

## LTD FACES BIG UTILITY BILLS FOR EMX EXPANSION

Expansion of Lane Transit District's EmX bus rapid system into west Eugene could run up utility costs to LTD exceeding \$9.2 million, according to a memo sent July 28 to the EWEB board from EWEB Engineering Manager Mel Damewood and planner Jon Thomas. The memo was on the agenda for the Aug. 5 EWEB board meeting as an information item and no board action was anticipated.

An intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between EWEB and LTD calls for LTD to reimburse EWEB for any costs associated with relocating utilities that conflict with the expansion. The IGA deals with water mains, fire hydrants, power lines and other infrastructure above and below ground.

"To date, LTD has issued EWEB purchase orders for the design and relocations of EWEB utilities totaling

\$2,197,051," reads the memo. "Further relocation designs, Scope of Work and Purchase Order requests are forthcoming. Based on estimates of LTD's 30 percent design, EWEB's relocation costs could exceed \$9.2 million."

LTD's spokesman Andy Vobora tells *EW*, "The cost for utility relocation was greater than expected and a piece of the higher-than-expected guaranteed maximum price. We have healthy contingencies built in the budget so our expectation is we will still come in under the original budget."

Conflicts along the route have not all been identified and evaluated, so the final costs passed along to LTD could be greater or less. And LTD has not yet acquired all the easements for EWEB utilities in the right-of-way.

Some of the work will benefit EWEB's infrastructure. For example, an 8-inch steel water main installed in 1935 is scheduled for replacement "to avoid being left under the new EmX bus line," according to the memo. — *Ted Taylor*

# SLANT

• **Does anybody remember Rudy Crew?** He was the nationally known education expert hired by Gov. John Kitzhaber to figure out how to finance and fix Oregon's public education system. He was a bust. It was soon apparent that he wasn't that interested in Oregon kids and he was off to the next bigger job. The governor then wisely persuaded Nancy Golden, recently retired and much loved superintendent of Springfield schools, to become his education czar. Nobody doubts her competence or her dedication to Oregon kids. So, this is a cautionary tale. Board members of School District 4J won't confirm their hiring process to replace Superintendent Shelley Berman, who is leaving next spring, but good sources tell us the board is hiring a Portland head-hunting firm to look nationally. Maybe the leader we need already works in the neighborhood, another Nancy Golden, perhaps.

• We continue to hear about **VA Clinic issues** from sources who are critical but fear retaliation if they are named. Most criticism is leveled not at the Eugene clinic but rather the Roseburg VA Medical Center, and its management in particular. One source told us the sprawling old hospital complex in Roseburg is where "problem administrators are sent until they retire." Low morale and poor working conditions lead to good doctors and nurses going elsewhere. One Roseburg VA doctor did speak out on the record recently in an interview on KVAL-TV. Dr. Steven Blum told KVAL reporter Nia Wong that management is the real issue and internal criticism is met with retaliation. We hope Blum's courage is contagious. See the interview and transcript at [wkly.ws/1sl](http://wkly.ws/1sl).

Roseburg VA Director Carol Bogedain has worked for the VA in various posts since 1976. Yep, 38 years. Associate Director Steven Broskey has been on the VA payroll since 1987. Time to retire? The VA has closed old, problematic hospitals in the past, but what would happen if the Roseburg facility is shuttered after the new Eugene VA clinic is completed in 2015? "That would be the end of Roseburg," one source tells us, citing the fact that the VA is a major employer in the mostly rural and depressed area.

• We wrote about the **measure to legalize pot** for adult use last week in our news section and now we're seeing the opposition coming forward. A pro-hemp group called Raising Awareness ([raising-awareness.net](http://raising-awareness.net)) is putting out information that directly contradicts what's actually in the measure. The opponents claim the Oregon measure is "the same bill that recently passed in Washington," "It completely dissolves Oregon's already existing Oregon Medical Marijuana Program," and "It doesn't legalize industrial hemp." All these statements are false, of course, but this might be the kind of information we'll be seeing as we get closer to November. We can expect opposition from pharmaceutical companies, the timber industry, drug dealers, religious groups and some public safety officials. Educating voters about what's actually in the measure will be a big challenge.

