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Aurora Airport doesn't get grant to extend runway

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Oregon Department of Aviation didn't get the \$37 million in grant money it sought to complete the controversial plan to extend a runway at Aurora Airport, but the plan is going forward anyway.

The state is trying extend the runway to the south of the busiest state-owned airport to 5,901 feet from its current 5,000 foot length.

State officials were aiming for a piece of \$1 billion the federal government was dispersing from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, but that fund has been doled out and the Aurora project was passed over.

"We had applied for the one that was 100 percent

funded and Aurora was not selected," said Oregon Department of Aviation director Betty Stansbury, who was appointed to the position by Gov. Kate Brown in January.

Despite that, Stansbury said, the state agency intends to move the plan forward with procuring funding for the Aurora Airport runway extension and intends to start the process in 2022.

But the state has started a project that would construct an area for jets to test their systems through a separate grant and legislative funding.

The problem, according to opponents of the expansion, is the most recently adopted master plan – a document that guides infrastructure improvements over a 20-year period – in 2000 stated the runway didn't

See AIRPORT, Page 2A



The Aurora State Airport in Aurora on Wednesday, Oct. 24, 2018. There is a \$37 million dollar proposal to expand the airport. ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL



Guided horseback rides will begin at Silver Falls State Park this weekend. PHOTO COURTESY OF SILVER FALLS LODGE & CONFERENCE CENTER

Guided horseback rides begin at Silver Falls

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

A new way to experience Silver Falls State Park will begin this weekend.

Guided horseback rides will take visitors into the vast backcountry of Oregon's largest state park for \$75 per rider starting Sunday.

The tours, which are open to those with no horseback experience, will follow Howard Creek Trail through temperate rainforest but without any waterfall views.

"A lot of people only see the park on foot," said Adrienne Blomgren, general manager for The Ranches at Silver Falls State Park, the vendor offering the new rides. "But riding through the park on a horse gives you an entirely different perspective."

While the trips begin with beginner-friendly hour-long rides, Blomgren said, they plan to add intermediate-level two-hour rides later this summer that follow different routes.

See SILVER FALLS, Page 3A

Silverton fee Increase to fund road, playground

Christena Brooks
Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

SILVERTON – Three extra fees at the bottom of homeowners' utility bills will rise by 3 percent next month, with the projects they're funding ranging from a new outdoor basketball court to a major road rebuild.

Starting July 1, homeowners will pay a monthly \$1.60 park fee, \$7.38 storm water system fee, and \$9.49 street maintenance fee. That's a 3.1 percent increase, accounting for inflation as calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and approved by the City Council this spring.

The flat fees were originally introduced to Silverton residents and business owners six years ago, at \$1.50, \$1 and \$3, respectively. They are separate from water and sewer charges, which will likely rise too, by fall. A consultant, hired by the city, is reviewing these

See FEE INCREASE, Page 2A

Brooks rail project decision delayed

Bill Poehler
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Oregon Transportation Commission on Thursday delayed its final decision on funding an intermodal facility in either Brooks or Millersburg to July 18 so the project sponsors could provide detailed cost estimates and pricing structures of their proposed sites.

For two years, a Kevin Mannix-led group representing a site in Brooks has been vying against a group from Millersburg for \$25 million in state money to build a facility; the funding is part of the \$5 billion transportation plan from House Bill 2017.

"If pushed to make a decision today, it would be no," said OTC board chair Tammy Baney.

The commission is requiring the three project sponsors to provide detailed cost estimates for their projects by July 12 under the assurance they will be kept confidential under a raprovision in Oregon public records law which affords protection for trade secrets.

Third-party reviewer, the Tioga Group, has given a slight edge for Millersburg.

Concerns were raised over the connections between the Treasure Valley and Millersburg groups and State Representative Greg Smith of Heppner, but an Oregon Government Ethics Commission opinion on May 31 stated OTC members must declare potential conflicts of interest.

At Thursday's meeting, all five commissioners stated they had no conflicts of interest.

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