

Green Bridge Scheduled for Repairs in 2021 *continued from front page*

improvement document that identifies funding for, and scheduling of, statewide transportation projects.

"We do have a project that is planned and funded in the STIP for the Vernonia bridge over the Nehalem River," said Lou Torres, a spokesperson for ODOT. "We will be trying to add life to the bridge and try to keep it structurally sound."

Current estimates, according to the STIP, call for Preliminary Engineering and Right of Way work for the Green Bridge to happen in 2018, with actual construction work to take place in 2021. The total budget for the project is \$1.68 million. The project includes the removal of pack rust, replacement of bolts and rivets, and painting of the structure.

"We don't have any plans to replace the bridge at this time," said Torres. "That is a very old bridge, built back in the 1930s, and is what we consider 'functionally obsolete,' meaning it's very difficult, to almost impossible, to get parts we would need to do major repairs. They don't build bridges like that anymore. Our goal is to add as many years to its life as we can before we have to replace it, because it will be very expensive when we do."

"The Green Bridge was on the state STIP in 2005-2007 for replacement and then after the flood it disappeared from the list," said former Mayor Harrison. "With that history, ODOT's plans are obviously not engraved in stone."

Harrison says she and Vernonia City Administrator Josette Mitchell have met with Columbia County Commissioner Alex Tardiff and County Parks Department staff to discuss a combined effort to replace the bridge and include a crossing for the CZ Linear Trail, a county bike, pedestrian and equestrian trail that runs from Scappoose to just outside

Vernonia; the final connection of the CZ Trail to the Banks-Vernonia State Trail and a way to cross the Nehalem River has yet to be designed. Harrison says she has also been in contact with State Senator Betsy Johnson, asking for assistance in getting the bridge replaced.

Harrison also raised concerns about the danger of the intersection on the north side of the bridge, which has been the scene of multiple accidents during the last several years. "The signs there have been knocked down three times in the last year," said Harrison. "Do we have to wait for a fatality before they do something?"

On January 11, Harrison and Mitchell made a presentation to regional ODOT representatives in an attempt to convince ODOT that the Green Bridge should just be replaced. Following the meeting Harrison said the meeting went well and that the ODOT people were interested in learning more about the condition of the structure and the need to replace the bridge.

According to the ODOT's 2017 Bridge Condition Report, *A bridge rated Structurally Deficient by the Federal Highway Administration indicates deteriorated physical conditions of the bridge's structural elements (primarily deck, superstructure, and substructure) and reduced load capacity. Some of these bridges are posted and may require trucks of a certain weight to detour. A classification of Structurally Deficient does not imply that bridges are unsafe. Structural deficiency is one of the many factors that are used in the ODOT State Bridge Program for project ranking or selection.*

House Bill (HB) 2017, the transportation funding package passed by the Oregon Legislature last year, will provided funding to

help maintain current conditions and prevent more bridges from falling into poor condition. HB 2017 provides additional funding to ensure that deteriorating bridges on Oregon's highest priority routes can be addressed before they impede mobility or force trucks to detour. ODOT's economic analysis found that when bridges are weight-limited - meaning they can no longer carry heavy trucks due to structural problems - it becomes more expensive to get products from Oregon's farms, forests and factories to market. This, in turn, makes Oregon's trade-dependent economy less competitive.

Torres says the process to make the repairs at the Green Bridge will most likely include erecting environmental protections, including an encasement to keep old paint and rust from falling into the river. He says he believes the bridge will not have to be closed during the construction process. "I don't know what the traffic control plan is for this project, because it's still pretty early in process, but I doubt it will involve a complete closure. We'll probably have some periodic single lane closures with flaggers. We know it's a lifeline road that people depend on, commerce uses it, and emergency responders depend on it."

Harrison says that if a case can be made that Vernonia's Green Bridge is structurally unsafe, federal funds could be used to pay for a large percentage of the replacement costs.

