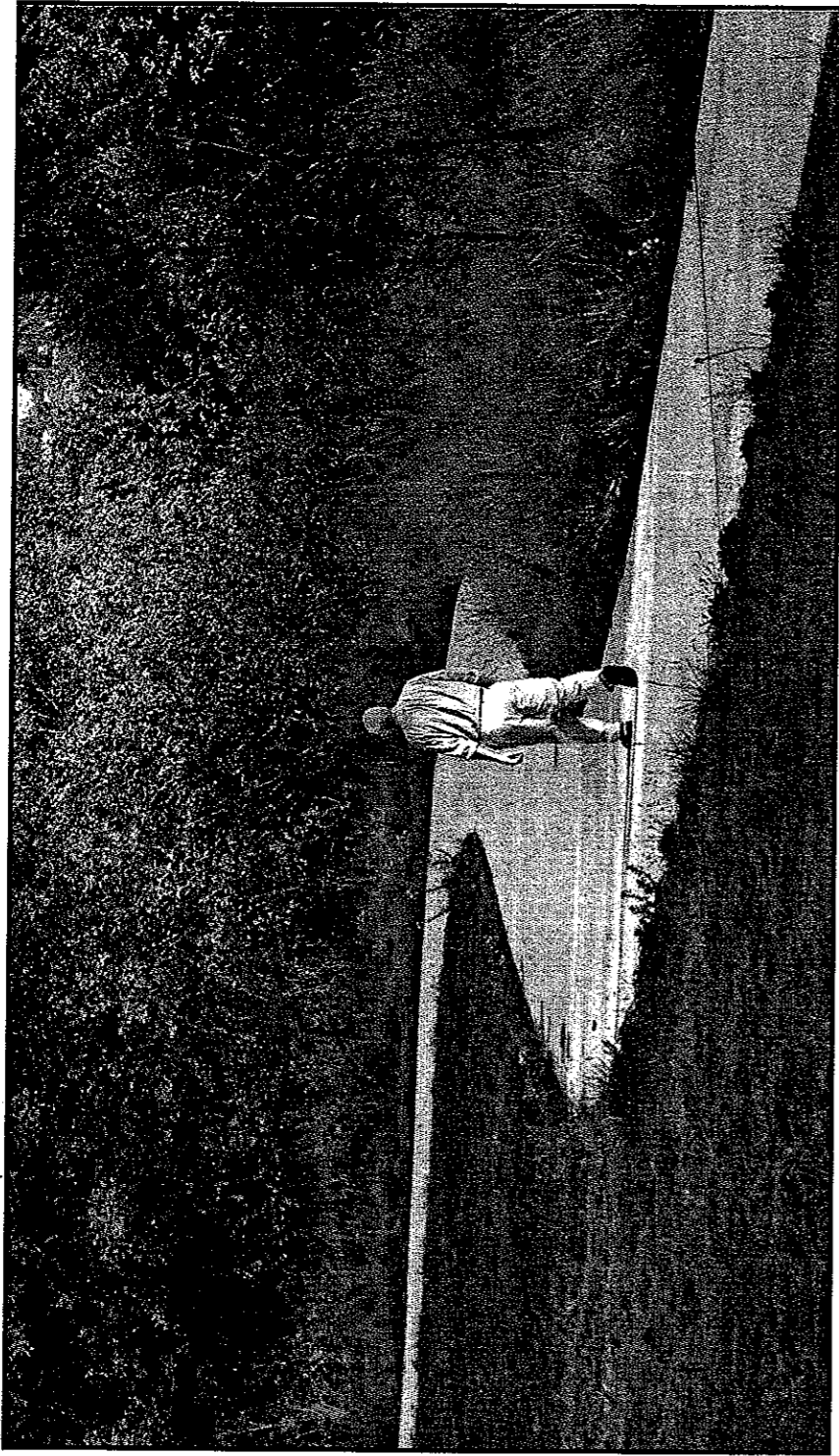


OPINION

OPINION EDITOR: GEORGE REDE • 503-221-8391
COMMENTARY@NEWS.OREGONIAN.COM

COMMENTARY ON ISSUES THAT MATTER IN THE NORTHWEST

PORTLAND'S TRAIL SYSTEM



Ribboning through parks, jogging through neighborhoods, silencing through cities, the Fanno Creek Trail is a key connector for Tualath, Tigard, Beaverton — and beyond. JAY FARBMAN

