

## BIKING MCKENZIE PASS

The widest, most scenic bike path in Oregon and perhaps the world just opened up for a very limited time only.

ODOT announced last week that it had opened one lane through the snow on the Old McKenzie Pass Highway (OR 242) to bicyclists and pedestrians only. No motorized vehicles. The bare pavement path across the lava plateau beneath the Three Sisters will be car-free until all the snow melts off the other highway lane, according to ODOT.

With a 15-foot snowdrift near the pass, gates are likely to stay closed at least through this weekend. ODOT states, "There is no firm date for reopening, but it's anticipated it will be in July." Check ODOT at [tripcheck.com](http://tripcheck.com) or dial 511 for the latest information.

The car-free road starts 11 miles up Hwy 242 at Alder Springs Campground, tucked into towering Douglas fir trees (about a 90-minute drive from Eugene). A sign says a Forest Service pass is required for parking, but there's no pay kiosk and no rangers were checking last Sunday.

Boost your bike around the snow gate and start climbing. At four mph it's three hours to the top 12 miles away. That speed is doable enough for a reasonably fit 12-year-old or reasonably unfit 45-year-old with a granny gear, but you'll be passed by many people in Lycra and shoes clicked into racing bikes.

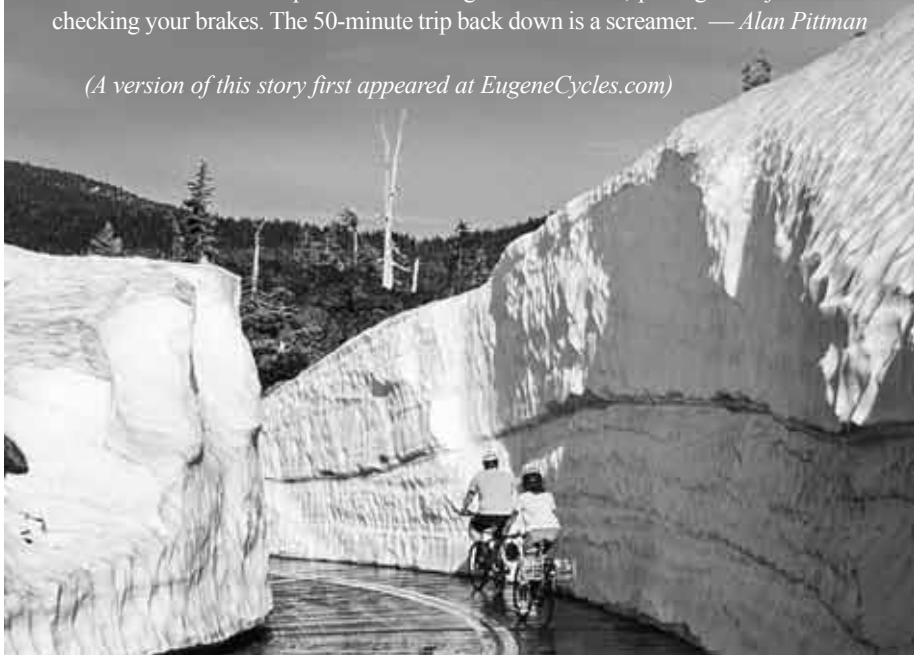
The road avoids very steep grades by using many hairpin switchbacks. About 3 miles in, you may start to see patches of snow in the forest before you hit "Dead Horse Grade." Here the road snakes back on itself several times to work up a near cliff.

Two full bike water bottles and a couple of granola bars should fuel you up and over to where the road levels mostly out with cooling, 4-foot snow banks on both sides. At the roadside tomb of a pioneer who died on the pass trying to deliver the Christmas mail, a guy in a T-shirt and flip flops walked by with his girlfriend and a Chihuahua. Better equipment is advised.

Two miles before the basalt tower of the Dee Wright Observatory, there's a great view of the snowy Sisters. It's also a great place to lie in the middle of the normally busy highway. The intimate ride up the quiet pass may make 242 never look the same to you.

From the tower atop the 5,325-foot pass, there's a panorama of mountain peaks all the way up to Mount Hood on a clear day. Check out the biggest 15-foot snowdrift on the other side of the pass before hitting the bathrooms, putting on a jacket and checking your brakes. The 50-minute trip back down is a screamer. — Alan Pittman

*(A version of this story first appeared at EugeneCycles.com)*



## SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM STARTS

Hungry children can get a healthy meal during the summer when schools are closed. The Summer Food Service Program is a federally funded nutrition program in neighborhoods around the state. Meals are served in locations where kids congregate such as playgrounds, summer schools and community centers.

