

## Rail line would answer transportation demands

**OUR OPINION:** Oregon should support the proposed high-speed rail

For a nation that considers itself to be the leading superpower in the world, the United States certainly isn't making much progress in improving the transportation system.

While other nations such as France, Japan and Sweden have all implemented high-speed railway systems, some that have existed for 16 years without one fatal accident, we have automobiles, buses and airplanes that produce air pollution and cause congestion and fatalities.

With the passing of the 1992 Surface Transportation Act, federal funds have finally been allocated to create more efficient forms of transportation, such as high-speed railway systems, across the nation. Cities in Florida, New York, Texas and Washington have already started building high-speed railways to test their effectiveness.

With the recent failure to gain support in the state Legislature, Oregon is now moving further away from making this long-awaited transportation improvement.

Fortunately, Gov. John Kitzhaber refuses to allow this rail line, which is planned to run from Eugene to Vancouver, B.C., to lose its status as a federally recognized high-speed rail corridor.

If the federal funding is revoked due to lack of support, the \$80 million project will be too costly to implement.

There is no reason the

Legislature should not support this project. Though it appears they have decided that improving transportation is not their responsibility, it is undeniably an issue that is not going to go away.

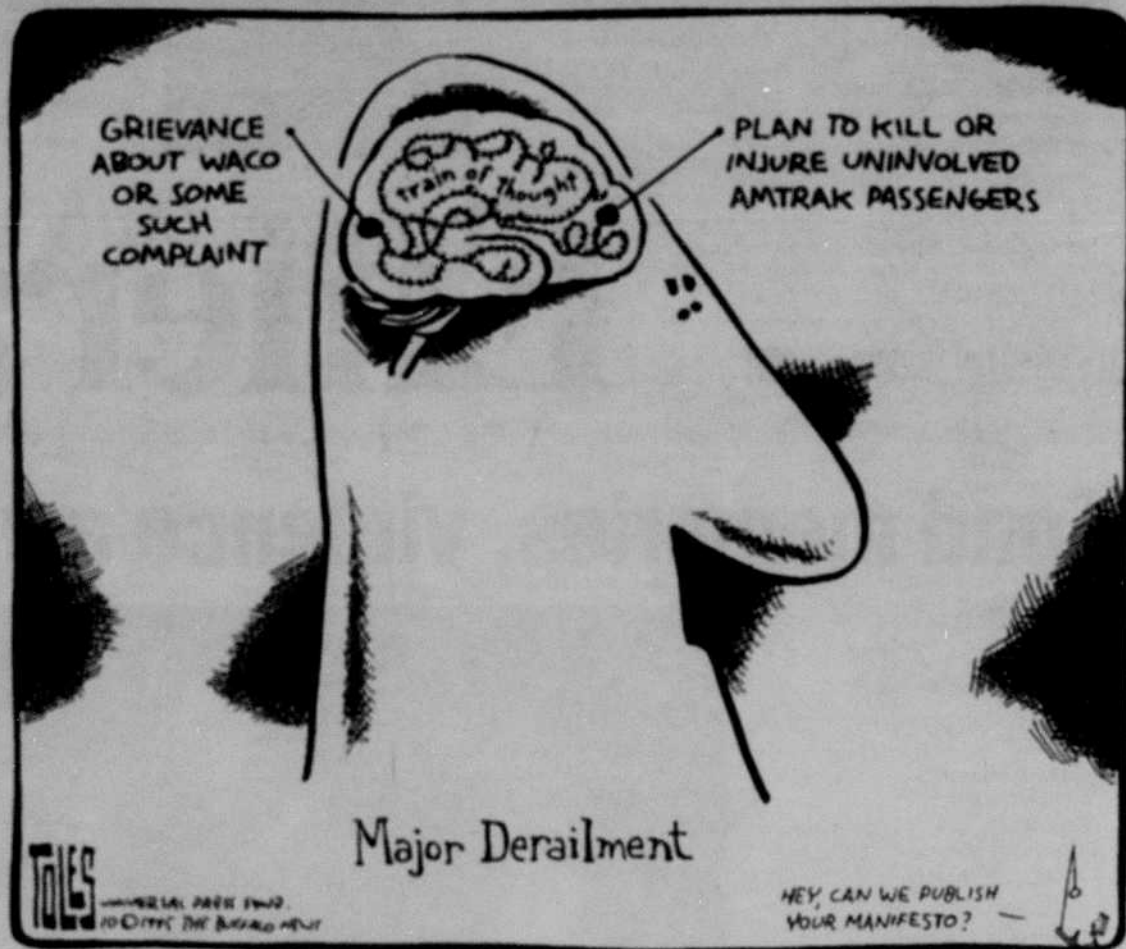
With the increasing population in Linn and Benton counties and the Willamette Valley causing massive congestion in the Interstate 5 corridor, we cannot afford to allow this project to lose its funding.

