

news Briefs



NEW INTERCHANGE FACES TOUGH PROBLEMS

Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey wants a big new freeway interchange at Franklin Blvd. and Interstate 5, but the proposal could face tough engineering, environmental and planning problems, not to mention a huge price tag.

This week, Torrey, Springfield Mayor Sid Leiken and Rep. Peter DeFazio announced that they had successfully urged state highway planners to study the interchange as an option in a \$2.7 million environmental impact statement for a planned I-5 replacement bridge.

"Interstate access at Franklin would create Eugene's first true front door to welcome visitors," Torrey said in a press release. "This could be a great development if the study recommends it, and future funding can be secured."

But the idea for a full I-5 interchange isn't new — it's been kicking around for at least a decade and hasn't been done because of a number of problems, city and state traffic engineers have said in the past. Here are some of the high hurdles:

- Freeway interchanges are generally built as huge sprawling cloverleaves to accommodate high speed turns. But I-5/Franklin would have to cram between the rock cliff at Judkins Point and environmentally sensitive areas along the Willamette River.

- With space tight, the interchange would likely have to be built on pylons out over the river, increasing the project's cost and perhaps running afoul of the Willamette greenway and endangered fish protections.

- The big construction project would likely raise noise and pollution complaints from the nearby Laurel Hill neighborhood.

- Traffic models have shown the interchange will increase traffic impacts on neighborhoods near the UO as people seek shortcuts to hop on I-5. Those residential neighborhoods are already among the city's most politically active in opposing traffic impacts.

- The interchange could make it easier for people to shop downtown, but it could also contribute to sprawl by making it easier for people to drive to the developing Gateway area.

- The interchange would serve as another river crossing, but probably wouldn't draw enough traffic to relieve pressure for proposed river crossings at Valley River Center and elsewhere.

- State and federal policies discourage the use of interstate bridges for local traffic.

- The interchange could cost upward of \$100 million, and no funding source has been identified.

- The interchange isn't included in local TransPlan and other planning documents that are supposed to guide and prioritize transportation spending. Including the interchange in the fiscally constrained plans could require removing other big road projects.

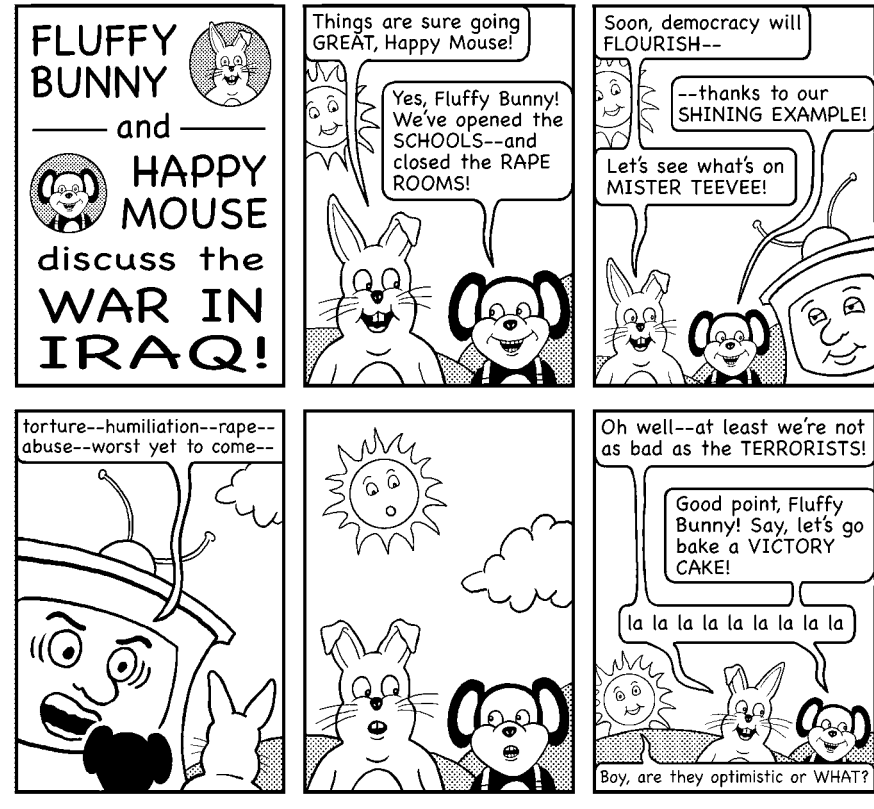
- Studying and building the interchange might delay completion of the I-5 bridge, which is needed because of cracking.

- Landowners near the interchange could cash in on higher values, but freeway interchange development often consists of ugly gas stations and fast food chains.

