

The existing line was averaging 6,000 boardings a day, according to Vobora. When the EmX line opened, it went up to a little over 9,000 a day, with 2,300 being attributed solely to the Gateway area.

With the proposed West 11th EmX line, Vobora said it would continue to solve the two big factors stopping non-riders: It is faster than driving and avoids the hassle of transferring buses.

“As you add that next leg,” he said, “it certainly creates that cross-town system that is very attractive to people and (will) continue to grow the ridership.”

LTD is anticipating a continued rise during the second half of the fiscal year, which has more school months and tends to be stronger than the first. Last year, four out of the six months in the second half recorded more than one million customer boardings, according to Vobora.

— Ted Shorack

RESIDENTS DEMAND TOXIC RECORDS

Three months after requesting the state’s records of the pesticide sprays that have rained down in their backyards, the residents of Triangle Lake haven’t seen a thing.

For years, residents of this Lane County unincorporated community have dealt with negative health effects that they believe are due to spraying of pesticides by Weyerhaeuser and other private timber companies. “Since we’ve moved out here we’ve experienced more health problems than we ever have before,” says Justice King, who lives with her family in Triangle Lake. Many residents blame their coughs, heart palpitations and muscle spasms on the logging companies’ use of pesticides.

This summer, a study conducted by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) revealed that the chemicals 2,4-D and atrazine are present in the urine of Triangle Lake residents. This study was conducted after the residents themselves had their urine tested in spring 2011 and found the chemicals present. Both of these chemicals are found in the pesticides that are almost always used to follow clear cuts — in Triangle Lake, these noxious chemicals have often been dispensed via aerial spraying.

All of King’s family turned up positive for pesticides, and she has been working with her husband to gain access to the Oregon Department of Forestry’s (ODF) spray records. “We want to help OHA confirm that Weyerhaeuser did spray 2,4-D and atrazine,” King says. “Then we can prove that pesticide spraying was our pathway to exposure and hopefully make sure that things can be safer for us in the future.”

The spray records, which are required by law to be public, have been difficult to acquire. “ODF is responsible for requesting those records from logging companies,” says local activist Day Owen. “They have been dragging their feet for months and the records still have not been released.”

Last week King’s husband, Eron, organized three protests at ODF’s Veneta

office. The protests were well attended, and ODF — which claims that it doesn’t have the resources to analyze the records — finally seems to have conceded. “On last Thursday it was stated in an email that the results will become available in February,” King says. However, she is not holding her breath. “Once February rolls around, we’ll start putting more pressure on ODF.”

— Caitlin McKimmy

RULING AGAINST POOP THAT POLLUTES

If you’ve ever driven by a cow pasture or a field recently fertilized with manure and wrinkled your nose at the foul odor, then you have an inkling of what it’s like to live near a CAFO — a confined animal feeding operation. Hundreds or thousands of animals live in close quarters to maximize production of milk, meat, eggs and other animal products. Hordes of animals produce tons of poop, and that manure doesn’t just smell bad, it pollutes the water. But a recent ruling may make CAFOs pay a little more attention to their effect on the environment.

On Jan. 12 U.S. District Judge Lonny R. Suko ruled the Nelson Faria Dairy in Eastern Washington must conduct groundwater monitoring for its CAFO operation. Eugene-based attorney Charlie Tebbutt calls the ruling “a great decision” and says the judge’s order is “precedent-setting.”

Tebbutt, who was lead attorney on the case representing CARE (Community Association for Restoration of the Environment), says the industrial dairy caused extensive soil and groundwater pollution through its poor manure management practices. The judge ordered the dairy to monitor its groundwater, tile drains and soil to determine the full scope of its pollution.

Tebbutt criticized not only the dairy and CAFOs, which can produce as much waste as a city of more than 200,000 people, according to information from CARE, but the state agencies that are supposed to monitor them.

“If you looked at any other industrial CAFO,” Tebbutt says, “you would find the same problems (as at Nelson Faria) of excessive manure application causing groundwater pollution and surface water pollution.”

He continues, “It’s just that the agencies have failed to look — and the agencies need to look — in order to protect human health and the environment. If states agencies would look like CARE did, they would find every one of them is polluting groundwater. They’ve have failed to do that.”

Lane County is home to several agricultural operations considered to be CAFOs by the state of Oregon, including Eugene Livestock Auction, which was issued a \$4,320 civil penalty for discharging into waters of the state on July 29, 2010, according to an Oregon Department of Agriculture press release.

— Camilla Mortensen



VIGIL SEEKS TO CLOSE GITMO

A small group gathered in front of the Eugene Public Library at noon Saturday, Jan. 14, to protest the National Defense Authorization Bill that “empowers indefinite detention of people deemed to be terrorists, even U.S. citizens, without trial or the right to be tried,” according to local peace activist Peg Morton.

Morton wore an orange jumpsuit and a black hood to dramatize the fact that about 170 prisoners remain at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base detention camp in Cuba, and many have never had their day in court. More than 80 have been cleared for release but remain in custody. Last week marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Guantánamo prison, aka Gitmo. President Obama promised to close the infamous Bush-era prison complex when he was elected, but has met resistance from the military, the courts and from hawks in Congress.

Morton says the group, which holds weekly peace vigils at the library, is calling for the immediate closing of the prison at Guantánamo, the release of those who have been cleared, fair trials for others, and that “the right of the military to indefinitely detail suspects of terrorism be abolished,” and “traditional democratic procedures, including the right to see a lawyer, and a fair trial, must be guaranteed.”

— Ted Taylor



ALAN GILLESPIE