

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS



METRO

PEOPLE PLACES
OPEN SPACES

Robert Liberty
represents
District 6, which
includes portions of
Northeast, Southeast
and Southwest
Portland.

Rolling a mile in another man's wheels

We cannot understand another person's circumstances until we have walked a mile in his or her shoes.

That saying was in my mind when I accepted Señora Consuelo Arauza's invitation to join her son Juan in a wheelchair tour of the streets and sidewalks in the heart of Cornelius.

Juan is a lively teenager with cerebral palsy who lives with his mother and makes daily trips to the store, the post office, cultural center and clinic in a wheelchair.

Arauza's interest was spurred by her participation in a citizen committee, which promotes an accessible community. (The committee's work is supported by Drs. Claudia Vargas and Phillip Cooper as part of OHSU's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program.)

Señora Arauza made the invitation during a Metro Council hearing at which the Council was considering whether to invest some of the limited flexible transportation dollars in sidewalk improvements in Cornelius.

Cornelius is a small city (population 10,785) with farming roots, in the western part of the metro area. About half of the residents of Cornelius are Latino. As of the 2000 Census, about one in seven residents of Cornelius had incomes below the federal poverty line. (Today, a family of four with an income of less than \$20,444 would be defined as poor.)

Cornelius is working hard to attract jobs and to build a more livable community. But it must struggle to find resources to do things that other, wealthier, communities can take for granted, like building sidewalks.

On my tour I learned what Juan Arauza faces every day in Cornelius:

No sidewalks: Where a sidewalk petered out into a narrow dirt track with a telephone pole in the middle of it, travel comes to an end. In many places the sidewalks did not connect. As a result, some places were simply inaccessible.

No signals: Even a small group of people, including a person in a wheelchair waiting at the curb, wasn't enough to convince motorists to slow down, let alone stop. Finally Dave Waffle, Cornelius' City Manager, stepped bravely out into a gap in the traffic and waved drivers to a halt in order to allow us to cross the highway. I made that particular crossing wearing goggles to simulate blindness: I was very conscious of the lack of an audible signal and nervous about whether I had enough time to cross.

Barriers: Most pedestrians would hardly notice a two-inch high lip at the bottom of a corner-cut ramp on a sidewalk. But I found it impossible to surmount in

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Councilor Liberty with Juan Arauza, Cornelius Mayor Bill Bash, and OHSU's Philip Cooper.

Wendy Armstrong

Another man's wheels

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my wheelchair. On my third run at the obstacle I started to roll over backwards. The prospect of falling over backwards into oncoming traffic on the Tualatin Valley Highway—for someone who couldn't walk—would be terrifying, plenty of deterrence for making that trip.

Awkward Crosswalk Button Placement:

It is not easy to reach up to hit the walk signal button high on a post when you are already positioned partway into the pedestrian ramp—if you do it the wrong way you might fall over. You had better set your brakes first or you will end up racing down the ramp before you are ready.

The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Grant of \$3.2 million Metro awarded to Cornelius will help solve some of these problems by funding the construction of sidewalks along Baseline Road in Cornelius.

These improvements will help a lot more people than just Juan. Seniors will be among the groups of citizens who will be grateful for sidewalks, pedestrian ramps and traffic signals with audio features. And even for those of us who do not need these investments today, we should admit that we might need them in the future.

It seems that what is good for Juan is good for all.

— *Robert Liberty*

Three Bridges open on Springwater Trail

Join us on Saturday, May 19 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for the grand opening of the Three Bridges section of the Springwater Trail. The new section connects Portland to Milwaukie via bridges over McLoughlin Boulevard, the Union Pacific Railroad and Johnson Creek.

Opening day festivities will offer a variety of fun activities, including bike demos, hands-on environmental education, bike helmet decorating and learning from design team members how the bridges were built. Activities and demonstrations will be held at four designated points along the trail—SE 19th Avenue and Ochoco in Sellwood, the

Three Bridges area at SE 28th Avenue and Sherrette, the Tideman Johnson Natural Area, and the Johnson Creek Trailhead at SE 45th and Johnson Creek Boulevard.

Thanks to the City of Portland's Parks & Recreation Department, Office of Transportation and Bureau of Environmental Services, the City of Milwaukie, SMILE and the Ardenwald Johnson Creek Neighborhood Association for co-hosting the celebration along with Metro.

Hillsdale Plaza design update

The Hillsdale community has completed a series of design workshops focused on developing a plaza in the Hillsdale Town Center. The first stage will be to provide a cover and bathrooms for the highly successful Hillsdale Sunday Farmers Market, the only year-round market in the Portland area. The design calls for attractive solar panel roofs covering the market area as well as side curtains to reduce the wind during winter months. The next steps will include moving the ideas through the City of Portland planning process and obtaining funding.

For more information, or to get involved, contact Don Baack at (503) 246-2088 or visit www.hna-pdx.com.

Metro co-hosts 2007 economic development speaker series

7:45 a.m. Thursday, May 31

Multnomah Athletic Club

1849 SW Salmon, Portland

Robert Yaro: "Quality of Life: Creating a Globally Competitive Regional Economy"

Continental breakfast at 7:15 a.m. Free; register at www.foundation.pdx.edu/busbriefings or call (503)725-4763.

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About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

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