

excess revenues back into the community.

Sacred Heart's biggest payers are Medicare, Medicaid and commercial insurers, none of which will suddenly pay more because a hospital has a bigger mortgage. That's why the cost of RiverBend has been built into Sacred Heart's long-range financial plan. The public pays for facilities whether they are new or old. The money can be spent to renovate older space or create new ones. As a percentage of health care expenses, hospital buildings comprise less than 8 percent of the cost of care; PeaceHealth is below this national average.

Mamie Arnold
Eugene

HELMETS OVERDUE

I strongly support Sen. Floyd Prozanski's proposal for a mandatory bike helmet law. It is long overdue. I see bicyclists riding without helmets in Eugene and in Portland, and I cringe. In Portland especially, the traffic is bad, and there are bicycle accidents here daily. For a "bicycle friendly city," this is still a hazardous place to ride.

Two weeks ago, I was in a bike accident in Portland and smacked my head hard on the pavement. If I hadn't had on my helmet, I would have been in serious trouble. Many states, including Oregon, have passed motorcycle helmet laws, which have greatly reduced deaths and serious head injuries. We now need bicycle helmet laws for the same reason. Like motorcycles, we share the roads with cars and trucks, and thus share the same hazards.

As reported in *The Oregonian*, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that in 2006, 730 of the 767 bicyclists killed were not wearing helmets. A study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that between 1996 and 2006 the fatality rate for bicyclists age 5 to 15, decreased 8 percentage points after mandatory helmet laws were put in effect for young riders. We now need to have these protections and laws put in place for adults.

I hope that Oregon bicyclists will get behind this bill and support this as a sane public health measure.

Karen Kennedy
Eugene

FLATTENED DUCKS

I am writing to register my extreme disapproval and distaste for the city of Eugene using the Amazon Channel alternative for the West Eugene EmX line. I am a bicycle commuter who uses the bike path every workday to get from my home in west Eugene to my job in south Eugene.

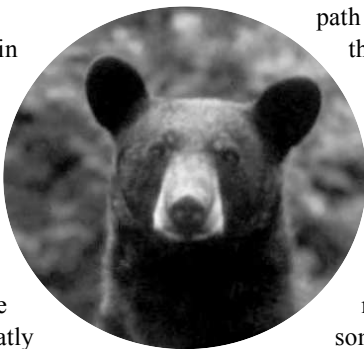
The bike path serves dozens, if not several hundred, commuters like myself. I also daily see joggers, dog-walkers, people out on strolls and pleasure cyclists. Where are these people to go if the EmX line takes their path? And alternatively, if the city uses eminent domain to take over the properties adjacent to the path (between

Garfield and City View), having the EmX right next to the bike path will endanger them, not to mention reduce the quality of experience. Who wants to go for an evening stroll with the kids only to have to worry about them getting in the way of a huge bus going 30 MPH?

Another potential hazard comes from nature. I've used the bike path at many times of the day, the earliest being 6:30 am and the latest being 10 pm. I've had near collisions with nutria, ducks and even deer, and have had great blue herons soar into the air from the creek right in front of me. Amazon Creek supports a lot of wildlife. I foresee a lot of flatter ducks in west Eugene if the Amazon Channel Alternative is used.

It seems to me that the West 13th and West 6th/7th options would affect the traffic (maybe even reduce it) on those streets. The Amazon Channel option would reduce the quality of life for many, many more Eugeneans. In this time of skyrocketing fuel prices, we should be encouraging bicycle use by maintaining and even expanding our current bike path system, not scrapping them for an ill-conceived attempt at rapid transit.

Alpha M. Wilson
Eugene



BEAR NECESSITIES

In late June, my neighbors and I shared some disturbing visits by a yearling bear. When I first saw him, he looked to me like a big dog. I emailed my friends that he was cuddly-looking. I have also shared my backyard with bears for many years in Juneau, Ala., and I'm fond of them, but when they decide to enter the local supermarket as one did there one summer, I'm all for public safety measures to discourage them. But what are these measures? Many communities have found alternatives to killing.

Our McKenzie Bridge bear was alarming because he would scratch his claws down the windows, climb the trees next to our houses in order to get on the roof and not be at all discouraged when my neighbor yelled and waved his arms. However, he scampered quickly back down the tree and disappeared when I banged pots and pans together and turned the radio up full volume. The other thing we did to discourage him was put out containers of ammonia, especially near compost and garbage containers.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife brought a trap up and placed it in one of our driveways. I'm happy to report that as far as I can tell the bear never returned.

If you live near a wilderness area they will most certainly visit at some time or other. They've been coming to our property in McKenzie Bridge for more than 30 years. This is the first time one has tried to get inside. As noted, we have had a late spring (and this may continue to happen), but I do not believe this bear would have made such a serious effort to get inside our houses if someone hadn't fed him from a house in the past. As our population continues to

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