



# Rabid Transit

The drive toward West 11th EmX heats up BY SHANNON FINNELL

**I**n an age when money is speech and corporations are people, following the money doesn't always produce a clear, well-documented trail of dollars. The opposition to Eugene's planned West 11th EmX extension is no exception. Now the issue is heating up in anticipation of a Sept. 26 City Council work session.

**T**wo bus rapid transit (BRT) lines are running in Eugene and Springfield, and while advocates such as international public transit design and policy consultant Jarrett Walker say BRT's dedicated-lane style makes transit a reliable and traffic-easing option, some vocal local opponents disagree and have done everything from littering West 11th with signs to taking out anti-EmX ads on LTD buses.

Advocates say it will reduce Eugene's carbon footprint, that it will help redevelopment in an area expected become a major transit corridor and that having a rapid transit system is essential to adding the 30,000 people projected to move to Eugene in the next 20 years. "Transit systems work, they're very effective, and you don't find communities trying to give them back," EmX proponent Julie Daniel says.

Because there's no public vote involved in the West 11th EmX extension — Eugene doesn't typically vote on topics as wonkish as mass transit projects — financial disclosure related to issue advocacy isn't required by law. It's free speech.

But the use of "Paid for by Tax Payers United" on Our Money Our Transit (OMOT)'s anti-EmX ad campaign raised questions for some local EmX enthusiasts, who wondered whether that funding was coming from the conservative anti-tax activists Illinois-based Taxpayers United for America or conservative initiative sponsor Bill Sizemore's Oregon Taxpayers United.

"All of OMOT's funding comes from concerned citizens and local businesses. There is no outside funding that comes in," OMOT member Bob Clarke says. "[Tax Payers United is] a group of individual business people that are specifically united against EmX. You could almost consider it to be a subgroup of OMOT."

Clarke says he's not sure why OMOT decided not to register as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, which would have made public the IRS Form 990, which contains financial information, including a nonprofit's total revenue. "The group is loosely formed of people who are concerned," Clarke says, "and they use my advertising agency as a conduit to be able to acquire the bus ads or radio ads and update the website so people are able to contribute to us and not to an overall nonprofit corporation."

OMOT is not registered in the Secretary of State's registry of active nonprofit corporations, the Oregon Business Registry Database, the Oregon Department of Justice Charities Database or the National Database of nonprofits.

As a result, little is publicly available on OMOT's finances. The group's site does list a group of local businesses where anti-EmX petitions are available, and 11 of the 24 are related to the automotive industry.

Our Money Our Transit hired the K Street office of law firm Dorsey and Whitney out of Washington, D.C., to respond to the Environmental Assessment that LTD submitted to the Federal Transit Administration.

Dorsey and Whitney's 19 worldwide offices represent a wide range of clients, including many oil and gas interests. Past and present clients include Phillips66 (formerly ConocoPhillips), Tesoro Refining and Marketing, CenterPoint Energy, Marathon Oil Company, PBF Energy, Continental Resources, Delaware Pipeline Co., Global Energy, Holly Refining and Marketing, U.S. Oil Company, American Samoa Petroleum Office, Canadian Natural Resources, the Algerian National Energy Company and Suncor Energy, and the firm has acted as Canadian Oil Sands Limited's principle American liaison.

## Oregon's rapid transit problem

Scott Moore of Oregon, a Portland-based economic and social issues advocacy group, says that in Clackamas, where voters are readying for a special election on light rail rapid transit, the campaigns are subject to elections-related disclosure laws, so finances there are a little less murky.

The Clackamas anti-rapid transit campaign is primarily funded by two entities, Moore says, Nevada businessman Loren Parks and Stimson Lumber. In Oregon, he says, "We've been living in a *Citizens United* universe for a very, very long time."

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