

NO BIKE LANES FOR HAZARDOUS WILLAMETTE

A draft "Concept Plan for South Willamette" by city planning staff has left out one of the top safety priorities for the city's bike plan — bike lanes on Willamette Street.

Willamette ranked as the third most dangerous street in Eugene for cyclists in a recent city study. Bike lanes on the street were the top priority among more than 600 comments for the city's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, and the lanes were included in a draft plan accepted by the Eugene City Council.

But the city's planning department appears disconnected from the city's transportation planning and has not included the bike lanes.

"I was absolutely amazed," said bike shop owner Paul Moore of the lack of bike lanes. "That's what everybody has been after for a long, long time."

Moore runs Arriving by Bike, a shop on south Willamette emphasizing bike commuting. Instead of bike lanes serving the many destination businesses on Willamette, the plan designates a winding bike route on side streets one or two blocks away. "What they're showing on there already exists," Moore said. "It adds absolutely nothing for bicyclists."

"It's as if whoever put that in there is not clued into the fact that bicycles actually are transportation," Moore said of the plan's car emphasis.

Patricia Thomas, the city planner in charge of the Willamette Plan, was evasive about why the planned bike lanes were excluded from the city's plan for south Willamette. She would not say whether she had read the bicycle/pedestrian plan or its many comments calling for the bike lanes. "There are many ideas that come out of the community," Thomas said.

Moore said that at a meeting presenting city plans for the area, the city called for increasing car traffic on a side street connecting Willamette to Amazon Parkway.

"People were like, what, are you crazy?" he said. "They're thinking differently by a long shot from what I'm thinking and what I'm hearing the community thinking in the meetings."

Bike, pedestrian and livability advocates for decades have called for reducing Willamette to two travel lanes and a center turn lane to allow space for sidewalks and bike lanes while maintaining traffic flow. But a "design workshop" in October was apparently dominated by business interests who opposed bike lanes on Willamette or the three-lane solution, according to a city "summary" of the event.

In an online city slideshow, Thomas said the plan features "vehicular oriented commercial areas" in a "all-business area" near 29th and Willamette. Farther north is the "walkable heart of the district," she said.

The vague plan apparently includes some eventual widening of existing narrow sidewalks in the "walkable" area. But it's unclear when even that would happen. "We are talking about a long-range plan that might get implemented over decades — 10, 20, 30 years or even more than that," Thomas said in the online presentation.

The city plan would allow a huge increase in development in the area. The plan has tall apartment buildings next to existing single family homes. The plan lines Willamette and 29th with apartments and calls for conversion of adjacent single family neighborhoods into higher densities.

The city plan calls for converting the old Willard School site at 29th and Lincoln into tall apartments and row houses. The city leaves about a third of the large site for a park.

South Willamette "seems to be on the verge of an exciting resurgence," Thomas said online.

But the city's plan could set up the area for choking car traffic if the massive development the city envisions is not served by attractive sidewalks and bike lanes that will encourage alternative transportation.

The city plans to finalize its plan for the area in March and conduct a traffic study this spring. "If the community prefers," Thomas said, it's possible she may include the Willamette bike lanes in the final plan. "This plan is not final; it is out there for comment," she said.

View the plan online at eugene-or.gov/Swillamette and comment by email to patricia.thomas@ci.eugene.or.us

— Alan Pittman

Holiday Market vendors we talked to reported the best sales they've seen in recent years, and that was confirmed by Kim Still, manager of market promotions at Holiday Market and Saturday Market. Still tells us the reasons for the bump is sales are many, but the general consensus is that the economy is looking better and more people are now aware of how important it is to support the local economy.

Belly Restaurant in Eugene plans to open a second, larger restaurant downtown in April at a location to be announced. Belly's original restaurant is 291 E. 5th Ave..

