

Rally for 'real recovery' Sept. 30 in Portland

One year after the federal government bailed out big business and banks with hundreds of billions of dollars, jobs continue to be cut and wages

slashed. In response, AFSCME Local 189 and the Portland Chapter of Jobs with Justice will hold a noontime rally at City Hall on Wednesday, Sept. 30, to demand a "real economic recovery" for working people.

The rally starts at noon on the front steps of City Hall, 1221 SW 4th Ave.

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Portland mayor, Metro head reversing gears on I-5 bridge

Portland Mayor Sam Adams has suggested scaling back the size of a proposed new I-5 bridge over the Columbia River from 12 lanes to as few as six, the Columbian newspaper reported.

Adams made his remarks at a Sept. 4 Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project Sponsors Council meeting.

Last March, the CRC Project Sponsors Council unanimously endorsed a 12-lane bridge.

"Given the financial realities we face, I think we need to change that to six to 10 (lanes)," Adams said.

Metro Council President David Bragdon, who sits on the Sponsors Council with Adams, agreed that the CRC staff needs to start cutting lanes or interchanges from the bridge project, the Portland Mercury reported.

"It's clear that the version the DOTs (Washington's and Oregon's Department of Transportation) are pushing is not fundable at its current size," Bragdon told The Mercury. "It's also unpopular. They're in a real jam, because they've cooked up this project which is unfundable."

The Mercury continued: "With

tolling a controversial topic, the feds unsure if they can put as much money toward the project as the CRC staff wanted and the 'near death experience' in the Oregon Legislature, says Bragdon, 'they've basically overestimated and been overly optimistic on all three revenue streams. How they've gotten this far and spent as much money as they've spent without being realistic about the revenues is beyond me.'"

Comments from the two politicians came as a huge surprise to union officials, who have lobbied for a 12-lane span for years. Unions are unanimous in their support of a replacement bridge that would provide six through lanes (three lanes in each direction) and three lanes in each direction to connect interchanges in the five-mile project area, a light rail line, and lanes for bicycles and pedestrians.

"This project has gone through an extensive vetting process and the parties have all agreed that 12 lanes with light rail and bike lanes is the preferred design," said John Mohlis, executive secretary-treasurer of the Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades

Council. "For these two elected officials to start back-tracking now is extremely disappointing."

Mohlis said the Columbia River Crossing bridge span and corresponding interchange expansion work is "exactly the kind of big project we need right now so that we can start putting people back to work."

The Project Sponsors Council is comprised of Mayor Adams, Metro Council President Bragdon, Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard, TriMet General Manager Fred Hansen, C-TRAN chairman Tim Leavitt (who is challenging Pollard for mayor), Oregon Department of Transportation Director Matthew Garrett, Washington State Department of Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond, SW Washington Regional Transportation Vice Chair Steve Stuart, Oregon Transportation Commission past chairman Henry Hewitt, CRC Project Director Richard Brandman, and Hal Dengerink, chancellor of Washington State University, Vancouver branch.

Adams is facing a recall attempt and Bragdon is in his last term as president of Metro due to term limits.

Classified workers at Oregon University System reach tentative agreement on two-year contract

Negotiators for more than 4,000 classified workers on seven campuses in the Oregon University System who are represented by Service Employees Local 503 have reached a tentative agreement on a new two-year contract.

The settlement, reached Sept. 25, ended eight months of sometimes acrimonious bargaining. The pact covers workers in 272 classifications who provide a broad range of support for academic departments, student services and campus maintenance. The pact

calls for eight to 16 unpaid furlough days over 21 months pegged to salary levels and a one-year freeze of scheduled step increments.

The agreement is similar to ones covering 21,000 state workers represented by SEIU and AFSCME. Those contracts were ratified last week.

Initially, the State Board of Higher Education had demanded far deeper cuts from university workers than the state did from its employees. This included unlimited furlough days and a two-year step freeze.

It reached a boiling point late last month, and workers began preparing for a possible strike.

"From the beginning we said we were willing to pitch in and reach an agreement that helps balance the budget and protects the important services our members provide in support of students, faculty and the educational mission," said Marc Nisenfeld, a development engineer at Portland State University who chairs the union's bargaining team. "It took a while to get there, but this settlement achieves those goals."

Safety & health seminar offers union discount

Union members are eligible to get a reduced registration fee of \$35 to attend a day-long symposium examining Oregon's health and safety trends for the next 10 years.

Co-sponsored by the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division and Oregon Health and Science University's Center for Research on Occupational and Environmental Toxicology, the symposium will be held Thursday, Sept. 24, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Red Lion Hotel on the River in Jantzen Beach.

For more information or to register, go to: www.ohsu.edu/xd/research/centers-institutes/croet/outreach/looking-forward-to-2020.cfm.

North Clackamas teachers sacrifice raises for jobs

In response to an anticipated \$9 million shortfall in the North Clackamas School District's 2009-2010 budget, the North Clackamas Education Association (NCEA) recently agreed to significantly reduce cost-of-living-increases for the upcoming school year in order to save jobs and keep teachers in the classroom. The action of North Clackamas educators will save the district between \$1.6 million and \$2.2 million.

"Our members have made a sacrifice to help save jobs and ensure a quality education to every student in North Clackamas," said Greg Parrington, NCEA president. "At the same time, the district has agreed to restore teaching

positions to ensure that class sizes remain reasonable.

The agreement, which was overwhelming approved by the membership of NCEA, prioritized preserving jobs and avoiding massive layoffs. North Clackamas' budget is based on the anticipated \$6 billion proposed by the Oregon Legislature as the statewide budget for schools. Whether more cuts are in store for public education will depend on the fate of the tax fairness package, which voters may be asked to consider in January 2010.

NCEA represents 1,050 teachers, counselors and specialists in the North Clackamas School District.



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