

## **PORTLAND** Trudging Through the Sewer

POSTED BY AMY J. RUIZ ON MON, DEC 10 AT 5:45 PM

I spent the morning underground, checking out the progress on the Eastside Big Pipe project with Commissioner Sam Adams and a gaggle of press folks.

If you're into that sort of thing—hanging out with Adams in the sewers—you can [bid on a private tour with Adams via our holiday auction](#).



“It’s hard to imagine unless you’ve been down there to see it,” Adams said after venturing underground (it was his first peek at the Eastside tunnel). The project is a \$1.4 billion investment, “and most of it is underground. I want to make sure people have a sense of where the money is going.”

It’s going this way:



The tunnel, so far, starts at the Opera building near OMSI, with the tunnel boring machine plugging away near Alder. When we got to the end of the tunnel, the project manager informed us we were under the Montage restaurant (more than 100 feet under it). There, we could see the back end of the tunneling machine, which cost \$15 million.



That thing digs at a rate of about 60 feet a day. The crew brings in five-foot-wide sections of concrete liner—over 800 so far—to create a big subway-like tube. Surprisingly, it wasn't claustrophobic at all (though if you have a fear of needing to use the restroom and not having one in sight, this tour might not be for you; the nearest portapotty was way back at the beginning of the tunnel, at the bottom of the 110 foot deep shaft where they started digging). And the tunnel is clean, dry, and well ventilated.

The project won't be finished until 2011, at which point it's supposed to help curb our nasty sewage overflows into the Willamette—from 100 a year down to 4, Adams said.

But you can see it this summer! [Bid....](#)

More photos after the cut.



Tunnelvortriebstechnik = German for "really big, expensive tunnel boring machine"



Santa Barbara, the patron saint of miners, Adams said. The statue is near the elevator, at the bottom of the deep shaft.



View from the top of the shaft. You have to hold onto your hard hat, so it doesn't fall in.



The coolest invention ever—steel caps for those of us who don't wear steel toed shoes every day. They're called "Pro-tek-tos." Sadly, we didn't get to keep them. But we did get cookies shaped like fish,

decorated with colorful icing. Apparently these are the happy fish that won't have to swim in poo, once the Big Pipe project's finished.

[PERMALINK](#)

## COMMENTS

1

Oh my god...is that HRG from Heroes? Adams must be a fan. I'm totally bidding now.

Posted by **Jaymes** | December 10, 2007 6:39 PM

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2

need a restroom? you're in the freaking sewer. let loose and break the damn thing in. you paid for it after all.

Posted by >>> | December 10, 2007 7:55 PM

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3

Pro-tek-tos are so cool!!! I must get a pair to wear around town!!!!

Posted by **Someone** | December 11, 2007 12:08 AM

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4

I call shenanigans! I saw this in Ocean's 13.

They're trying to rob the Montage!

Posted by **Ritchie** | December 11, 2007 12:43 PM

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