The time's right to turn "The City That Works" into "The City That Walks" by taking the area's existing trail network and . . .

connecting.the.(green).dots

From Portland to Perth to Prague, the story's the same: Energy costs are soaring. Public health is plummeting. Air quality is racing water quality to be the first declared downright dangerous.

It almost seems events actually are conspiring to make us rethink three core elements of modern life.

- Where we live.
- How we live.
- The manner in which we move around.

The response may be fledgling, but all around the world the trend is clear. In city after city, governments are getting engaged in nothing less than the retrofitting of the urban landscape.

Portland is lucky. It got a head start.



JONATHAN NICHOLAS

Insider: Top 20 targeted trails | Page E2

...
The urban remodel began here way back in 1905. That was when a cadre of civic visionaries imagined a walking trail that would wrap around the booming young city. Their goal was to connect Portland's most significant surviving open spaces — public parks. They dubbed their dream the 40-Mile Loop.

By carving connectivity from chaos, trail planners hoped to create a sum much greater than its parts, transforming a mere collection into an actual community.

In fits and starts, through the years, metropolitan Portland has added all sorts of walking bits and bicycling bobs to this network. Yet when we pause to take stock, it's clear the configuration has been cobbled together from little more than

financial crumbs left on the transportation table. In the past 50 years, less than half of 1 percent of all transportation money spent in the Portland area has been used for trails.

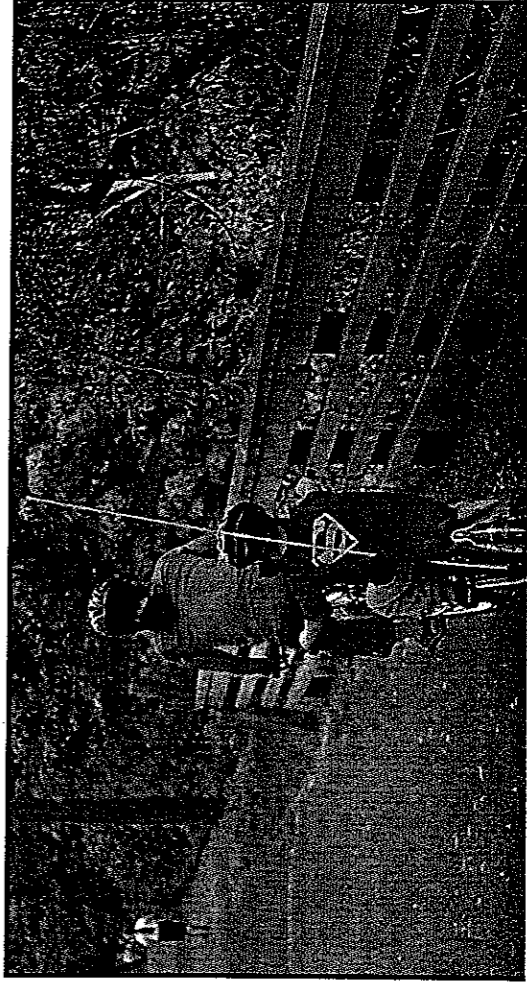
Yet metro-area voters repeatedly pass — by heavy majorities — bond measures to buy more greenspaces.

They do so not because they have an inordinate fondness for flower beds. They do so surely because they increasingly recognize the crucial role greenspaces play as urban refuges, as locales for carbon sequestration, as watersheds and as wildlife corridors.

So the time now has come for the most innovative — and most expensive — idea of all: Connecting the green dots.

