

Appeal Tribune

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Oregon gets infrastructure help

State could get \$5 billion in 5 years

Bill Poehler Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oregon is expected to receive at least \$5.3 billion in federal funding for roads and other infrastructure now that President Joe Biden has signed the long-debated \$1.2 trillion bill into law, according to estimates from the White House.

Most of that money, \$3.4 billion, will

be earmarked for roads; Oregon also will receive large amounts for bridges, public transportation, electric vehicle chargers, internet, airports and drinking water filtration and distribution systems from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

"This is the biggest investment in our highway and bridge system since Dwight D. Eisenhower," said Representative Kurt Schrader, a Democrat from Canby. "Come on man, that's 60, 70 years ago. Biggest investment ever."

"Biggest investment ever in public

transit to really get the bus systems going the way we need them, to connect all parts of Marion County and Polk County and the rest of the state here."

The Oregon Department of Transportation is expecting to receive about \$1.2 billion of initial money.

The rest of the \$3.4 billion for roads will go to counties, cities and metropolitan planning organizations.

According to ODOT, Salem will receive a total of \$34 million in funding for roads in the next five years, an increase of \$8 million, and Eugene will receive

\$35 million, also an increase of \$8 million.

Public transportation in Salem also will receive \$33 million, an increase of \$8 million, and Eugene's public transit will receive \$67 million, an increase of \$17 million.

The funding hasn't been allocated to specific projects, but Schrader said he's looking forward to playing "a little bit of Santa Claus in a fiscally responsible way to our communities."

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'We wanted it to be a getaway'

Silverton bar owners determined to succeed despite the pandemic



Paige and Josh Echo-Hawk opened Graystone Lounge tiki bar in downtown Silverton in 2020.

Geoff Parks/Special for the Statesman Journal

Geoff Parks

Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Josh Echo-Hawk's life story reads like the history of his young downtown Silverton restaurant, Graystone Lounge: Full of quick-change decisions and direction, but always with eyes fixed on creating success.

Echo-Hawk and his wife Paige still run a successful video production business that has them flying around the country. But during a financial downturn at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, they began plans to diversify their lives.

In 2020, they set up a tiki bar/restaurant called Graystone Lounge in the Main Street space that for years held the Towne House. The original Tiki bar format envisioned by the couple has morphed into a series of restaurant additions in the block of buildings north and east of the Main Street and Water Street junction.

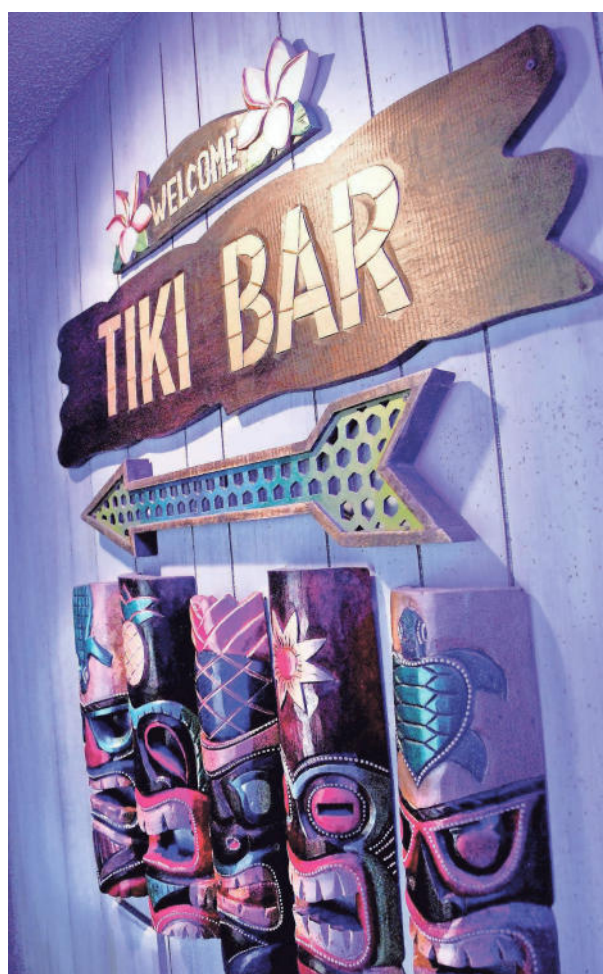
Hits to the restaurant/bar's customer visits — provoked by the two COVID-19 surges limiting or halting indoor dining opportunities — inspired them to let their own creative impulses take over.