Seismic vulnerability for Oregon's roads and bridges is also a major concern, as the Pacific Northwest

braces for the possibility of a major earthquake. ODOT's Bridge Condition Report states, *Oregon's aging bridge network has a number of vulnerabilities, with many bridges beginning to reach the end of their design life. Oregon also has bridges built before modern seismic standards that will likely collapse or become unusable in an earthquake. Old timber bridges need regular repair, and coastal bridges need special treatment to withstand constant exposure to salt in the environment. ODOT's budget prioritizes bridge preservation and maintenance to keep these bridges open to traffic, reducing impacts to businesses and communities.*

ODOT has also developed a seismic strategy that will invest in replacing or retrofitting vulnerable bridges in phases. The first part of the first phase, which will secure U.S. 97 and Oregon 58 so that relief supplies can get into the state and across the Cascades into the Willamette Valley, has been funded. A triage route that will ensure southern Oregon is accessible was also funded by HB 2017, and ODOT expects to make continued progress on seismic resilience as a result of the investments made by HB 2017.

"We always have to look at what funding is available so we stretch it as far as we can and look at what we can do to add as much life as we can to these structures," says Torres.

"I don't think putting lipstick on that pig is going to help," said Harrison about the Green Bridge. "Eventually they're going to have to replace it. Why invest money in cosmetic repairs now?"

Police Blotter • January 1-16, 2018

Reports Taken

- January 5, 2018 Report of Stolen Vehicle Recovery on Nehalem HWY S
- January 12, 2018 Report of Unlawful Entry of a Motor Vehicle near State Ave.

Citation/Other

- January 1, 2018 Cited for Operating a Vehicle While Using a Communication Device near Rose Ave.
- January 7, 2018 Cited for Violation of the Posted Speed near Rose Ave.
- January 10, 2018 Cited for Violation of the Basic Rule 50 mph in a 35 mph near Nehalem HWY S

Vernonia Police Department responds to calls that do not always end in Arrest, Report, or Citation. 01/01/2018 through 01/16/2018 VPD had 105 calls for service.

The Vernonia Transfer Station is scheduled to be open on the 2nd and 4th Saturday January - October 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

January 27 February 10 & 24

Dates and times are subject to change due to weather

Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

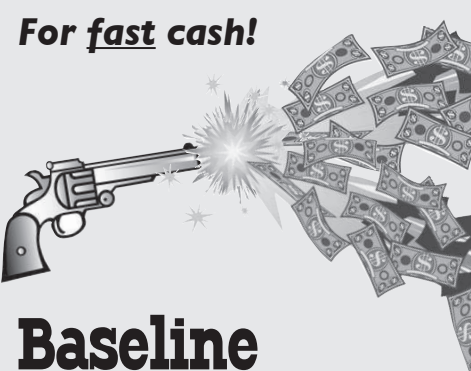
City Council Meetings are scheduled for 7:00 pm:
Monday, February 5, 2018
Tuesday, February 20, 2018

City Closures are scheduled for:
Monday, February 19, 2018
Presidents' Day

Dates and times subject to change

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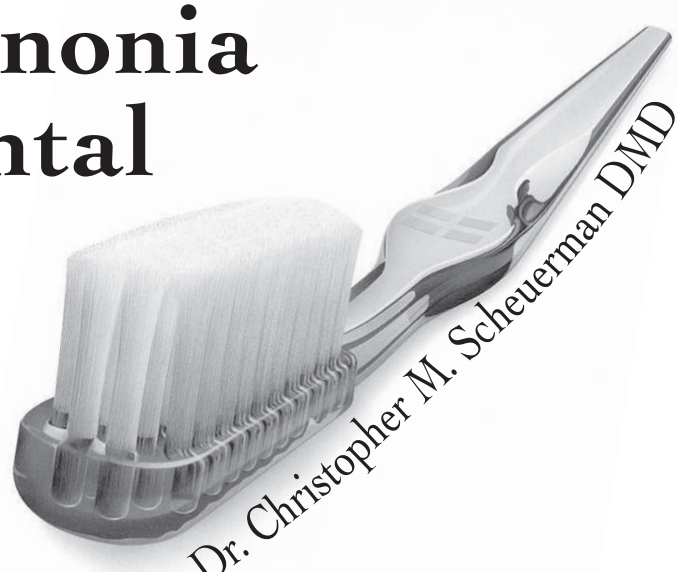
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