ODOT SIGNS 'VANDALIZE' BIKE BRIDGE

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) workers have installed large new signs on the graceful new cable-stayed bicycle and pedestrian bridge south of the Gateway interchange. The signs give directions to the nearby freeway flyover bridge serving Beltline Road, but not everyone appreciates the positioning of the signs.

"It is clear that ODOT has absolutely no taste," says noted Eugene architect Otto Poticia in a letter to *EW*. "This is the agency that Eugene has relied on to design the new and important I-5 bridge entrance to Eugene? Clearly they lack imagination and aesthetic skills to be trusted to make important design decisions as important as this one."

Poticia calls traffic engineering "the least creative of all the engineering disciplines," and says it's "sad for the state, since ODOT controls more resources that influence our built environment than any other agency. No use continuing to discuss the design of the new I-5 bridge; they simply don't, won't and never intended to understand."

Poticia does give credit to ODOT for the design of what he calls a "beautiful and sleek" bike bridge to serve the Gateway area. The bike bridge, he says, "truly makes an important difference to the event of driving the freeway. Alas it now turns out that they built it to support two very large and ugly standard signs to guide you to the Beltline and save two posts."

The bike bridge, he says, "has been vandalized and ruined by its maker." And he suggests that the signs be removed and "the person who made this decision be promoted to painting yellow traffic lines for his or her lack of caring."

ODOT and Congressman Peter DeFazio's office did not respond to requests for comments by press time. — *Ted Taylor*

COUNCIL BACKS AUDITOR VOTE

Eugene voted overwhelmingly in support of the police auditor on Nov. 4. But the 65 percent yes vote for the charter amendment didn't appear to impress critics on the City Council who again voted against the voter-backed function.

At a Nov. 11 meeting, Councilors Mike Clark, Jennifer Solomon, George Poling and Chris Pryor voted against pursuing an ordinance to implement updates to the charter amendment passed by voters. Councilors Bonny Bettman, Betty Taylor, Alan Zelenka and Andrea Ortiz voted in favor of the police auditor ordinance. Mayor Kitty Piercy broke the 4-4 tie in favor of the pro-auditor measure.

Clark, Solomon, Poling and Pryor make up a conservative block on the council that has frequently voted against the auditor position despite its passage twice by voters. The four conservative councilors themselves were elected after running largely unopposed for their seats.

If Jim Torrey, another opponent of independent police oversight had won election, Torrey and the conservative block on the council could have repealed the police oversight system approved by voters. It was that prospect that prompted Councilor Bettman to move to refer the just-passed charter amendment to protect the will of the voters.

"The outcome of the election was important," Bettman said at the meeting. "There is overwhelming support for the [police auditor] system," she said. "There was a mandate by the voters."

To follow that mandate, Bettman proposed a dozen ordinance changes and clarifications to assure the auditor access to information on police complaints and a role in the intake and review of complaints against the police.

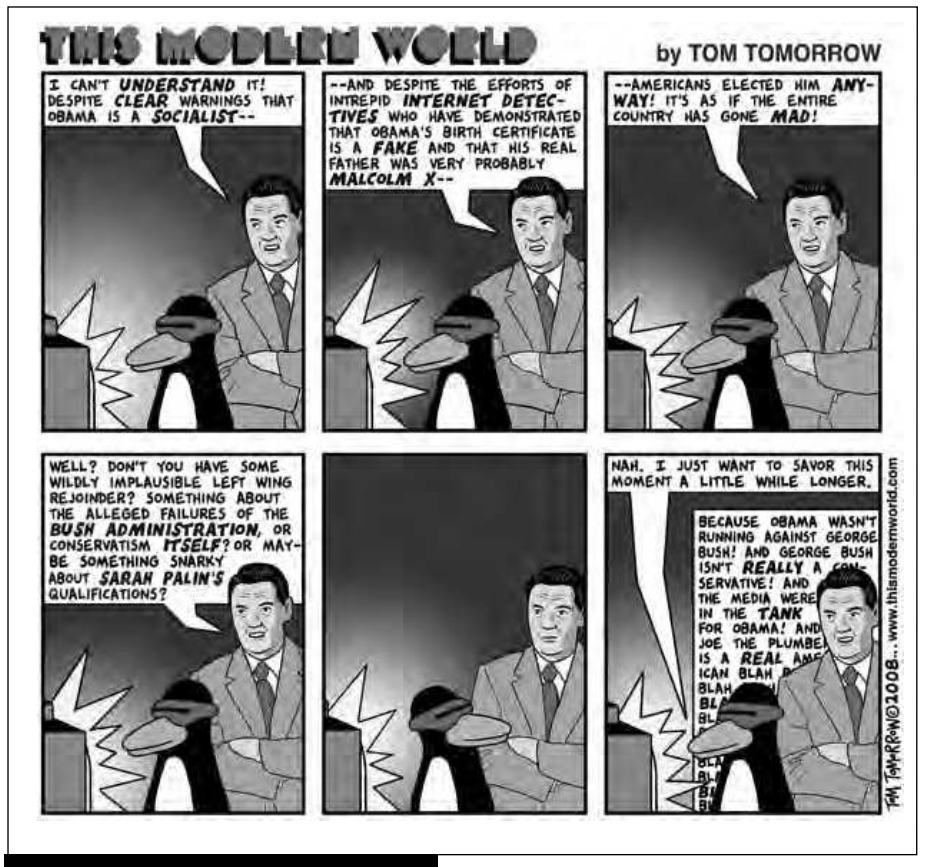
"It's just reinforcing what the public wants," said Councilor Taylor in support. "It's routine almost."

