

## Taking the lead

Meet Winta Yohannes and 17 other new Oregon execs

LEADER BOARD, 20-21



# SURVIVING

## CORONAVIRUS

**COVER STORY**

Business owners are grappling with hard decisions that seemed unthinkable weeks ago. In the first of an ongoing series, seven small business owners share their journeys navigating these uncertain times. **PAGES 4-7**

**PBJ INTERVIEW:  
SUSAN BLADHOLM**

**HAILING A TAXI COULD REQUIRE A TRIP TO THE RIVER** 27



### HEALTH CARE

#### A thin line between urgent and elective

The state's directive to cease all nonemergency procedures during the COVID-19 crisis raises a big question: What's the difference between elective and urgent/can't wait?

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#### 'Relatively normal' chip season awaits

As the coronavirus pandemic levels the world's businesses, Intel Corp. CEO Bob Swan must once again assure customers of the chip giant's manufacturing capabilities.

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THE PBJ INTERVIEW

SUSAN

BLADHOLM

Susan Bladholm, who founded Friends of Frog Ferry, believes Portland is ready for a passenger ferry service.

CLOSER LOOK

CERISSA LINDAY | PBJ

WHY SUSAN BLADHOLM IS CONFIDENT FROG FERRY WILL HAPPEN ON THE WILLAMETTE RIVER



Susan Bladholm's first job out of college was at the Oregon Economic Development Department.

Her assignment: See if Oregon could pull off a statewide bike ride.

Bladholm co-founded and served as the first executive ride director of Cycle Oregon, a weeklong ride through scenic parts of the state that will mark its 32nd anniversary this year.

She also spent a decade with the Port of Portland, followed by a stint at Erickson Inc, a global helicopter company.

Now she's throwing all her energy into bringing a commuter ferry service to the Willamette River in Portland, as founder and president of Friends of Frog Ferry. The effort has at least \$3 million in pro bono support behind it.

Several details still need to be worked out, but Bladholm is confident it will happen. Earlier this month, she received \$240,000 in grant funding from state and local transportation agencies for a feasibility and financing study.

We asked her about why this project means so much to her.

Was Cycle Oregon good preparation for your current effort? Looking back, I like founding things, creating

the infrastructure and changing the culture. It must be hard to comprehend, but back then, we didn't have bike lanes, wide shoulders and places to lock bikes up. There was no awareness in rural Oregon about, "Who are these bicyclists?" We changed the culture around it. The first ride had 1,006 people and Cycle Oregon 3 sold out at 3,000, and it was designated the No. 1 bike ride in America.

You got the idea for Frog Ferry from the air? Flying to Puget Sound and to Vancouver B.C., as far as the eye can see, there are ferries. In 2018 I drafted a 10-page concept plan. I sent that to my two former bosses at Business Oregon. I sat down with Bill Wyatt at the Port. He said it's a great idea. That's how we got so many supporters behind it. Here in Portland, we have all this interest from the private sector, and public officials are like, "Can it be done?" I go to Seattle, and people are falling over themselves to help me. Once we learned it could be done, it completely changed the conversation. Public transit officials said, "We're not going to do this, we think you should start it up, and we'll support you."

What about parking at the ferry stops? The intention is to get people out of their cars. This induces demand for other transit. For ferry service, they

**TITLE:** Founder/president, Friends of Frog Ferry  
**FORMERLY:** co-founder and VP of Cycle Oregon; worked in marketing at the Oregon Economic Development Department, Travel Portland, the Port of Portland and Erickson Inc.

**EDUCATION:** BA from the University of Puget Sound, communications major, English literature minor

**FAVORITE RESTAURANTS:** Imperial, Ned Ludd, MAC 1891, Higgins, Q, Luc Lac, Lovejoy Bakery

**READING NOW:** "The Medici Effect"

**FAVORITE PODCAST:** Pod Save America

**HOMETOWN:** Portland

**PERSONAL:** has a son and a daughter who are in their 20s

are more willing to take light rail or bus or bicycle. Reliability is the No. 1 determinant of whether transit is successful. Ferries have a very high reliability statistic.

What's the biggest selling point for commuters? There's the the calming effect of the river. All of these stops were created by the public transit community, which said, "This is where there's the greatest demand and connectivity." We think to start this service with two vessels, we will start with 1,250 a day. We can have school kids out there and talk about Portland's native past.

How confident are you? This is going to happen. I left a full-time job, and I'm not a wealthy woman. When you look at the goals that our public agencies have, we meet nearly all of them: reducing greenhouse gas emissions and connecting communities. When you look at it from a cost, economic and business development perspective, building the Portland brand and for tourism and visitors. We're the river city and city of bridges. We're the only major metropolitan river city in the nation to not have a water-based transit service. When you start looking at all the filters, this maps onto it.

- Elizabeth Hayes

A DAY IN THE LIFE

We asked Susan Bladholm to break down her typical workday:

Work  
Sleep

Personal time  
Commute