—Alan Pittman

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



CITY RECEIVES \$9.1 MILLION WINDFALL

Any ideas how to spend \$9.1 million?

The citizens of Eugene received a \$9.1 million windfall from a legal case between the city and Qwest last month and the city is trying to figure out what to do with the money.

The money was a result of an Oregon Supreme Court ruling in the city's favor ordering Qwest to pay the city's 2 percent telecommunications tax, which it had balked at paying since 1997.

Indirectly, much of the money may have come from higher phone bills for local residents. Federal law allows phone companies to pass such local taxes directly on to customers.

City Manager Dennis Taylor wrote a memo to the city council this month stating that he will review options for spending the \$9.1 million and forward a recommendation to the city council. "The size of the payment presents a unique opportunity to policy makers," Taylor wrote.

The \$9.1 million, plus perhaps about \$1 million a year more in ongoing revenue, could be used for some popular projects such as buying natural areas threatened by development, building a new park on the EWEB property along the river, constructing an indoor swim park downtown or even using the money to pay off bonds and lower taxes.

But none of these popular projects appears likely. In the past, city staff have pushed to have such windfalls dedicated to nicer office space for themselves. A new city hall and police station, costing up to a quarter billion dollars, is the city's top spending priority and there's already talk of using the people's \$9.1 million for that project. —AP

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY HONORS EW STAFF

Several *EW* staffers — and one awesome intern — have received Society of Professional Journalists 2003 Excellence in Journalism awards. *Eugene Weekly* is a member of the SPJ Greater Oregon Professional Chapter and competes in the Non-daily Newspaper category.

First place went to editorial intern Kaukab Jhumra Smith in the Religion and Values cate-

gory for "Ramadan in Eugene" (11/6).

Staff Writer Alan Pittman won three second place awards: in the Social Issues Reporting category for "Profiled" (10/16); in Business News for "Back to Work" (5/8); and in Sports News for "Better Watch Out: Sports vs. Nature" (12/24).

Editor Ted Taylor won second place in the Headlines category.

News Editor Aria Seligmann won third place in the Business Feature category for "De-Reg Demons" (4/24).

Graphic Artist Todd Cooper received an honorable mention for Page One Design.

Winning stories can be viewed in the 2003 archives at www.eugeneweekly.com

LABOR HISTORY CONFERENCE AT UO

Exploring issues of the working class, labor history and the legacy of organizing efforts in the Pacific Northwest, the UO Labor Education and Research Center will host the 2004 Pacific Northwest Labor History Association Conference, May 21-23.

Titled "Reform, Revolution, and Reaction: Workers and the Quest for Social Change in the Pacific Northwest," the



Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEL

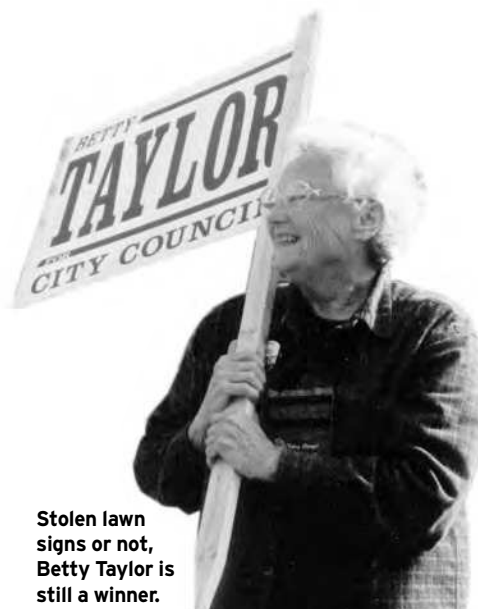
CARLOS SANTANA AND ROSA LOPEZ

Since January 2003, Rosa Lopez and Carlos Santana have tutored Latino adults in Spanish literacy two evenings a week at the LCC Downtown Center. First-language literacy greatly facilitates the learning of English as a second language.

After they took a training course offered by the Mexican Consulate in the fall of 2002, Lopez and Santana volunteered to teach the class. Mexico's National Institute for Adult Education supplies teaching guides and textbooks at no cost, and class participants can take exams to earn primary and secondary certificates from the Mexican education system.

"Two of our students have passed the first two tests," says Santana, a native of Jalisco who came to Oregon 12 years ago to pick beets. He learned English in LCC night classes, earned a transfer degree last summer, and now works as a bilingual assistant at Springfield High School.

Lopez grew up in California, worked for NGOs abroad, and graduated from the UO (ethnic studies) in 2001. "I worked in ESL before I graduated," she notes. "Now I'm getting a masters in educational leadership. My thesis is about learning skills for adult ESL students."



Stolen lawn signs or not, Betty Taylor is still a winner.