

A Light Rail Future

The March OERHS meeting held at OMSI provided interesting information regarding Tri-Met's light rail plans. The slide presentation by Bill Hoey gave members a glimpse of what might well be the local transit future for the Portland metropolitan area.

Current consideration focuses upon a light rail route traveling from the downtown Transit Mall to the Gresham Fairgrounds via the Steel Bridge, the Banfield Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way, NE 92nd Ave., and East Burnside Street. Stations would be located at Memorial Coliseum, Lloyd Center, and the Gateway Shopping Center, with others yet to be determined. Stops downtown would likely be limited to the Transit Mall since light rail cars may be designed for platform loading. Along East Burnside a platform will be built at each station, located either on the side of the street, or in a protected center right-of-way.

Opposition to the plan so far seems to be limited to Burnside Street homeowners who, according to an April 6 article in *The Community Press*, fear the necessary widening of the street would in the loss of lawns or driveways. Of course, the exact location of the right-of-way is still not known.

East Burnside Street has been chosen for light rail for two main

➤ O.E.R.H.S. ANNUAL BANQUET TO BE HELD NEXT WEEK ➤

Our annual banquet, postponed until General Manager Paul Class returned from his eastern projects, will be held Friday April 29th at 7 o'clock, in Room "B" of the Beaverton North's Chuck Wagon, 2875 S.W. Cedar Hills Blvd. Dinner will cost \$3.25 each, payable at the door. Please plan on attending and bring spouses and friends!

Entertainment to include:

- ◆ NEWS OF PAUL'S EASTERN PROJECTS
- ◆ TRACTION FILMS & DISCUSSION
- ◆ ASPEN & SEATTLE TROLLEY PROJECT REPORTS

reasons; it is less heavily traveled than SE Stark or Glisan, and it may still legally be public land due to its former use as an electric railway right of way. 🚃

The Past is Prologue; the Mt. Hood Railway

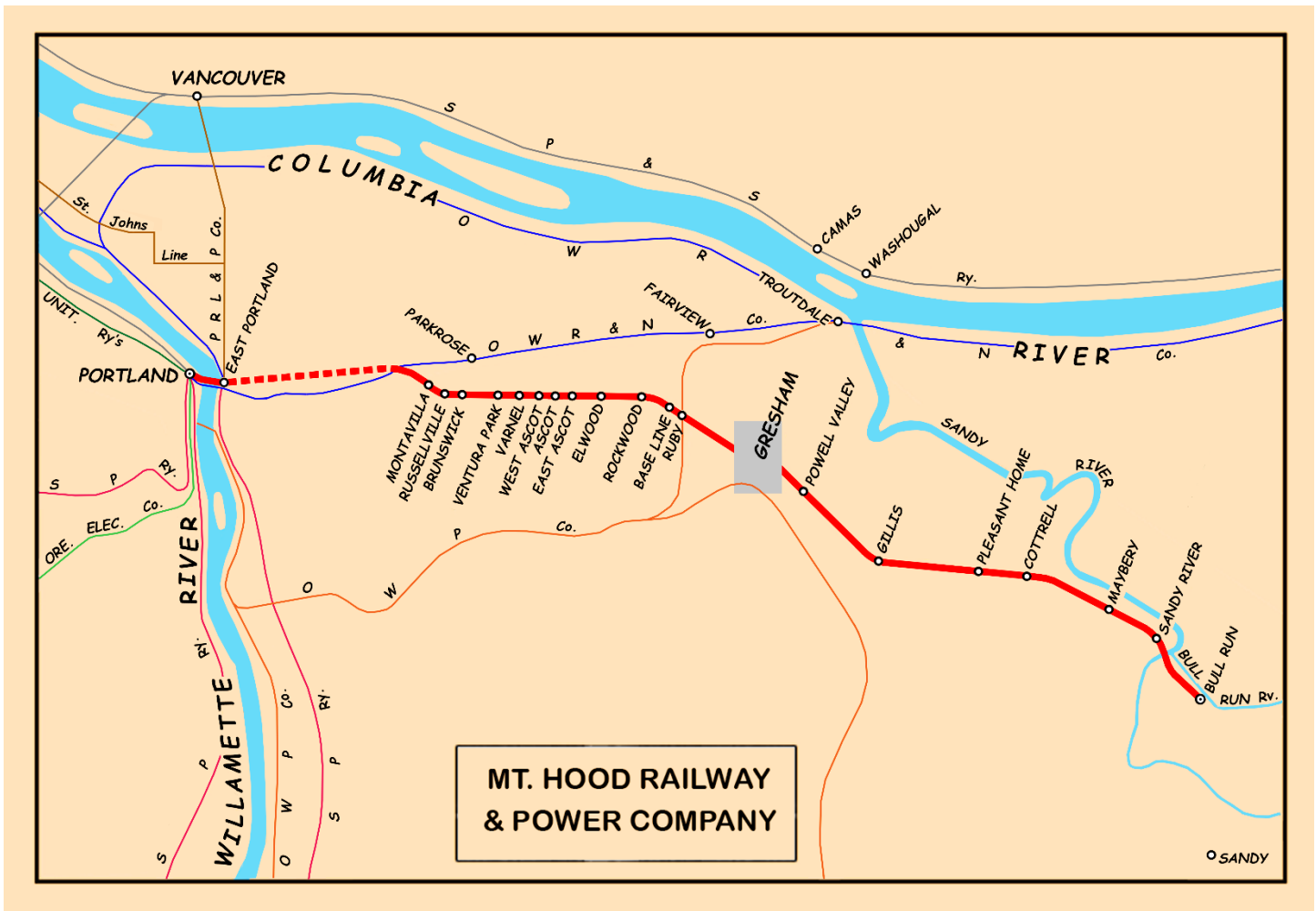
Tri-Met's much discussed plan to build a light rail line to Gresham may seem like a radical concept to some, yet the idea is far from new. The proposed route follows almost exactly in the footsteps of the historical line opened by the Mt. Hood Railway & Power Company in 1911. As Shakespeare's character Sebastian observed, "What's past is prologue."

