

Bridge Beautiful

Plan for concrete span lacks character

Was a precedent set when the most recent bridge built (to last) in the metro area was designed with the environment and aesthetics in mind?

Eugene's DeFazio pedestrian/bicycle bridge, which opened in May of 2000, is a graceful structure suspended above the Willamette River with no supporting intrusions into the waterway. Congressman Peter DeFazio did not receive enough praise for getting this bridge built.

It's not too late to call and thank him — especially if you add that you want the next Interstate-5/Willamette River bridge, scheduled for construction from 2010 through 2012, to be just as beautiful as it frames the river from Eugene on the west and Springfield to the east. DeFazio chairs the House Highways and Transit subcommittee, and he ought to hear from constituents with a vision.

We need an aesthetically significant bridge crossing the Willamette to make a unique statement about this community.



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Right now nothing calls to I-5 drivers between the 30th Ave. interchange and the McKenzie River. Malls, sound walls and housing tracts all turn their backs to the freeway. Crossing the Willamette at night, you can barely sense you've passed over a river.

Imagine a scaled-up version of the DeFazio bridge, its angular superstructure rising above the bridge deck, making the point that you've arrived in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area — or better yet, that you live here.

This is precisely the reason for the Oregon Department of Transportation to design and build a memorable structure. The bridge bisects the second largest urban area in Oregon. Other freeway bridge upgrades in the valley are in more rural settings.

Adding character to the I-5 bridges being built over the McKenzie would be a logical complement to a quest to make the Eugene-Springfield end of the valley instantly and permanently identifiable for travelers, but the focal point obviously is what will eventually span the Willamette.

While ODOT has budgeted \$180 million for a new Willamette crossing, \$110 million of this is devoted to dismantling the two existing bridges, mitigating construction wear and tear to the parkland north of the river and safely diverting bicycle and pedestrian traffic along the vital north bank non-motorized commute route.

None of ODOT's current "bridge types" shown to the public is worth the effort of building. While they reduce the number of pillars in the river, they offer nothing from the bridge deck upward except one absurd example that features a girder bonnet — reminiscent of the Ferry St. bridge's superstructure — over Franklin Blvd., followed by the same kind of concrete wasteland as the existing bridges on the rest of the crossing.

While there have been reports of local elected officials lobbying DeFazio for more funds to build a beautiful bridge, the congressman and ODOT must hear the voices of the public. ODOT has acknowledged every communication from citizens supporting a Kalapuya Indian name for the bridge — a wonderful idea. There isn't much time left to tell DeFazio and ODOT that we will benefit from a bridge design as innovative as giving it a Native American name.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio can be reached at www.defazio.house.gov, and 541-465-6732. ODOT's I-5/Willamette website is www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION2/I-5WRB.shtml

David Sonnichsen is a member of the ODOT-I-5/Willamette bridge Community Advisory Group.

have been around for just a brief period, considering how far back we can now trace our roots. Ninety-nine percent of all species that have ever lived have gone extinct. A common genetic link can be traced to all life on Earth, starting 3.5 billion years ago. Homo sapiens are one of a few evolutions from chimps, dating back 200,000 years — the only one to survive.

The DNA of chimpanzees is about 99 percent the same as humans — whether we are black, white, yellow or brown. All people living today have 99.9 percent the same, highly complex, DNA. Geneticists can map out how life has evolved for billions of years and show where we fit into the picture. There are no gods out there, making us in His or Her image, telling us what's right and wrong and how to behave in the world. The many gods are just a creation of our highly developed human brain.

We think we're special, but we're just another passing species with a big brain, wishing there was a god somewhere to look after us. Belief in a god has not helped us to end wars, share wealth equally, or respect nature. We would be better off not believing in a god — if we could learn to live in harmony with one another and nature.

Patrick Bronson
Eugene

STUMPQUA BANK

Seems like every time you turn around another large corporation is calling itself an "environmental leader" or "green." Usually all it takes is a little scratching at the surface to uncover just another coat of greenwash — much like the greenwash currently flaking off our local (PC) Market of Choice.

By projecting the image of a local supermarket alternative, Market of Choice attracts many eco-conscious shoppers. Yet how would MOC customers feel if they knew their purchases bankrolled the clearcut destruction of hundreds of thousands of acres of Oregon's life-giving forests and the poisoning of countless miles of rivers and streams?

With the climate crisis upon us, protecting forests remains the most workable and significant step we can take to reduce our carbon footprint — with logging responsible for 1/3 of all human-caused emissions; number two, after fossil fuels. Surely, any business supporting further devastation of our global warming safety net — our forests — should get its green credentials revoked, right?

Sadly, Market of Choice IS making this poor choice by investing its \$100 million accounts with Umpqua Bank — or StUmpqua — whose board of directors include the most notorious clearcutting, poison-spraying timber barons in Cascadia. I wonder how many MOC customers would be pleased to know their purchases provide dividends for Umpqua's timber baron board, whose profits fund further forest-eradication and influence for their Earth-eating agenda.

MOC customers, please encourage CEO Richard Wright to get MOC to live up to its green image by removing all accounts from Umpqua and investing in a local, environmentally-conscious bank.

Josh Schlossberg
Eugene

CATS HAVE RIGHTS TOO

I must respond to Greg Norman's "Killer Kitty" letter from the 6/28 issue. He includes the statement, "J.R. Yeager in San Francisco, who started the trap, neuter and return program ..." In truth, J.R. Yeager was on the SF Animal Control & Welfare Commission for two years. I volunteered at the San Francisco SPCA Feral Cat program in trap, neuter, return and monitor (TNRM) programs, and I can assure you that TNRM was around long before Mr. Yeager appeared on the scene.

Yeager re-trapped colony cats he'd been involved with and deposited them at S.F. Animal Care and Control. He gave feral cats a death sentence by insisting the life of a street cat was dangerous and therefore not worth living.

Yeager's partner was a West Coast regional associate for PETA. Apparently, this PETA connection has blurred Mr. Norman's version of the facts. While I agree with Mr. Norman that an indoor cat is a safe cat and free roaming cats may victimize the bird population, many times cats will prey on an easier target, such as a mouse. Free roaming cats can fall victim to cars, predators, maladjusted people and toxic substances — many of the same issues that face declining bird populations. But stray cats don't deserve to die. There are countless advocates committed to fixing, feeding and monitoring these cats in places they already call home.

Are we teaching our children that it's OK to kill one species over another? Many of the anti no-kill letters come from PETA supporters. Many of them believe that feral cats should be euthanized. If PETA and Audubon supporters want to broaden their support and reputation, they must work with no-kill advocates and TNRM programs, not against them. With effective public education, TNRM and affordable spay and neuter programs, together these groups could humanely reduce the cat population and ultimately protect the bird population.

Barbara Gunther
Junction City

HISTORY: IMPERIAL MESSES

"Well, here's another fine mess you've gotten me into," Oliver Hardy used to say to Stan Oliver. Can't you just imagine Tony Blair saying that to George W. Bush? But

then, who would the Brits be to talk? The British made a mess of things in their two previous wars in Afghanistan (1839-1842 and 1878-1881). By the time it was over, they had little to show for their glorious campaign except for death and debt. The Afghans really didn't like being invaded and occupied.

Then there was the British war in Iraq from 1920 to 1932. After drawing the map of the new Iraq and occupying the country, the Brits had to fight Iraqi insurgents who, surprise, really didn't like being invaded and occupied. T. E. Lawrence, also known as Lawrence of Arabia, wrote, "The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a



WHO YOU GONNA BLAME?

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