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County road status on Web site

Frequent updates will keep citizens and the media informed

By Ashley Bach
 Oregon Daily Emerald

Faced with six months of weather-related road closures and little way to notify drivers, Lane County officials are turning to the newest mode of communication — the Internet.

A Web site debuted last month with information on road closures on all county-maintained roads in Lane County. Officials say the site will quickly transmit information to not only citizens, but also media and other government agencies.

"We've never had a good way of telling people in the community uniformly about what's going on," said Doug Putschler, county road maintenance manager. "This lets

people track the information at any time and see if they can get from point A to point B."

By making the information readily available to media outlets, government officials and citizens, the Web site fulfills its primary goal: making drivers aware of what's on the roads, said county spokesman Mike Moskovitz.

The site lists road names, locations, types of hazards, road conditions and time of the update. Roads are listed in alphabetical order. On Tuesday, for example, the site showed five roads in places such as Florence and Santa Clara that were closed because of hazards such as mudslides or downed trees.

Putschler said the site will be updated each day as roads close or reopen. In extreme weather conditions, such as during the December 1997 storm, the site will

be updated every hour, he said.

That storm, during which more than 100 roads were closed and reopened in four hours because of rain and wind, is a perfect example of why the Web site is necessary, Putschler said.

"I must have had to answer the phone 10,000 times," he said. "Now there's a lot of efficiency in the transmission of the information."

The Web site will cover all 1,500 square miles of road the county maintains. About 90 percent of county-maintained roads are rural, Putschler said.

The site, which is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days of week, is located at <http://www.co.lane.or.us/roads>. For people without Internet access, reports on county road conditions will remain available by phone at 682-6900.

Speeders

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"People need to be observant of fellow pedestrians, because usually that's a fellow student," he said.

Cutler said he has many ideas to curb the traffic problem on Alder Street, including more crosswalks, speed bumps and even closing the street entirely.

"We either need more crosswalks or at least stop signs at 14th and 15th," he said.

Another idea is to make certain sections of Alder Street open only to local access, like the campus section of 13th Avenue. This would allow traffic on Alder Street only when absolutely necessary.

Eugene Police Sgt. Rick Gilliam

was also at the task force meeting and said Alder Street is a problem he has been aware of for a long time.

The two-way bike traffic often creates a problem for drivers who don't realize there is a bike coming, he said. It is not only vehicles but also bikes that do not stop at stop signs, he said.

"There is a lack of respect for bikes and vehicles," he said. "They have to share the road, especially with pedestrians on the roads."

Gilliam said there definitely needs to be some intervention in the area to deal with the traffic problem.

"There either needs to be a controlled intersection between 15th and 16th or some type of

change in traffic," he said.

A controlled intersection would involve adding a four-way stop or stoplight at one of the intersections.

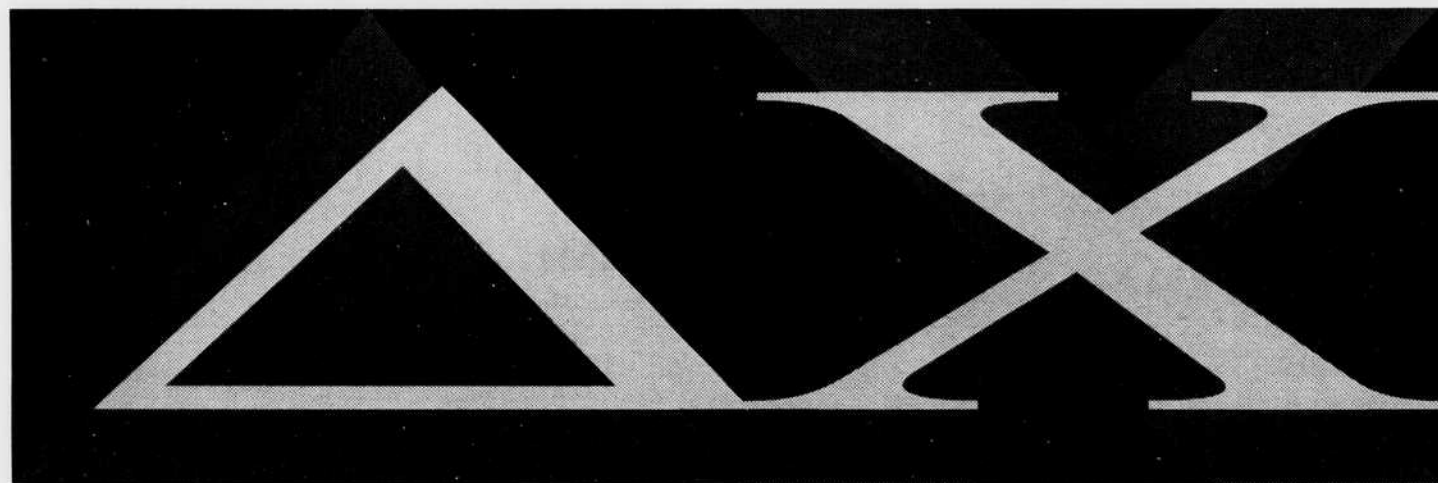
"Just something that causes a driver to slow down," he said.

The Eugene police are doing all they can, Gilliam said, but the bottom line is that drivers need to obey the law.

"We do enforcement, but you can't do it every day, and people just go back to their old ways," he said.

Felicity Ayles covers city development and West University neighborhood for the Emerald. She can be reached via e-mail at fizzer@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

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