

House stumped on leader; rail system stalled for now

By GREG WASSON
Of the Emerald

The House is still without a leader. Tuesday found most the press corps huddled outside the caucus room waiting for the scoop. It never came.

Even an evening session — called to force dissident Democrats to go on record publicly as opposing their party's choice — failed to organize the House.

The meeting disintegrated into confusion and amid cliched charges that the Legislature was "turning into a circus," it was adjourned until noon today.

At the other end of the capitol, though, the tempo is already rapid. Senate Pres. Jason Boe, D-Reedsport, has assigned over 200 bills to committee. Boe, who was elected president for a fourth session Monday, is clearly in control of the 60th Assembly.

One of the things Boe, and the rest of the Legislature, will have to consider is a proposal for a state subsidized light rail system running from Eugene to Portland. Boe was less than enthusiastic when queried about the plan last week in Eugene.

"I think it should be explored," said Boe, and then added with a laugh, "and that's about as



weaseling an answer as I can give. No — we formed the task forces that looked at this, but whether we can afford that kind of transportation system yet, I don't know."

The system, proposed by the Willamette Valley Rail Study Committee, would require a \$5.2 million subsidy to add two round-trip passenger trains between Portland and Eugene. The proposal is based on an \$85,000 study prepared by a Berkeley, Calif., consulting firm.

The study estimates the two extra trips would require a \$2.3 million subsidy using existing Southern Pacific rails. Another \$2.9 million would be required to buy the two self-propelled, 86-passenger cars.

The system would be cheap to ride — one-way from Portland to Salem would cost \$2.90 — and added to the one existing Amtrak run each day, would provide convenient mass transportation to Portland.

But Sen. Ed Fadeley, D-Eugene, shares Boe's hesitation.

"The real problem has to do with the attitude of the public. Unless they're willing to ride a mass transportation system, it really doesn't matter which one you are for or against. The expensive light rail system is more than the state needs at this time."

Sen. Dell Isham, D-Lincoln City, adds a third pessimistic voice.

"It's not going to be something passed out of committee quickly. It has to be weighed against other demands on the state's surplus funds, and the priority for those funds is property tax relief.

ties, so the meeting could be "a five-minute one."

Because the group wants to wait until the Senate can review recommendations of the Affirmative Action Compliance Committee, as well as a proposal to change the election of the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate, it will take no action on any matters.

The Senate will take action on those items when it meets on Jan. 31 for its regular monthly meeting.

Assembly meets today for 'short' work session

In spite of ice, slush, sleet and no University Senate-recommended business, the University Assembly will hold its first meeting of the New Year today at 3:30 p.m. in 150 Geology.

Because the Senate took no action last week after failing to garner a quorum, chances are the Wednesday Assembly session will be short.

Only one motion is scheduled for the meeting, according to Assembly secretary Marshall Wat-

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