

Growing Better Choices

THE BENEFITS OF LTD'S SELECTIVE TREE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT

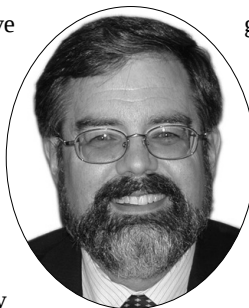
At its core, the West Eugene EmX project is about growing. On the heels of a long recession, we now see our economy ticking up with new businesses and redevelopment in downtown Eugene, downtown Springfield and across our metro area. We want to keep our economy vibrant. We want to retain the natural beauty around us with clean, fresh air. And we want to have more — and better — choices in how we live, travel and recreate.

Most residents travel in our community on a nearly daily basis to work, school, doctor's appointments, running errands or just having fun. Most travel by car, some bike or walk and many take LTD regular bus, EmX or RideSource. More than half choose to ride the bus even though they own or have access to a car while a portion of transit riders are too young, too old or have a disability and therefore cannot choose to drive.

Convenience and time are the primary reasons why people opt for car keys instead of a bus pass. But when the transit trip is fast and frequent, many more people are attracted to ride. While EmX is only one of LTD's 35 bus routes, it attracts 25 percent of LTD's weekday passengers. But for many residents, EmX doesn't yet travel near their home or destinations. The West Eugene EmX project is going to change this for thousands of area residents. The route will grow from 9.5 miles to 14 miles across Eugene-Springfield. More than 50,000 residents will have access to 80,000 jobs along the expanded route.

At the same time, the project will improve the overall transportation system in a number of exciting ways. First, motorists will see travel times maintained by widening the roads at congested intersections. Second, the EmX project will build 5 miles of wider sidewalks and upgrade more than 300 sidewalk curb ramps to make walking safer and more accessible, especially for people who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Third, cyclists and pedestrians will have better connections when three new bike-pedestrian bridges over Amazon Creek are constructed. LTD will build two of these bridges, and the city of Eugene will build the third. Fourth, nearly 7 miles of concrete travel lanes will be constructed that will be shared by EmX and motorists as they turn into businesses or at cross streets. This community investment will reduce street reconstruction costs for the city.

To prepare for road widening this spring, the removal of street trees was the first step. The current trees are struggling in narrow planting strips, causing damage to the sidewalks and resulting in a decline in the health of the trees. To prepare for planting new trees, LTD worked with neighborhood leaders and residents, businesses along the route, the city urban forester, landscape architects and many others to create and implement a plan that seizes this opportunity to select more appropriate species of trees, provide more



growing space for the new trees and find ways to use the wood from trees that need to be removed. Examples of how the wood will be used includes: logs from the removed trees being placed in Eugene wetlands to provide habitat for turtles, salamanders and chorus frogs; and chipping the limbs into wood chips that will be available free to the public for gardens and paths.

How many trees are being removed? More than 200. How many trees will be planted? More than 400. When complete, the corridor will include more than 200 additional trees. With more room to grow and in better soil, these trees will grow quickly and provide more diversity and beauty along these busy Eugene streets.

In addition to more trees, the project will add miles of new landscaping along the widened roadways, including special planters that clean stormwater runoff. These stormwater treatment planters are an exciting addition to the project. They not only provide more green space along the street, separating pedestrians from the traffic lanes, but they treat storm water before it flows to area waterways.

Growing choices, growing trees and growing transit are long-term benefits for our community. Visit weemx.ltd.org for more information and to sign up for project news.

Ron Kilcoyne is general manager of Lane Transit District. See ltd.org or call 687-5555.

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