

news Briefs

WEP GOES TO HEARING

The Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) has scheduled a public hearing on an update to the Regional Transportation Plan (formerly TransPlan) at its next meeting from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm Thursday, Dec. 9 at the Eugene Library Bascom-Tykeson Room. The update of the transportation plan, high on the to-do list of Mayor Jim Torrey before he leaves office, is expected to help pave the way for the contentious West Eugene Parkway.

Opponents to the WEP note that the highway's price tag has ballooned from \$88 million in 1997 to \$169 million in 2004, a recent ODOT re-evaluation report recommends

turning the Beltline intersection into a full-blown \$45 million interchange that would fill even more wetlands, and ODOT is asking the city to maintain the WEP east of Belt Line.

"Would it surprise you to learn the public process has been all but invisible and ineffective, with a dearth of public hearings and gathering of public input?" asks local transportation activist Rob Handy in a message sent to rally people to testify for three minutes at the Dec. 9 MPC meeting.

A little history: In December 2000, ODOT informed the city that the WEP couldn't be constructed unless *all* of the WEP were included in TransPlan's financially constrained list of projects. That requirement ultimately led to the November 2001 vote on the WEP, which gave local jurisdictions the green light to make the needed amendments to TransPlan. In early 2002, the proposed amendments were reviewed by the Eugene, Springfield and Lane County planning commissions. In July 2002, the necessary amendments to TransPlan were adopted by the Eugene and Springfield councils, the County Commission, and LTD.

More recently, an ODOT report reveals that the July 2002 amendments to TransPlan were inadequate. Those amendments left out



THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



two key parts of the WEP: the Beltline/WEP interchange and the connection from Terry Street to the WEP. Thus to construct the WEP, it is necessary to also include these two projects in TransPlan's financially constrained list of projects.

The decision now goes to the MPC, whose members include Mayor Torrey and City Councilor Bonny Bettman representing Eugene. Unlike Torrey, Bettman is opposed to the WEP. For more information, call the Eugene office of 1000 Friends of Oregon at 343-5201 or e-mail rhandy@efn.org

The public comment period for the Regional Transportation Plan runs through Dec. 9. Written comments can be sent to Lane Council of Governments, 99 E. Broadway, Suite 400, Eugene 97401 or e-mail mpo@lane.cog.or.us or visit www.lcog.org/mpo/rtp.html — TJT

ART FOR EVERYONE

You may have heard of the First Friday ArtWalk, but what about the Last Friday ArtWalk? Hosted by an association of Eugene artists and galleries primarily in the Whiteaker neighborhood, Last Friday is a new event that features public art by behind-the-scenes artists.

Sterling Wallach and his partner Ruth Beller came up with the idea for Last Friday in tandem with the founding of Possum Place, a community art space that highlights the work of neighborhood artists. "It's a pretty simple concept," Wallach says. "It's about people opening their doors. There should be art on every corner, or more. We like others to see their porches or their living rooms as art gal-

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• Regional transportation planning can be painfully wonkish and dull to follow, until we look closely at its potential impact on our community's livability in 20 years. Along with the siting of PeaceHealth's new hospital, one of the biggest rubber and road issues to be decided this decade is the fate of the West Eugene Parkway. The WEP still has its cheerleaders, despite compelling evidence that it will harm rare wetlands and wildlife, suck millions of dollars from previously identified higher-priority road projects, and lead to more sprawl and gridlock. Our lame duck mayor is trying to push the WEP through with an update to the Regional Transportation Plan, but we can still pull the plug on the WEP, or at least let our new mayor and City Council deal with it next year. See our news story this week on the Dec. 9 public hearing and how to submit comments.

• One openly gay guy may have been helped into office by Measure 36, the ugly anti-gay marriage initiative that carried this state. He's Sam

Adams, a former Eugenean (SEHS '82) who is now Portland's newest City Council member after years as chief of staff for Mayor Vera Katz. *Willamette Week*, Portland's leading alternative paper, speculates that large numbers of young and gay voters who turned out to vote against 36 also voted for Adams. He beat Nick Fish 51 to 48 percent, although Fish trounced him in the primary by nearly 11 points. Incidentally, 36 lost in Multnomah County while the rest of Oregon went the way of 10 other states in this hate-filled election. Byron Beck, who writes *WW's* "Queer Window," wonders if "we've finally got a chance to stake a queer

claim in city politics. Don't let us down, Sam Adams, because we are counting on you."

• Before Nov. 2, they might have given us the benefit of the doubt. The 2000 presidential election left room for the argument that George W. Bush wasn't the chosen leader of the American people. The



A young Sam Adams



2004 election was, in a sense, a referendum on the U.S.: Do we really want this buffoon as our president? W's victory suggests that we do. But the other half of America — those who voted for John Kerry — have a message for the rest of the world: "Sorry everybody. We tried." A website has sprung up to send that message: www.sorryeverybody.com. There, you can take comfort in images of people all over the U.S. looking truly remorseful, outraged and sad about W's re-election. You can submit your own sorry photo (*EW* already did), buy sorry merchandise (even thongs and doggie T-shirts), and link to www.apologiesaccepted.com — a website created by non-Americans in solidarity against the Bush regime.

• Seems like there's been more discussion in the mass media about election fraud in Ukraine than there ever was regarding

Ohio and Florida. The abuses were more blatant in Ukraine, and the nation is on the verge of chaos, but it's also easier and safer for media to bitch about corruption on the other side of the planet than to examine it at home. American conspiracy theorists are circulating reports of government agents infiltrating the boards of all the major media pressuring news managers to not allow coverage of election fraud issues. Reporters and editors are cowering in fear of losing their jobs. Well, maybe, but more likely, the media are just following their usual inclinations to do the easy stories while they wait for the next sex scandal or high-profile murder case. We did hear this week that Jesse Jackson has become the first major political figure in the country to scream "foul" and demand a recount in Ohio. Jackson says a GOP "pattern of intentionality" was behind a suspect outcome and at stake is "the integrity of the vote." He is also quoted as saying, "We can live with losing an election. We cannot live with fraud and stealing." See the full story and related stories at www.FreePress.org

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com