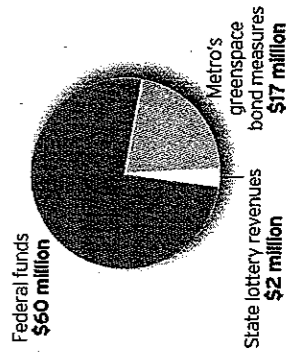
•••

David Bragdon is high on connectivity and low Please see **WALKING**, Page E2



Trail funding

Since 1993, agencies have spent \$79 million developing the Portland region's emerging trail system.



ERIC BAKER/THE OREGONIAN

You used to have to be a Superman

Walking: Blue-ribbon panel will ID funds, strategy

Continued from Page E1

on patience. The president of Metro, the area's regional government, says that at the current rate of progress the region's proposed trail system will not be complete until 2098. He's just appointed a Blue Ribbon Committee for Trails and given the group more than marching orders. He's given them a deadline. He wants their report by October.

The committee's charge is twofold:

- Evaluate just where regional trails fit in the long list of metropolitan priorities.
- Recommend potential strategies for expanding, and paying for, the region's emerging trail network.

Bragdon is no starry-eyed, khaki-shorted, great blue heron-hugging tree cuddler. He's an arch-urbanist. His idea of a stunning view is a bus pulling into a station on time to make its connection with a waiting train. But last summer, Bragdon convened in Portland a Connecting Green summit. He wanted to get people talking about a radical new way of looking at regional economic development.

Bragdon insists that modern, successful city-state economies have moved beyond a time in which people assembled where the jobs were. He's convinced that people now choose where they want to live ... then the jobs follow.

Where people want to live, he says, is in a city in which they can feel connected, from where they sleep to where they work, shop and play — connected by an accessible network of walking trails, bicycling paths and mass transit options.

The metro area's regional trail system now embraces 25 cities and four counties within the Portland/Vancouver region. Planners have been dreaming for years about inte-

grating them. The spawn of their labors is the astonishing vision that Bragdon just presented to his blue-ribbon brigade — a 950-mile network that would place every metropolitan Portlander living and working, shopping and going to school within a half-mile of an urban trail.

The big question: How will we pay for it?

• Four out of every 10 people in the Portland area live too far away to comfortably walk to a neighborhood park. For those fortunate enough to have ready access to park property, what they encounter when they get there is land where more than half has been deforested.

That means land that, even though it's greenspace, is not cleaning our air, not cleaning our water, not ameliorating global warming, not even serving as good wildlife habitat.

As if all this weren't bad enough, what greenspace we have is linked by a hopelessly disjointed array of trail segments more noteworthy for its gaps than its greatness.

What that means is that we have something like 600 miles of missing pieces. The tab, including buying rights of way from willing sellers and building trails, could run as high as \$1 billion. Which explains why Bragdon knew exactly who he needed for his blue ribboners: Big Thinkers.

Under the leadership of Dave Yaden, the group includes the usual meat and potatoes — business executives and elected officials. But they're spiced with a pinch or two of creative types. Their collective challenge is to craft a plan to change both the amounts this region spends on trails and the rate at which it spends them.

That can only happen if the region taps into fresh sources of funding.

A few early ideas to get them started:

- The upcoming reauthorization of the federal Transportation Act will afford opportunities for dramatically expanding the kind of projects that can qualify for transportation funding.

• Look for more money for trails to come from federal health funding, from fitness

and recreation funding, even from climate-change and clean-air funding.

• Build on the success of the federal Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program. The Rails to Trails Conservancy is urging a \$2 billion plan under which 50 cities would each get \$50 million to lure people away from their automobiles. Portland is ideally positioned to be first on this list.

• Ours is a rare metropolis bordered by vast swathes of federal land. Trail links to Uncle Sam's trees could be funded in part by the Forest Service.

• The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, which receives more than \$60 million in lottery proceeds each year, could play a much more significant role as a maker, marketer and maintainer of urban trails.

• Who could fail to fall in love with a ballot measure for regional trails in 2010?

• Can Portland really change itself from "The City That Works" to "The City That Walks"? The challenge is as huge as the concept is visionary. Even a cursory glance through trail proposals suggests a mind-numbing range in everything from design and development costs, through likely intensity of use, to environmental bang for the civic buck.