Although planning had begun as early as 1906 various delays led to the railway not being completed until 1911. Then, as it turned out, Mt. Hood Railway trains were in

operation for only a few months before the giant Portland Railway, Light Power Company bought the Mt. Hood Railway & Power Company. PRL&P was interested in their electric power generation capability, as well as rights-of-way.

Mt. Hood Railway trains were originally drawn by ex-Oregon Water Power & Railway Company steam locomotives (OWP was merged into PRL&P in 1906). Their rolling stock included closed passenger trailers 151, 152, 153, and 154 and express freight cars 101 and 102. The coaches were ordered from the G. C. Kuhlman Car Co. of

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This map from a contemporary brochure described the Mt. Hood Railway as “without question the Tourist Scenic Route of the World.” Other Portland-area steam and electric railroads shown include Portland Railway, Light & Power; Oregon Electric; United Railways; Oregon Water Power & Railway; Oregon Washington Railroad & Navigation; Spokane, Portland and Seattle; and Southern Pacific.

Cleveland, Ohio (a J. G. Brill subsidiary) in 1911 and the express cars from J. G. Brill the next year.

Many believe the Kuhlman's were the most beautiful interurban cars ever used in Portland. Certainly, with their classic arched windows, stained glass upper sash, and interurban-style Dutch doors, they vie with Oregon Electric rolling stock for that honor.

PRL&P began electrification of the Mt. Hood Railway line soon after its sale on April 24, 1912. The work was completed by March 1, 1913. The following year, motors and electrical equipment were added to the former Mt. Hood Railway cars. PRL&P renumbered the four

interurbans 1124-1127 and the express cars, usually referred to as “box motors,” became 1190-1191.

The Mt. Hood Railway's route began at a connection with the OWR&N near present day NE 86th Avenue and Wasco Street. It then proceeded diagonally across NE Multnomah and Hassalo streets and then turned south in a cut along what is now NE 91st Avenue. At NE Glisan Street the line went through a tunnel, emerging near today's private school. It then proceeded south to Burnside then east to SE 181st Avenue, where it entered private right-of-way. Next, the line travelled briefly through downtown Gresham along 7th street, then headed south and east along

what is now Orient Drive. Final portions of the trip were on private right-of-way, terminating at the Bull Run power station. Rails can still be seen in the power station floor.

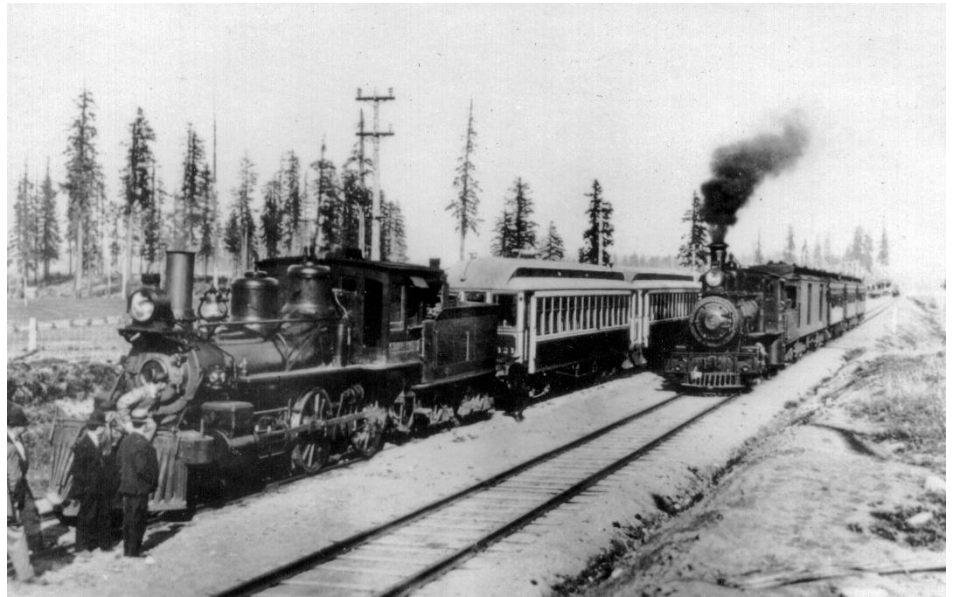
Due to their large streetcar system PRL&P passenger trains had no need to access downtown Portland via the OWR&N. Although freight trains used the route out East Burnside for a few years, PRL&P had other plans for the railway line now designated the Mt. Hood Division.