Mountain Rose Herbs was honored with three environmental awards in 2011 for sustainability efforts. Mountain Rose was named Wholesaler of the Year by the Oregon Organic Coalition, and won the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce Emerald Award for environmental values. BRING Recycling also gave Mountain Rose the RE:think Award for waste reduction and conservation of natural resources, according to Jackie Logan of Mountain Rose.

Business Oregon has begun accepting applications for awarding \$16.5 million in federal small business assistance. The funding from the U.S. Treasury's State Small Business Credit Initiative is expected to generate lending up to 10 times the amount received, or an estimated \$165 million over the next four years through existing Business Oregon financing programs. Small businesses interested in applying for funds can get more information at Business Oregon's website, <http://wkly.ws/15c>

Oregon's minimum wage increased from \$8.50 to \$8.80 an hour starting on Jan. 1 and will mean an extra \$624 a year for a family with one full-time minimum wage worker. The raise effects more than 100,000 Oregon workers.

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Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEL



GARY CORNELIUS

A graduate of Clackamas High School, Gary Cornelius edited the college paper at Clackamas Community College and wrote for *The Oregonian* and the *Enterprise Courier* before he ran off to Alaska, where he drove a cab on the night shift in Anchorage. "My passengers were hookers, airline pilots, drunks, little old ladies and dancers," he says. "I loved Alaska." He also became a father, and after he and his daughter's mother broke up, he moved back to Oregon as a single dad, looking for work. "I started as a receptionist at Clackamas County Mental Health," says Cornelius, who soon moved on to a clinical position. "I worked with patients on practical matters." He worked in mental health for four years in Clackamas County and three years in Klamath County before moving to Eugene, where he worked 14 years in mental health, then eight years in developmental disability services. He retired in 2010 at age 55. "It's the youngest I could retire with a pension," he explains. "I wanted to get into the Peace Corps." Later this month, he will fly to Philadelphia, then to South Africa, for a two-year Peace Corps assignment as an HIV outreach worker. Cornelius has maintained writing skills by way of frequent op-eds in *EW*, the *R-G*, and *The Oregonian*. Last March, he published a novel, *Crashing Through the Underbrush*, concerning the struggles of a county mental health worker in Oregon. Learn about the book and follow the author's African adventures on his website, garycornelius.com. His dog Carly will stay behind with his daughter Megan and her three kids in Cottage Grove.

ACTIVIST ALERT

- **Parvin Butte gravel mine owners** (see story last week) have appealed the fines the county has assessed for their illegal mining and a hearing is scheduled for 2 pm Thursday, Jan. 5, in Harris Hall, 125 E. 8th Ave.

- Comedian Tom Wilson will perform and emcee at the free **Opal Hour** gathering of mental health activists at 5 pm Thursday, Jan. 5, at the LILA Peer Support Club, 990 Oak St. in Eugene. Call 345-9106 for more info.

- Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy will give the annual **State of the City Address** at 5:30 pm Thursday, Jan. 5, in the lobby of the Hult Center downtown. Council Vice President George Brown will be emcee for the event.

- **Cheese Wars III** is a Greenhill Humane Society benefit for homeless pets featuring sit-down tasting of gourmet cheeses, beers and wines, with two-hour sessions at 5:30 and 8 pm Thursday, Jan. 5, at 16 Tons Union Café, at 2864 Willamette St. Tickets are \$25 and participants must be 21 or older. See <http://wkly.ws/15l> or stop by 16 Tons for tickets.

- "**Occupying the Heart and Mind**," a silent meditation/ prayer circle, will gather again at 11:45 am Friday, Jan. 5 at Occupy V headquarters, 7th and Polk. Meditation will be from noon to 1 pm.

- Lane County Board Chair Faye Stewart will deliver the **State of the County Address** at 6 pm Tuesday, Jan. 10, at the County Fairgrounds Gleason Atrium.

- Springfield Mayor Christine Lundberg will give the annual **State of the City Address** at 5:30 pm Wednesday, Jan. 11, at the Wildish Theater, 630 Main St. in Springfield.