• This weekend (Aug. 10) marks the 50th anniversary of the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution** in 1964 that carried us into the disastrous Vietnam War. Let's not forget that our own Wayne Morse of Oregon and fellow senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska were the only "no" votes in the Senate against the war. Several events have happened or are going to happen in Lane County this week (see Activist Alert) that remind us of the impact of that war on veterans, their families, society and our foreign policy.

• **The rats are coming!** Check out our news brief this week on unintended victims of rat poison. Rats are becoming an increasing problem in Eugene neighborhoods. Exterminators tell us backyard chicken flocks and tasty compost bins might be to blame. We haven't heard of rats attacking chickens, but we do know rats like to gobble chicken feed and they get fat while they pee and poop in the feed bins. No manners at all. Rats are smart and sneaky little bastards and will chew through wood to get into chicken houses at night, and sometimes even make daylight raids. Any suggestions from our readers? Maybe training videos for timid hens on "How to Tap Your Inner Velociraptor"? Those smaller Havahart live traps can work — and one bait that sophisticated Eugene rats can't seem to resist is garlic-dill cheese curds from Market of Choice. Maybe MoC should run an ad for that. Meanwhile, take a baseball bat when you check on your chicks after dark.

## RAT POISON PASSES ALONG ITS TOXIC IMPACT

Louise Shimmel, executive director of the Cascade Raptor Center, recalls a great horned owl that was found in a pond last winter. "You could actually see the bruises on his neck where the blood was seeping out of his jugular because his blood was so thin and he was essentially bleeding to death," she says. "We were not able to save that one."

Rodenticide, commonly called rat poison, is used in both urban and wild areas. Though the goal is to kill mice and rats, the poison has also been the cause of a wide range of deaths and illnesses in children, dogs and endangered species throughout the country. The most toxic and painful rodenticides are called second-generation anticoagulants.

"In terms of the poison itself, it's a really horrible way to go. What it's doing is interfering with the clotting mechanism that the body has, and they're essentially bleeding internally," Shimmel says. At the raptor center, severely anemic birds are often brought in with bruising and discolored mucus membranes. The problem, Shimmel says, comes when the rats are poisoned and then consumed by other species.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, rats that ingest second-generation anticoagulants can take five to seven days to die, giving ample time for predators such as coyotes, raptors and cats to prey on the them, especially given their weakened state and slow movements. In addition, the bait is made to attract rats via smell and taste, which sometimes draws in other animals that eat the bait directly. The bright blue-green colored bait in pellet form is also attractive to curious children.

California's issues with wildlife deaths from rodenticide, including endangered San Joaquin kit foxes, has led the state to limit the use of the poison early this year, restricting its use to licensed pesticide applicators. This move comes after the EPA's 2008 decision to remove certain rat poisons from the market that did not use protective bait stations in hopes of eliminating accidental ingestion by children, pets and wildlife. Most recently, some d-CON products made by Reckitt Benckiser will stop being produced by Dec. 31, 2014.

Rose Kachadoorian, Oregon Department of Agriculture pesticide and endangered species specialist, says that those looking to get rid of rat poisons or other unwanted pesticides should look into their local depositories. "Don't pour them down the toilet, sink or storm water; that is absolutely the worst thing to do," Kachadoorian says.

Instead of using rodenticides, Shimmel, Kachadoorian and the EPA recommend alternatives and preemptive measures such as removing possible food items that would draw rats in the first place and using humane traps. For homeowners in Lane County looking to dispose of unwanted rodenticides or pesticides, call Lane County Waste Management Division to call and make a drop-off appointment at 682-4120. — *Anna V. Smith*

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— LOUISE SHIMMEL,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CASCADE RAPTOR CENTER



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