But council conservatives appeared adamantly opposed. "This is working too fast because of a recent election," said Councilor Clark.

But supporters said the changes have been long considered in response to continued police opposition to the auditor function. "These aren't new issues; nobody should be surprised at it. These are issues we've been tackling and grappling for the past year," Councilor Zelenka said.

The council plans to hold another work session on the ordinance changes, hold a public hearing and take final action in a month.

It's unclear whether all the changes will end up passing. "I don't support several of these," said Councilor Ortiz, a key swing vote. —*Alan Pittman*



news Briefs

OREGON SCHOOLS AND PESTICIDES

Eugene-based Oregon Toxics Alliance says children in Oregon have been exposed to pesticides in classrooms, on playgrounds, on ball fields and at school bus stops. OTA reviewed pesticide poisoning complaint records kept at the State Department of Agriculture and Department of Human Services and found 56 cases of kids in Oregon schools being exposed to pesticides since 1990. Forty-three of the cases were reported in the last 10 years.

OTA Executive Director Lisa Arkin says there are probably more incidences of pesticide exposure at schools than the records indicate. Exposures can go underreported, she says, because it takes effort to report an incidence, kids don't know why they feel ill, people are unsure of which agency to inform and some are afraid of workplace repercussions if they report the exposure.

According to OTA's report, 14 of the reported incidents resulted in school evacuations, trips to emergency rooms or citations from a violation of state pesticide law. Unlike many other states, Oregon does not have a statewide policy promoting safe pesticide practices at schools, says Arkin.

One incident in the report took place four years ago in Lane County, at a school bus stop in Junction City. A bus driver reported smelling odors and seeing pesticide drifting from a nearby aircraft. A farmer was applying pesticides to a grass-field next to the bus stop, according to OTA's report. The children at the bus stop were coughing and yelling to get on the bus.

Arkin says OTA's report is "tracking the exposures to pesticides in a state like our own that really doesn't protect people." The report itself, she says, is not making a correlation between higher rates of illnesses like autism, asthma and breast cancer and pesticide exposure. But Oregon does have unexplained high incidences of these conditions, and Arkin says some of these highly toxic pesticides have been linked to cancer, reproductive effects and nervous system damage

OTA presented copies of the report to Gov. Ted Kulongoski's office and State Superintendent of Schools Susan Castillo on Monday. — *Camilla Mortensen*

WAR DEAD

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq began on March 20, 2003

(last week's numbers in parentheses):

- **4,193 U.S. troops killed*** (4,189)
- **30,774 U.S. troops injured*** (30,764)
- **145 U.S. military suicides*** (145)
- **314 coalition troops killed**** (314)
- **1,123 U.S. contractors killed** (accurate updates NA)
- **97,084 to 1.1 million civilians killed***** (96,976)
- **$570.0 billion cost of war** ($568.0 billion)
- **$162.1 million cost to Eugene taxpayers** ($161.5 million)

** through Nov. 10, 2008; source: icasualties.org; some figures only updated monthly*
*** sources: icasualties.org, defenselink.mil*
**** highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate civilian deaths as high as 655,000 (Lancet survey, 2006) to 1.1 million (Opinion Research Business survey, 2008)*

NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE

Is staying inside making your kids sick? It's time to get them out of the living room and into the great outdoors, accord-