Yet a common thread runs through all: Each proposed trail already boasts a cast of classic Portland characters, committed citizen activists, working on its behalf.

They already are convinced that in the city of tomorrow people will embrace the notion of walking and bicycling, connecting with buses and trolleys and streetcars and trains, to get them almost everywhere they want to go. They'll do so because they'll feel much happier and healthier living this way. And because they'll feel like better shepherds of our little slice of the planet, too.

The goal, you might say, is historic. To make Portland in 2045 look like it looked in 1845: the perfect place for pioneers.

Jonathan Nicholas, associate editor, can be reached at 503-221-8533 or jonathannicholas@news.oregonian.com

To see photos and other details of Metro's top 20 targeted trails, go to: www.oregonmetro.gov. Enter "Blue Ribbon" in the search field and follow the links.

Percentages indicate amount of trail already built. Dollar amounts are informed guesstimates of completion costs, including land acquisition.

Columbia Slough

Major east-west corridor boasts rich cultural ties to aboriginal trails. Way prettier than it sounds. 21 miles
28 percent built
\$13 million

East Buttes Loop

Connects people with parks, schools, jobs and the distinctive forested bumps that burst from Portland's east side. 13 miles
0 percent
\$16 million

Fanno Creek

Celebrates a signature urban stream while disguised as a commuting corridor for Tualatin, Durham, Tigard and Beaverton. 19 miles
60 percent
\$45 million

Forty-Mile Loop

Historic "hub" wraps around the region linking to neighborhood "spokes." 102 miles
80 percent

\$25 million

Gresham/Fairview

Knits east Multnomah County folks into fabric of workplaces and way cool picnic spots. 6 miles

56 percent

\$4 million

Hillsdale to

Lake Oswego

If the Hillsdale farmers market has run out of organic onions, walk on down to the one in Lake Oswego. 5 miles
80 percent
\$10 million

Mount Hood

Connection

Hike or bike from mild to wild. 30 miles
0 percent
\$30 million

Oregon City Loop

Think John McLoughlin on a tandem. The end of the Oregon Trail's funnels into a family of paths to Portland. 16 miles
0 percent
\$19 million

Path to the Pacific

City to surf, with Stub Stewart State Park along the way. 127 miles
0 percent
\$39 million

Portland

Demonstration Project

Boosts trail use by crafting bike boulevards, calming traffic and

coaching couch potatoes. You like social engineering? Here comes the full meal deal. 34 miles
0 percent
\$150 million

Rock Creek

Scenically exposes Sillicon Foresters to technology of unvirtual trees. 11 miles
25 percent
\$8 million

A Sandy River

Runs Through It

Scenic chute from city to Columbia River Gorge. 5 miles
0 percent
\$11 million

Scouter Mountain/

Mount Scott

Makes cycling and strolling viable within an emerging population center. 15 miles
0 percent
\$45 million

Sullivan's Gulch

High-volume commuting corridor connects east side to downtown. Amsterdam, eat your heart out. 7 miles
0 percent
\$16 million

Tonquin Trail

Mr. Wilsonville, Mrs. Sherwood, Ms. Tualatin: May I introduce you to the southwest suburbs? 18 miles
0 percent

\$26 million

Trolley Trail

Marries the ingénue that is Milwaukie to the Springwater Corridor's leading man. 7 miles
0 percent
\$3 million

Tualatin River

Greenway

Seen at last! The Tualatin, the river long thought invisible. 6 miles
5 percent
\$5 million

Westside Wonder

North/south corridors link people to parks, jobs and town centers in Washington County. 21 miles
18 percent
\$47 million

Willamette Greenway

North

Go north, Young East-bank Esplanade. Riverfront connections, from downtown to Linnton and North Portland. 23 miles
0 percent
\$40 million

Willamette Greenway

South

From Portland through Lake Oswego to Wilsonville. Mmmm, I can almost taste the wine country already. 22 miles
0 percent
\$75 million

— *Jonathan Nicholas*