In a nod to indoor dining restrictions, the couple last winter set up a tent-covered outdoor restaurant called The Lagoon in the back alley of the building as a way to draw in diners. It featured a full-size mermaid figure Paige created from a duct-tape mold of their daughter suspended from the tent ceiling surrounded by colored lights and a sea theme with Tiki underpinnings.

"We wanted it to be a getaway," Echo-Hawk said. "People were hunkering down inside."

Unfortunately, a windstorm took full advantage of

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Signs outside the Graystone Lounge's main entrance on Main Street in Silverton announce what the patron can expect inside.

What influences COVID-19 transmission and vaccination rates?

Megan Banta

Register-Guard
USA TODAY NETWORK

Across Oregon, communities with higher COVID-19 vaccination rates tend to have lower case rates, though the correlation varies based on factors like access to health care, race and income level.

The Register-Guard examined thousands of data points around Oregon's vaccination rates and case rates, looking at ZIP codes, groupings of ZIP codes and demographics within those areas.

The analysis found a strong trend in the average rates of Oregonians' vaccinations compared to the average COVID-19 case rates based on population density, with less variance based on income and how much of the population identifies as white.

Health experts said the data is helpful in targeting messaging about testing and vaccination for different populations across the state to combat the spread of the pandemic.

It doesn't tell the whole story, said Steve Adams, who serves as Lane County's incident commander for COVID-19. Officials do look at ZIP code-level data, he said, but also take deeper dives to look at spread in neighborhoods and underlying socioeconomic factors as well as transportation and access issues, especially in urban areas.

It's becoming clear over time that the consistent answer to whittling down case rates is the vaccine, said Dr. Ann Thomas, a public health physician with the Oregon Health Authority.

As more data shows that already having had COVID-19 isn't enough protection, Thomas added, officials have increasingly focused on upping vaccination rates.

To continue to get more people vaccinated, it's going to depend on a local response that listens to and addresses people's concerns while putting aside individual biases, she said.

"I think for each community or each vulnerable population, we need to find the trusted messenger," Thomas said.

Denser populations had higher vaccination rates, lower case rates

Oregon has more than 400 ZIP Code Tabulation Areas, or ZCTAs, which are generalized representations of ZIP codes that have been assigned to Census blocks. The U.S. Census Bureau uses ZCTAs to measure data. Multiple ZIP codes can be in a single ZCTA.

The Register-Guard analyzed vaccination rates and case rates across 272 of those ZIP code areas. While the state provides vaccination data for all ZCTAs, it only provides case numbers for those with a population of at least 1,000.

OHA and Census data were merged to create a database. Vaccination rates and case rates, demographics and population density for each ZCTA, as of the end of October, were analyzed.

That analysis showed rates for vaccinations and cases of COVID-19 varied greatly based on whether a ZIP code area is considered urban, rural or frontier.

Urban areas — those within 10 miles of the center of a city with at least 40,000 people — had the highest vaccination rates and lowest case rates.

On average, around 698 people per 1,000 residents of cities with at least 40,000 people were vaccinated as of Oct. 26.

Some urban areas pull down that average, such as one ZCTA in Benton County where the rate dipped to 265 per 1,000. Other areas, especially around Portland, pull the average up.

Urban case rates didn't see as much variation, av-



Clarence Williams Jr. receives his COVID-19 booster shot from Jesus Leon, a paramedic with Lane County Public Health, during a vaccination clinic at St. Mark CME Church in Eugene. CHRIS PIETSCH/THE REGISTER-GUARD

Audit: Oregon can do more to protect sensitive student info

Claire Withycombe

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Oregon Department of Education could better protect sensitive data about students by making its web applications more secure, state auditors said in a recent report.

The department has developed and maintains more than 60 web applications that allow schools to

submit information about students and workers to the state. The information ranges from demographic data to information about enrollment and discipline in schools.

While the education department does have measures in place to protect the information, the agency could improve its processes for keeping networks and apps secure. For example, state auditors found two

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Clarence Williams Jr. receives his COVID-19 booster shot from Jesus Leon, a paramedic with Lane County Public Health, during a vaccination clinic at St. Mark CME Church in Eugene. CHRIS PIETSCH/THE REGISTER-GUARD