

# HIGHWAY ROBBERY

## Structural decay appalls speaker

By Joan Herman  
Of the Emerald

While in Seattle for a hearing on the condition of Washington's bridges and highways, urban planner Marshall Kaplan was given a grand tour of the city's transportation structures.

During the tour, "somebody punched a hole in one of the wood pilings that holds the bridge up," Kaplan said. "The damn thing went all the way through. The wood was rotten."

So the curious tourist tried his experiment with another wood piling. This time termites emerged.

"The mayor said 'We'll have to go over that bridge to get to our appointment' and I said 'not on your life.'"

So much for the tour.

Kaplan used this humorous incident to illustrate a serious problem: the nation's infra-structure — urban planning jargon for highways, bridges, water distribution and sewage treatment plants — needs some 'doctoring.'

Kaplan, dean of the University of Colorado's graduate school of public affairs, was the keynote speaker at the Oregon Planning Commission's ninth annual conference.

During the Carter administration, Kaplan was deputy assistant secretary for policy development at the department of Housing and Urban Development.

Kaplan spoke to the planners about a federally funded study he is directing that examines 25 states' infra-structures, including their present and future needs, resources and conditions.

Before the study, planners estimated that \$3 trillion would be needed to fill in the gap between anticipated revenues and actual dollars allotted for infra-structure needs through the year 2000.

Kaplan now estimates a gap of between \$200 billion and \$400 billion. Although that figure represents a large range, Kaplan said "it doesn't matter because it's a gap figure. It suggests we have a problem from a policy standpoint. But it's manageable."

Although more money is being used for infra-structure development today, "the real dollars" have decreased due to inflation, he said.

And solving the infra-structure development dilemma will require innovative financing from the public and private sector.

Federal air and water quality regulations must be examined carefully as well, Kaplan said.

"It's obscene for the federal government to impose standards without grants or aids to state and local governments. I'm not questioning air and water quality standards. We need them. But what is obscene is for the federal government to mandate certain standards without helping out to meet those needs."

Finally, federal, state and local governments must devise long-range planning tools that can accurately estimate infra-structure needs. No such tools exist now.

Kaplan suggested devising a capital improvement budget, because "the federal government has put a lot of money into infra-structure, but we don't know where they put it and neither do they."

In closing, Kaplan coined the Virginia Slims cigarette advertising slogan: "I think planners have come a long way — but they have a long way to go."

"I'm asking you to look forward and build on what is already a solid base here in Oregon."



Photo by Brian Erb

## Eugene wants highway funds

By Michele Matassa  
Of the Emerald

The State Highway Division is deciding how to divide up a \$933 million highway improvement pie and Eugene city officials are crying for a bigger piece.

But the reason they have to cry now, says a highway division spokesman, is because they adamantly refused an offering more than a decade ago.

That refusal came in the form of a charter amendment saying Eugene's citizens didn't want freeways within the city and any future work would require voter approval.

"They're after things now that 12 years ago they were dead set against," says Jack Ayres, who is with the Roseburg highway division.

What Eugene is "after" is an increase over its planned allotment of \$1.7 million in highway construction funds, Mayor Gus Keller says.

Portland is receiving \$200 million

and Salem should get about \$35 million, Keller says. Even if the highway division agreed to all five of Eugene's requested projects, the total would only be \$20 million, he says.

Among those requests is a 4.5 mile extension of 6th and 7th avenues west to Highway 126 near Oak Hill.

Ayres does admit that the "we were taken to task" at a State Transportation Commission public hearing here Wednesday night because "we have not spent that much money in the Eugene area."

Some 35 state legislators, city officials and citizens turned out at that hearing to testify against the transportation commission and to demand more attention.

Ayres also admits Eugene city officials have rotated since the charter amendment was drafted, a factor which may force the transportation commission to rethink its position.

"If it's felt and if the dollars are available, maybe we'll have second

thoughts," Ayres says.

Meanwhile, Keller says the statewide project would be "a disgrace" if the highway division doesn't respond to Wednesday night's hearing.

Asked if he expects that hearing to have an affect, Keller says "I think it better help. I don't see how they can keep ignoring us. They do have a responsibility to this city."

Apparently, Keller doesn't accept the charter amendment and required voter approval as an excuse for the highway division's "ignoring" Eugene.

Voters here want highway improvements and would be willing to vote for them, he says.

But Ayres disagrees, saying the highway division is in a "catch-22."

The division won't spend money designing a project without advance voter approval but voters won't approve a project until it already is designed, Ayres says.

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