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Little Caesars

004310

State's rail plan funding at crossroads

The Legislature considers a \$14 million proposal to improve the rail system

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

The last day of the 1997-1999 Oregon Legislature session was technically June 30 — but it's in overtime. This interim period, which hasn't happened in two bienniums, is giving the Oregon Department of Transportation some gray hairs.

One of the lingering issues is whether the Legislature will approve a \$14 million proposal for the improvement of a passenger rail system for the coming biennium. Operated by Amtrak, the railway connects Eugene and Portland. The request was made by Gov. Kitzhaber, ODOT's Rail Division and The Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County Oregon.

Efforts in Lane County are also being made to increase the reliability and ease of the local public-transportation system. In compliance with a state transportation rule, Lane Transit District has outlined a 20-year program aimed at reducing reliance on automobiles.

"The rule requires each city to reduce the vehicles traveling per capita over the next 20 years," said Lee Shoemaker, senior planner for the Lane Council of Governments.

The plan includes prepaid fares, exclusive bus lanes with lo-

cal and express lines and signal priority for buses, where light would detect an approaching bus and stay green a little longer to "get them in front of the line," Shoemaker said.

The Legislature's approval of the passenger-train system would help Lane County's campaign because Eugene citizens would be less likely to rely on cars if they could travel easily within the city's limits and beyond.

There is currently one daily round-trip train from Eugene to Portland, said Robert Krebs, passenger and rail planner for the development and operations division of the Oregon Department of Transportation. It leaves in the morning and doesn't return until late at night. The \$14 million would make a second, mid-day, round-trip service possible.

Since the 1950s America has had "a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage" mentality, Krebs said. These programs seek to change that. They would help relieve congestion by taking a projected eight percent of I-5 traffic off the freeway.

"But more importantly," Krebs said, "is easing the economic impact of driving cars."

If the Legislature denies funding for the rail system, the lone service would be terminated. The Pacific Northwest High-Speed Rail Corridor, one of only 11 in the nation, could also be forced to forfeit its national status. Desig-

nated in 1992, the corridor runs from Vancouver, British Columbia to Eugene. In addition, Oregon would suffer a loss of \$15 million in community development funds from the federal government.

"These funds won't be put toward another program," Krebs said. "They would be put toward another state."

The threat to the tourism industry caused by a shutdown of the passenger railway system would also be great. Oregon's revenue from tourism already lags behind Washington because the automobile offers the main means for traveling around the state, Krebs said.

Washington has a better passenger railway system because it has committed \$120 million since 1992, compared to Oregon's \$25 million, according to an LCOG newsletter.

"Oregon is playing catch up," said Krebs. "It's the only state dragging its feet on funding. If we shut the rail system down, it will cost as much as \$40 million in the future to start up again because all the rails will be turned into freight ways."

"It's a good economic investment for the state to give funding."

If this happens, Eugene will become a small transportation hub of connecting services.

"We are optimistic about the Legislature because we think they have a good business sense," Krebs said.

Ecotoons

Continued from page 1

Because cartoonists have traditionally targeted corrupt politicians, war, racism, etc., Robinson noted the logic behind addressing environmental issues because they have become so prominent in recent years. Robinson is a cartoonist and comics historian who was also one of the first "Batman" artists.

Interspersed among the drawings are three-dimensional displays sponsored by local recycling and environmental organizations and regional companies. The exhibit's stay in Eugene is dedicated to the late Alice Soderwall, a founder of BRING Recycling and owner of The Glass Station, a pioneer in the local recycling business. The Alice and Arnold Soderwall Endowment has allowed the museum to host a

number of environmental exhibits since her death in 1994.

Included in the displays are: — BRING Recycling information on composting, recycling and buying recycled items is featured in an award-winning video titled, "How to Waste Less and Save More."

— "Waste Zone," a video with Bill Nye, The Science Guy from the Seattle Pacific Science Center's "Waste Busters" program.

— Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe Program, which shows how playground surfaces can be remade from old running shoes.

— Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority's sponsorship of a kids' corner display with coloring books on pollution issues in the community.

— Aurora Glass Foundry's recy-

clad glass art and products from St. Vincent de Paul, which are also for sale in The Museum Store.

The gallery is open to the public noon to 5 p.m. on Wednesday through Sunday. Admission is free for University students, faculty and staff, \$2 for adults and \$1 for children younger than 12.

A special event for children and "the family who recycles together," will take place Saturday, July 17, as part of the Ecotoon exhibit. "Saturday Safari: Toons at Noon," running from noon until 3 p.m., will allow children to design their own cartoons, make art from trash, learn about composting and recycling and write letters to Congress expressing environmental concerns. Admission for Toons at Noon is \$2 per person, \$5 per family or \$10 for a group of 10 or more.

Festivals

Continued from page 1

your only articles of clothing. On the flip side, a long-sleeve T-shirt and jeans makes sense if the festival begins in the morning, but by about 3 p.m., you'll be drenched, all right, only with sweat.

Next, make sure that you really like whatever musical genre is at the festival's core. For instance, four days of the blues, no matter the level of talent, will wear out even the most diehard fans. Just imagine attending the upcoming Lilith Fair or Ozzfest 99, then two songs into the show realizing that, hey, this music all sounds the same. Heinous to the max.

If you want a variety of fun, take

in an occasion such as this weekend's Oregon Country Fair. Jam-packed with music, parades, vaudeville-type performers and a plethora of visual pleasures, everyone can find their own niche.

Which brings me to the next tip. If you attend one of these festivals with a large group of people, leave your type-A personality at home. Don't expect to all move and groove, en masse, to the same beat. You may want to zig while everyone else is zagging. If that's the case, just pick certain times and landmarks to meet up later. Remember, mellow is good.

An alternative plan to the en-

tropic approach is the base-camp system. Set up a blanket or two at a central location, then come and go freely. The biggest problem with this option is that at least one person must stick around to watch over the group's belongings.

With that in mind, always check on what's allowed at your chosen festival. A cooler full of ice and beverages may seem like a good idea, until you get to the front gate and security laughs at your ignorance.

And finally, remember that this is summertime. As author Kurt Vonnegut never said, "Wear sunscreen."

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