An expansion of I-5 will not solve pollution problems. Any student who has experienced this stretch of highway during rush hour or holiday traffic would benefit from a high-speed rail system that would not only be untouched by poor weather conditions, but will make the trip from Portland to Eugene in a quick hour and 22 minutes. This cuts the amount of time it takes to travel to Portland from Eugene via Amtrak by two hours.

The state of Washington has found \$50 million to put into the project along with the \$40 million that Salem, Eugene and Marion County have pledged.

Even though Ballot Measure 5 prevents Oregon from using money from property taxes to match federal funds for cost-effective transportation, action can still be taken to provide the funds for this project.

If Willamette Valley cities and counties support this project by pledging the necessary \$15 million to match federal funds, it will ensure this project's success, making it impossible for Congress to ignore Oregon's need and desire for more efficient and cost-effective transportation.



## Wild Duck lays huge egg, goes lame

If you're looking for a great place with good food and wonderful live music, forget the Wild Duck. It's a crash course in how not to design a brewery.

A friend and I went downtown on April 6 to hear John Hammond and Duke Robillard at the Wild Schmuck. We'll never go back, and unless you're into expensive abuse, I suggest you avoid the place, too.

The cover charge, even at \$14, didn't intimidate us. It's worth that (or more) to hear good music in a good place with good food — which is what we were expecting.

We planned to arrive an hour early, find a good seat, order dinner and settle in for a great show. NOT. We paid our \$28 and walked into what looks like a weird cross between a miniature movie theater and black gymnasium. There are no chairs, just bar stools with no arms and no backs.

This is weird enough, but you can't even rest your elbows on the table. Why? Because the "tables" are really little benches, and they're shorter than the stools.

So you sit on a stool and can't quite reach your beer on the bench below your knees, and before you know it you're peering around six-foot-tall guys who have no idea how tall and opaque they are. You're trapped on an uncomfortable stool with your beer in your lap and no view.

And about that great food? Well, they don't serve any in the bar. Why anyone would not want to serve food in their bar is beyond me — I puzzled over this as my friend saved my barstool so I could leave the bar and walk over to the restaurant portion of the building.

My friend fended off cash offers for my stool while I inquired and made sure there was no possibility I could eat in the music bar.

I scanned the menu and decided on the "artichoke and Parmesan bread." A number of restaurants in the area serve different versions of this, and none of them are bad.

None of them except the Wild Duck's that is. Instead of crusty homemade bread, I got what appeared to be SLICED HOTDOG BUN. A paper-thin layer of something they think is artichoke spread sat on top of the "buns."

I'm pretty sure the only artichoke in there was artificial artichoke flavoring. On top of that were shaved pieces of dry cheese — not even melted. On top of that rested six darling little specks of tomato. The tab was \$5.75.

So then I have the ultimate dining experience standing outside the music lounge, leaning against a lamp pole and munching down this

incredible feast. I went back in and assured my stool-guarding friend that I hadn't ditched him, then ordered a couple of drinks. Because I didn't want to fight my way back to the bar for a while, I ordered doubles. Seventeen dollars.

I don't know what they charge for good cognac, but \$17 for two mixed drinks is unreal. I expect that sort of shaft at the Denver airport, but not downtown Eugene!

Seventeen dollars' worth of alcohol at Rennie's will get you four people passed out under the table. On top of that, they were served in plastic cups! For seventeen dollars I expect to drink from a GLASS.

By now we've contributed over \$50 toward the cost of the Star Wars cash register system and the nifty radio headsets worn by the door attendants. The headsets are in case of an emergency, such as people attempting to smuggle good food in from Cafe Soriah or Mona Lizza's.

My only consolation was that our \$50 was also helping pay for the space-age sound system. In a past life, I mixed sound for a rock 'n roll band. I know a killer system when I see one, and I was REALLY looking forward to hearing killer blues on a killer system.

Guess again. Hammond opened with an acoustic solo set, and his vocals weren't even mixed in to the main speakers. We sat there listening to Hammond sing through the monitors, staring at each other and wondering if it was a bad dream.

But it gets worse. Hammond finishes his set, and because all the equipment and instruments are set up for the Duke Robillard band, we figure we're facing a ten-minute break, right? FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER, when the band finally takes the stage, the sound man experiences technical difficulties.

As in no band. As in another 10 minutes.

I had to be physically restrained to keep from walking out in disgust. When the band finally DID start, I expected that the sound would be so good that we'd all be levitated to blues ecstasy and everything would be okay again.

You tone-deaf folks who were there might think that was good sound, but with a system like that, believe me, Robillard's guitar (even a stinkin' Falcon) should have sliced right through the hubbub and knocked you up against the wall.

If you like the idea of forking over 50 bucks for two drinks and some dry cheese on hot dog buns, listening to bush-league sound mixing while you hunker over on a bar stool or stand up with no table, head right down to Sixth and Charnelton.

If you like that sort of abuse, the Lame Duck will dish out all you can take.

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## Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union.

Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board; signed columns represent the opinion of the columnist.

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