

driver, I see firsthand the toll that driving a bus takes on a person. Not only is the jostling of the seat difficult, but they work odd hours, including split shifts, early mornings, late nights, weekends, holidays — no real routine for their bodies to adapt to. They are responsible for safely transporting thousands of people daily, no matter what the weather and yet must grab restroom and meal breaks on the run.

No, it's not a glamorous profession, but it has been providing good family-wage jobs to more than 260 employees in Lane County and it's critical that at the very least, they continue their existing contract rather than take a step backward by accepting LTD management's proposal.

These are loyal, hard-working people — our friends, family members, and neighbors — not greedy people asking for too much. They are trying to hold on to what they've worked hard for, but management's proposal represents substantial economic costs for the workers. LTD management has also proposed cuts in the time operators have to do bus safety inspections, the time they have between shifts (used for sleeping), cuts in vacation as well as decreases to other benefits. LTD Management needs to review its strategic plan, because their vision to "Be the best transit system in North America" is in danger of becoming a joke. Team LTD is failing its mission.

Betsy Kelly
Eugene

BETTER WITH COLA

The Oregon Restaurant Association has submitted a bill in the Oregon House to repeal the cost of living adjustment (COLA) in the minimum wage law in the state. Those increased wages help pay for the COLA increases that we seniors receive each year with our Social Security check.

Maybe the ORA doesn't feel those minimum wage workers need the annual increase, but I know we seniors need it. Maybe we should begin asking our local eating places if they are members of the association.

Bob Cassidy
Eugene

SAVE LTD

What's going on with Lane Transit District? Why are the employees preparing to strike? Why have 200 of the employees signed a petition of no confidence in the general manager's ability to run LTD? Why aren't the citizens of Eugene and surrounding areas up in arms over the excessive capital expenditures by the current general manager?

Everyone who has an employee or is self-employed in the area serviced by LTD pays the employment tax. Do they realize that their money is being spent on grandiose projects and not to support service for the riders? The current general manager, Ken Hamm, started with a capital expenditure budget of \$2 million when he came onboard four years ago and the budget is now \$27 million for 2005. He has done this while cutting the number of routes served and the hours of service resulting in a 24 percent cut in service in the last three years.

Hamm and his board of directors has also now requested an increase in the payroll tax. If this is the way you run your business; buying new buildings, remodeling, repainting, buying new vehicles, while cutting your services and service hours and raising your rates, then support Ken Hamm. If, however, you see this as a way to business ruin and in this case a gross abuse of the way *your taxes* are being spent, contact Rep. Peter Defazio, your LTD Board representative, Gov. Ted Kulongoski and don't forget to write letters to the editor. Please, help save LTD.

Melinda Raven
Springfield

FINE TRADITION

It is reassuring to know that the district attorney continues to honor the comforting tradition of absolving vigilante executions.

Bernard Nickerson
Eugene

MODEL VILLAGE?

How prescient of the City of Eugene to arrange for construction of the large low-income housing development on Kinsroad to coincide with completion of the Urban Village at Garden Way and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard! These newest Harlow Neighborhood inhabitants and hundreds of their neighbors will enjoy the large grocery store that will anchor a mixed retail complex of various shops in a well-planned complex. Consumers will now have the option of walking or biking instead of driving to buy groceries and shop at adjoining stores. And the city will create a model urban village other neighborhoods will want to emulate.

Oh, wait! The city isn't going to build an urban village after all. City wisdom now decrees the land should be covered with medical offices — just what the service-starved residents need! Never mind that the city spent many dollars planning for the village in accordance with public input. All that is beside the point. Apparently the city is willing to renege on its promises, preferring to ignore the

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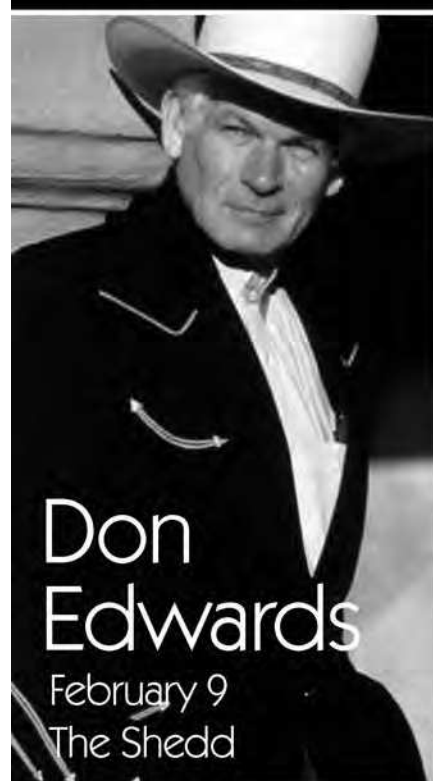
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