The western end of the Mt. Hood Railway right-of-way was used to connect city streetcars with a line to Troutdale, which opened in 1907. Passengers to and from Portland

transferred to the Troutdale Line at the new Mt. Hood Depot, which was located on Northeast 91st Avenue and Irving Street in Montavilla.

Meanwhile, the eastern end of the Mt. Hood route became a stub service from Linneman Junction to Bull Run. Portland passengers on the Bull Run Line either transferred at Linneman Junction (from Springwater Division trains to Estacada) or Ruby Junction (from Montavilla).

A bridge was built over the Sandy River and a park and picnic area called Dodge Park located on the river below. Like Oaks Park and



In the months prior to electrification OWP locomotive No. 1 and PRLP 1121 class trailers wait "in the hole" while No. 2 passes by with former Mt. Hood Ry. baggage and passenger trailers.



No. 1126, seen at the Sellwood Car Barn during the 1920s, was one of the most beautiful interurbans in Portland. She was built by the Kuhlman Car Co. in 1911 or 1912.

Council Crest Park this venue was designed to attract additional riders.

Abandonment for the Bull Run Line came in 1927, by which time the run from Ruby Junction was freight-only. The railway right-of-way was ceded to Clackamas and Multnomah counties and quickly turned into roads.

Even though the Mt. Hood Railway is long gone some of the old station names can be spotted on modern maps, including Montavilla (where a connection with a branch of the MV streetcar line was made at NE 91st and Irving), Russellville, Brunswick, Ventura Park, Varnel, Ascot, Elwood, Rockwood, Base Line (Stark), Ruby, Gillis, Pleasant Home, Cottrell, Larsen, Maybery, Willog, Baraboo, Dodge Park, and Bull Run. With all this talk of light rail perhaps some of those old names may become stations again. 🚋



No. 1058 (ex OWP 58), another fine example of the car builder's art, was built by Niles Car & Mfg. in 1905. It is seen at the Troutdale Line terminus soon after the station opened in 1907. This was the scene of a nighttime wreck on June 2, 1908 when a new motorman mistook the lights in Camas for Troutdale. He continued at speed, running off the end of the line and crashing onto the Union Pacific tracks below.

The shark was dead, but that happened before the accident. Officials said the MBTA trolley struck the 6 foot frozen shark which had fallen onto the tracks as the trolley was heading toward Park Square... The shark became wedged between the wheels and forced the trolley to stop. The shark had apparently been hung by a rope from a railroad bridge above the tracks.”



Trolley Hits Shark!

Paul Class sent this delightful news clipping from Boston: (UPI) “There were no injuries when a rapid transit trolley ran into a shark.

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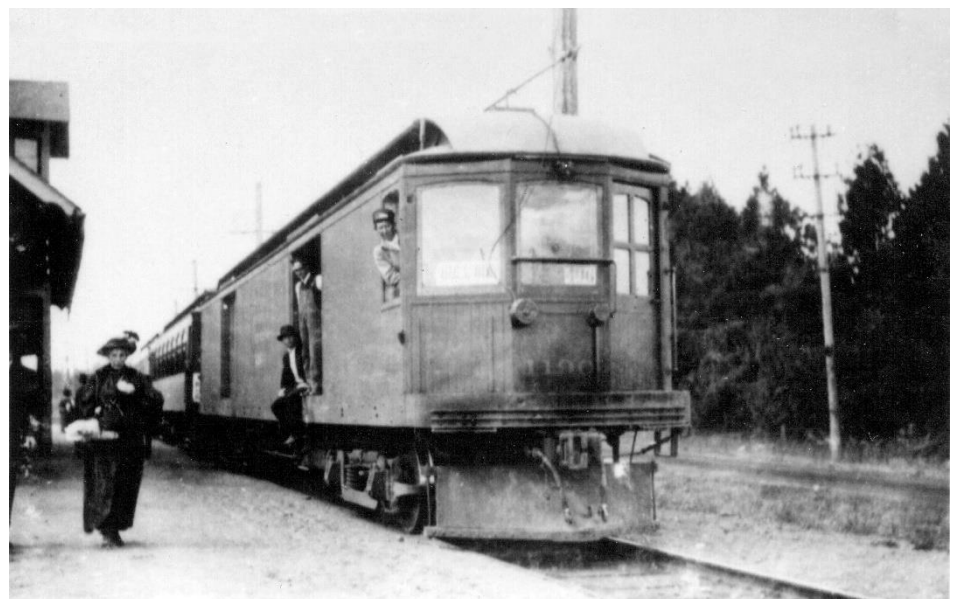
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Express motor No. 1190 (ex Mt. Hood Railway 101) heads a Bull Run Line train at the Gresham Mt. Hood Railway station in 1914. These workaday Brill box motors were certainly less elegant than their classic interurban passenger car sisters.