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New Sellwood Bridge construction officially under way

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

Work didn't actually begin that day, and at press time Multnomah County was still \$5 million short, but on the morning of December 16 it "officially" began work on a new Sellwood Bridge.

By now crews should be working on the creation of new piers 40 yards north of the existing structure. Sometime this summer the existing span will be moved onto these piers (a process taking two or three days), and this will function as a temporary bridge.

At that point crews will begin constructing a new bridge in the old location, a process that will take about three and a half years.

The new structure will have a lane of auto traffic in each direction as at present, plus much better facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, and the space and facilities to accommodate a future streetcar line.

The cost for all this will be just under \$269 million, from a variety of different sources, down from an estimate a year

ago of \$330 million.

The refusal of Clackamas County voters to approve an appropriation for the bridge left a major funding gap, but most of this was closed this week when the federal Department of Transportation approved a \$17.7 million Transportation Infrastructure Geared to Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant for the project.

Multnomah County spokesperson Mike Pullen said the County would attempt to get the remaining \$5 million from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Officials have identified the need to replace the bridge, built in 1926, for 50 years. Since the identification of cracks in its supports in 2004, heavy vehicles, including TriMet buses, have been barred from using it.

Multnomah County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury, who acted as MC at the groundbreaking ceremony, said, "Three years ago we only had a plan and about \$11 million. Now, after six years of planning and design work, construction can begin!"

Kafoury continued, "This is the larg-



Multnomah County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury (left) receives a ceremonial check from U.S. Undersecretary of Transportation Polly Trottenberg, at the December 16 groundbreaking of the new Sellwood Bridge. (Post photo by Lee Perlman)

est transportation project the County has taken on in a long time, and it would not have been possible without strong partnerships." There was some irony in the remarks.

Last year, County Commission Chair Jeff Cogen and Portland Mayor Sam Adams were publicly at loggerheads on this issue, and Kafoury announced at a public meeting a plan to have the rest of the Portland City Council overrule Adams. Last month Adams and Cogen paid tribute to each other.

U.S. Undersecretary of Transportation Polly Trottenberg said that the TIGER grant was one of 46 announced by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood "months ahead of schedule." It upholds President Barack Obama's pledge "that we will not wait for projects that benefit the American people."

The requests far exceeded the amount available, she said, but the Sellwood Bridge application "knocked it out of the park. It fits the transportation priority."
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The Hayhurst Neighborhood School Lego Robotics team won a trophy at the regional robotics competition at Catlin Gabel School on December 10. (Photo courtesy of Fran Barth)

Hayhurst School robotics team wins trophy in regional tournament

By Fran Barth

The Hayhurst Neighborhood School Lego Robotics team, "Lego My Lettuce", competed against 19 other teams in a regional tournament held at Catlin Gabel School on December 10.

They had spent the previous 10 weeks, designing and building their robot, writing programs and working on their research project.

Every year, teams across the world take on the First Lego League Challenge. The challenge is released early in September and the tournament is in early December.

This year's theme was Food Safety. The challenge always consists of three parts: the robot game, the research project and FLL core values.

For the robot game, the teams design, build and program a robot to complete challenges on a themed competition board. The robot has three opportunities to complete the tasks within 2 ½ minutes.

The second part of the robot game is technical judging on the programming and robot design. The research project involves selecting an existing, real life problem, researching it and recommending a solution.

The FLL core values are the foundation of the program, reminding all of us that Lego Robotics is about being a team, about being good sports and about enjoying the journey, regardless

of the outcome. Most importantly, it's about having fun.

"Lego My Lettuce" had a balanced day at the competition, performing well in all of the categories. They did especially well on the research project.

They researched lettuce harvesting and discovered a high incidence of contamination, including listeria, salmonella and ecoli. The team designed an invention that could be strapped to a harvester's arm or leg.

The device uses solar powered, ultraviolet light combined with a liquid cleaner to sterilize the harvesting knives. The process involves swiping the knife before each head of lettuce is cut, reducing the contamination.

The team wore farmer's costumes, created a lettuce field for a prop, built a prototype of their invention and wowed a panel of judges with their presentation. They were awarded a trophy for their project.

The team members are Tyler Brown, Josiah Barney (missing in photos), Sam Weber, Kailin Gilzow, Dominic Lenzini and Reid Kille. The coaches are Fran Barth, Shannon Rodgers, John Kresl, and Kathy Taylor. Danielle Lenzini and Lori Weber were particularly helpful on the research project.

Helpful Links: <http://firstlegoleague.org/challenge/thechallenge>, <http://www.ortop.org/fll/>

Fran Barth teaches instructional technology in the Odyssey Program at Hayhurst Neighborhood School.

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4207 SE Woodstock Blvd #509
Portland, OR 97206