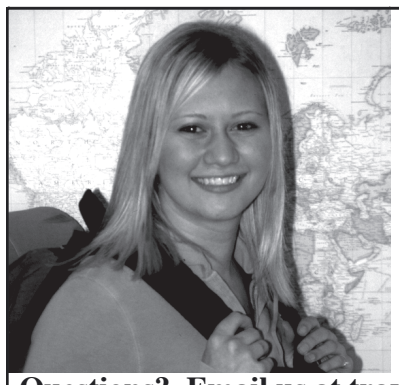

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news Briefs

The Eugene summit will allow attendees to give input on what needs to be done to improve pedestrian safety in Eugene. Speakers include: Ray Thomas, a Portland attorney specializing in bike and pedestrian law; Dan Barkovic, city prosecutor; police Sgt. Derel Schulz; and Dr. Travis Littman, Sacred Heart trauma surgeon.

Oregon and Eugene dedicate almost all of their transportation money to increasing vehicle speed rather than pedestrian safety. Five years ago, the Eugene City Council created a policy that directed a small amount of money previously available for pedestrian and bike safety to instead be spent on street maintenance.

Nationally, pedestrians account for 12 percent of all traffic deaths, but states have allocated only 1.5 percent of available federal funds to pedestrian safety projects, according to TforA. The Republican U.S. House is also considering big cuts in pedestrian and bike safety funding, according to the national group.

The Eugene summit is sponsored by the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and the City of Eugene's Transportation Planning Team.

The city has identified 11th, 18th and 6th avenues as the streets with the most pedestrian accidents. All are busy streets the city designed to maximize fast car traffic with little concern for vulnerable road users. TforA has posted a Google street view map of deadly locations at http://bit.ly/keyGpj online.

The city hired seven new police officers to patrol downtown, but so far the unit has focused mostly on excluding the homeless rather than on the lethal threat from dangerous drivers.

Last year, the number of pedestrians killed by drivers in Oregon doubled to 62. In response, a bill clarifying when a pedestrian in a crosswalk has the right of way was proposed in the Legislature.

Eugene is working on a new Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan that proposes hundreds of key safety improvements. But it remains to be seen whether the city staff and the City Council will actually prioritize the money and road space needed to promote greener, healthier active transportation and save lives. — *Alan Pittman*

COMMISSIONER CENSURE?

Eugene Water and Electric Board Commissioner Joann Ernst faces censure from her fellow commissioners for appearing at a recent protest at the Seneca biomass plant. Ernst appeared at the May 5 protest to express her opinion on Seneca Jones Timber Company's plans to log Trapper, an old-growth forest in the McKenzie River watershed. That sale has since been halted.

Other protesters were there to speak out against Seneca's new biomass burning plant and its effects on the lungs of nearby residents as well as the company's logging practices and issues of whether biomass burning is a renewable resource. EWEB is purchasing energy produced by the plant.

EWEB spokesman Joe Harwood said that on May 17 Commissioner Rich Cunningham "put forth a motion for an agenda item (to be brought for board consideration on June 7), which directed the board president and vice president to meet with EWEB legal counsel to prepare a resolution of censure relating to Commissioner Ernst's participation in the Seneca protests on May 5, 2011."

Harwood said EWEB staff is neutral on these issues: "This is a board issue and does not involve staff." He said the "motion was approved by a majority vote of the board and a resolution will be developed for board review, consideration and possible action."

He added, "As of May 24, no resolution has been developed. Because no action has been taken, any comment by EWEB staff

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