Visit [www.summerfoodoregon.org](http://www.summerfoodoregon.org) or call (800) SAFENET to find a location. Eugene and Springfield have about 30 locations and days and hours vary. Most sites serve lunch, but some offer breakfast and even afternoon snacks and dinner.

## LIGHTEN UP

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

City Councilor Mike Clark wants the council to open its meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance to "celebrate something that unites us." This is Eugene, man. If you're into unity, pass around a joint.

# news Briefs

## MEETING EYES BEHAVIOR DOWNTOWN

Different sorts of people gather in downtown Eugene during the summer: buskers and panhandlers looking to make a buck or two, agonizingly slow groups of tourists mobbing the sidewalks, hitchhikers and travelers just hanging out, retired hippies staring at clouds, and perhaps even a few residents doing their best to ignore everybody else and go about their daily business.

So what happens when people don't get along? Usually the odd drunken rant or a stern warning from one of those bike cops. Sometimes, however, things get out of hand, and somebody ends up with a hefty fine, exclusion from downtown or even jail time.

In an attempt to find a more constructive solution to the issue, the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) will sponsor a meeting July 27 to address behavior issues, homelessness in downtown Eugene and resources available to downtown residents and the homeless community.

"The objective of this meeting is to inform the community of the options out there and make us all feel more comfortable during the summer," said Sherrill Necessary, DNA member.

Called "Summertime Demographics Downtown: Impacts And Actions," a panel of eight organizations ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union to the Eugene Police Department will field questions from the audience about increasing understanding and minimizing conflict between downtown residents and homeless individuals.

"We're dealing with the rights of community members, we're dealing with limited resources, and we're dealing with behavioral issues downtown," said David Mandelblatt, DNA chair.

"We've all got rights," he said, "but what are we going to do when those rights conflict with each other? It's not illegal to be obnoxious; it's not illegal to ask people for money on the street."

Many downtown residents have expressed their frustration with the homeless population, saying they are disrespectful and unhygienic and that they intimidate local residents. Necessary talked about having to clean up human feces in her backyard, an experience she said she's in no hurry to repeat.

One option the DNA considered was asking the Dining Room to charge 25 cents per meal in an effort to make the downtown area less attractive to homeless individuals. The Dining Room is an organization that prepares and distributes food to Eugene's homeless population.

"That's the bird feed for the pigeons," said Necessary. "If not every pigeon can get

in, then maybe they'll go to another town."

"One problem with Eugene specifically is that there's this reputation that it's an easy city," said Dennis Westfall, DNA member. "(People) can come down here, score whatever kind of drug they want and just hang out."

Others were more sympathetic towards the homeless population.

"We see people out there on the street who are hurt," said Mandelblatt. "What do we do? It doesn't make Eugene a better community by ignoring those people."

"The goal is to increase recognition and respect by each group," he commented later via email. "One way or another, we all have a stake in our community — in this case, downtown Eugene."

The meeting will be from 5:30 to 7:30 pm Wednesday, July 27, in the Bascom-Tykeson room of the Eugene Public Library. DNA encourages everyone to attend, regardless of whether they live in downtown.

— Nils Holst

## CITY HALL: DEMO OR RENOVATE

The city of Eugene plans to move out of City Hall completely in 11 months and rent space for an indefinite number of years while trying to figure out how to remodel the old building or tear it down and build a new building, and how to pay for it all.

City staff told the City Council last week that they will spend \$65,000 to hire two architects, one to look at remodeling and another to look at demolition. The architects' work will be reviewed by a committee reporting to city staff and the results will be presented in displays at the Eugene Celebration.

The cost of a new building approached \$200 million in previous design work that the city spent \$2 million to get and promote before deciding the building was too expensive. The city has only about \$9 million in reserves for the project, meaning a tax increase vote could be likely.

City staff said they will compare the tear down vs. renovate options "equally and impartially." But in previous debates, both the city staff and a council majority have clearly favored tearing down the 40-year-old building. Some councilors and citizen critics have charged that a tear-down would waste money, resources and a historic building.

Councilor Alan Zelenka argued that it would be cheaper and more environmentally friendly to tear down City Hall and lease a new net-zero, highly energy efficient building from a for-profit developer.

"The remodel would be so much like a new building, it might not even be close to cost-effective," Zelenka argued.

But Councilor Betty Taylor said, "When you talk about sustainability, you have to talk about the cost of destroying something and tearing it down."

Taylor said that the rushed process appeared biased towards demolition. "There are big differences of opinion about what we should do with City Hall," she said. "We're moving out with no idea of what's going to happen here." — Alan Pittman