

THREE LANES MAY BE BETTER THAN FOUR

Frequent travelers on Willamette Street between 24th and 32nd avenues know that the corridor isn't Eugene's finest for travel, and with the November passage of the pavement preservation bond measure, there's funding to repave and possibly reconfigure the stretch in the next five years.

Transportation Planning Engineer Chris Henry says that four-lane, two-direction streets create problems for everyone who uses the street. He says that people turning left often stop in the left travel lane, people turning right slow in the right lanes, and cyclists end up riding lawfully in a lane of traffic or on the sidewalks with pedestrians.

Henry says that planners and community members are considering the option of having one lane of travel plus a center turn lane, then using the extra lane of space for bike lanes, bus turn-outs, widening the sidewalks or on-street parking. "A center turn lane would move those turning movements out of the travel lane, and that frees up the remaining travel lane in each direction to better handle the through movement of traffic," he says.

Safety is another problem reconfiguration could improve. "What is a little unusual for Willamette Street is that the collision rate is about twice as high as the state-wide average for similar facilities," Henry says. Some of the driveways on Willamette are redundant, he says, and don't necessarily improve access to businesses on the route. Each driveway is an intersection, and "every one of those driveways creates its own set of conflicts that, if people don't yield the right of way appropriately, may result in a crash," he says.

While some community members have expressed concern about the reconfiguration, worrying that it will make the drive more hectic rather than less and drive away business, Henry says that during focus group meetings, business and property owners were all supportive of a three-lane alternative, though they debated what should be done with the remaining space. The cycling community has been pressing for bike lanes on Willamette for years, and given a recent PSU study that shows bikers spend more per month at local businesses than drivers do (read more at wkly.ws/1eq), business owners might be warming to the idea.



"There's been a suggestion by some that cyclists should take alternate routes and side streets," Henry says, "but what we're hearing from the cycling community is that they want to be able to travel to the businesses on Willamette Street, and that means being able to move up and down the street when they're there."

While biking on sidewalks outside of the downtown core is legal, Henry says it's still not a good idea in general. "Riding a bicycle on the sidewalk creates conflicts with the pedestrians and creates a safety problem for both the pedestrians and the cyclists," he says, "which are further compounded by the 70-some driveways along this eight-block stretch of Willamette Street so that there's conflicts between the bicyclists and pedestrians and the motorists that are turning in and out of businesses along the street."

Henry says the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan is still in its early phases, and the next meeting, focused on evaluating the different alternatives, is 6 pm Feb. 27 at South Eugene High School. — Shannon Finnell

GIRL ASSAULTED IN SPRINGFIELD SEEKS ANSWERS

On the evening of Nov. 23, a 17-year-old African-American girl was beaten and left for dead near the Springfield Fred Meyer. Now family members say they need the public's help to catch the perpetrator.

"Some people have a mentality of not wanting to talk to the police, but this is somebody's life," says Jeremiah Farish, the girl's brother. "She could have died — if the lady didn't find her, she could have died." He urges anyone with knowledge of the attack to call the Springfield Police Department Tip Line at 726-3721.

According to Farish, the girl's injuries included massive facial swelling, a broken nose, bleeding from her ear, multiple upper front teeth missing along with the bone

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SPORTS

OREGON VICTORY

Five good reasons why the Ducks will beat the Wildcats

1. The forward pass. Oregon's Marcus Mariota throws the ball pretty well and Kansas State does not do a good job defending against the pass. The Wildcats rank 90th in the nation in defending the pass and got scorched for more than 300 yards more than once. Watch for Josh Huff to make some big catches. If Marcus can find tight end Colt Lyerla early and often, the Ducks will roll.

2. Turnovers. The secret to K-State's success this season has been turnovers. The Wildcats lead the nation in turnover margin — they have taken the ball away from opponents 31 times, while only handing it over 10 times. Bad news for the Wildcats: Oregon is almost as good at the turnover game. The Ducks rank third in turnover margin and have taken the ball away as well as anyone in the nation. Holding onto the ball is a key to winning football games, and the Ducks look good if they do not let the Wildcats win big in the turnover game.

3. The Lache effect. Remember Lache Seastrunk? He arrived in Eugene as a celebrated running back recruit and left when he found himself stuck on the depth chart behind Kenjon Barner and DeAnthony Thomas. He ended up at Baylor and ran through the Wildcats defense for 185 yards

and a touchdown when Baylor crushed K-State this season. If K-State defenders had trouble catching Lache, they are likely to have problems even catching a glimpse of Kenjon and DeAnthony. The K-State defenders are not fast enough to keep up with Oregon's running game.

4. Been there, done that. Oregon is returning to the stadium where they played in the Fiesta Bowl two years ago. Having been to four consecutive BCS bowls, Oregon is used to the hype of playing in a BCS bowl. K-State has not been to a BCS bowl since 2004. K-State will bring lots of fans to the game, but Oregon will bring the focus needed to win on the big stage.

5. Oregon's linebackers. Michael Clay, Kiko Alonso and Boseko Lokombo are underrated, experienced, athletic, fast linebackers. K-State quarterback Collin Klein is a veteran, Heisman-finalist quarterback who has hurt teams with his running. At 6 feet 5 inches and 225 pounds, he has run over defenders for 895 yards and 22 touchdowns. Oregon's linebackers are big and fast enough to shut down Collin's running, which is a big part of K-State's offense. Oregon rolls to a 42-21 victory. — Bern Johnson