

- There will be an **interfaith prayer service** with the theme “Seeing Light in Darkness,” 6:45 pm, Monday, Sept. 11 at the First Christian Church (1160 Oak Street in downtown Eugene). The gathering will “celebrate the oneness in our diversity through prayers, chants, readings from sacred texts and many other forms that come from the teachings and traditions of our participating presenters.” Those presenters include people of Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Jewish faiths, as well as an African-American storyteller, a Buddhist and the former mayor. For more info go to interfaithprayer.org.

- Lane Rescues is spotlighting the **Oregon Coast Humane Society in Florence**. The rescue group says animals from this small retirement town have a “harder time finding a home and can end up in the shelter for years.” Go to lanerescues.com or their ad in EW’s pages to see photos of and read about adoptable animals. Email petsponsors@gmail.com for more info.

- Heather Sielicki of Southwest Neighbors will discuss **“Finding Homes for the Homeless,”** 9:15 am, Friday Sept. 8 at the Unitarian Church, 13th and Chambers with Church Women United — “men have special invite!” Ruth Duemler tells us, and remember, “Winter will soon be here!” For more info call Duemler at 541-484-6145.

- There will be a **“direct action opportunity for kids and their guardians** at Rep. Peter DeFazio’s office on Sept. 20, to urge him to be a better advocate for women and children by being a stronger voice against Trump’s budget proposal, which puts 80 safety net programs at risk,” according to organizer Rowan Mason. Mason says the “final demonstration will be determined by who participates but may include a group singing adapted sing-alongs, statements made by school age kids, and gifting of protesting teddy bears.” All kids welcome. Practice meeting is 17. Contact activistparenting@gmail.com for more info.



- **Belly Restaurant** and Belly Taqueria once had the same owners, Brendan and Ann Marie Mahaney, but Belly Restaurant was sold to Diana and Steve Lee in 2015. Now the announcement of the taqueria’s closing (see our story Aug. 24) has caused some confusion for the popular downtown restaurant, which has no plans to close. Belly Restaurant at 30 E. Broadway is still very much in business. The taqueria at 454 Willamette Street will become a New Orleans-inspired restaurant called the **Black Wolf Supper Club**. A kickstarter campaign for Black Wolf has raised nearly \$30,000, and the Mahaneys have promised to match donations. Remodeling is planned inside and out.

- **Flavors Catering and Events** reported to police that its portable commercial oven and trailer were stolen from Oakway Golf Course Friday night, Sept. 1. “It had to be a group of people as it was pushed through the golf course and then eventually hooked up to a truck of some kind,” Jeannie Loomis says on the Eugene Food Carts Facebook page. “What is wrong with people! This is part of how we make our livelihood.” She says security video was working that night.

- **Equiano Coffee Company** of Eugene is expanding and has opened a Specialty Coffee Tasting Room at 300 Blair Boulevard in the Whiteaker neighborhood. “We wanted to create a space to showcase our more rare and exotic coffees,” says co-owner and roast master Okon Udonsenata. The tasting room offers unique treats such as cashew milk cappuccino and espresso milkshakes, along with local pastries and confections. The company has also launched a new e-commerce website, equianocoffee.com. “Today the Whiteaker, tomorrow the world,” says Udonsenata.

- **Hospice Pet Advocates** is a new Eugene-based nonprofit that targets “unintentional pet abandonment due to a medical emergency or death.” The charity is directed by Ruth Helle, a medical social worker, and Thea Peck, a hospice RN. A GoFundMe campaign has been launched to help build a small animal shelter and raise start-up funds. Find the group at hospicepetadvocates.org or call 541-632-3217.

NEWS

BY CORINNE BOYER



NEW ROADS, ELECTRIC CARS

Gov signs state’s largest transportation package

Gov. Kate Brown and several local lawmakers gathered Aug. 29 in Eugene’s Alton Baker Park to address a crowd about the passage of the transportation package — House Bill 2017. It’s the first time in the state’s history that funding will be dedicated to statewide public transportation; one aspect of the bill focuses on electric cars.

Brown thanked local and regional officials for their efforts during the 2017 legislative session and said she was excited that Republicans and Democrats came together to pass the \$5.3 billion package.

Over the next 10 years, the comprehensive package will invest in a number of infrastructure improvement projects aimed at curbing traffic congestion as well as improving roads, bridges, sidewalks and bikeways.

Public transportation will expand in both rural and urban areas, and electric vehicle rebates will be available to low and middle-income families, according to a statement by the governor’s office.

“We see public transit as a way to lift families out of poverty, as a vehicle to lift families out of poverty — and to provide better and more enhanced access to public transit is a really good thing,” Brown told reporters at the park. “Cities and counties also will be getting nice checks in the mail as well, so they can continue their road improvements that they’re working on.”

However, six to seven families living in their vehicles parked in the Alton Baker lot were not addressed at the bill’s signing.

The transportation package will designate more than \$100 million each year to improve public transportation, and funds will be distributed to Native American tribal governments, counties and transit districts that create transportation improvement plans, according to Oregon Department of Transportation documents.

Brown thanked the Lane County Transit District for its work partnering with Tesla Inc. on bringing electric buses to Oregon. Currently, ODOT is part of the West Coast Green Highway — a designation for the 1,350 miles of I-5 from British Columbia to Baja California equipped with charging stations every 25 to 50 miles.

An estimated 16,000 jobs will be created through ODOT projects from 2018 through 2025. Furthermore, cities will receive funding for local transportation projects, increasing local employment opportunities.

According to an HB 2017 allocation document, Eugene will receive \$3.8 million for local projects; Springfield will see \$1.4 million in funding and Cottage Grove will get \$228,000. In all, Lane County will receive \$8.2 million in transportation funding per year over the next 10 years.

Approximately \$12 million of the transportation package is allocated to the electric vehicle rebate program, according to Forth, an organization that advocates for electric vehicles. Jeanette Shaw, Forth’s director of government relations, spoke at the bill signing. “We’re extremely excited about the groundbreaking and the investment in the transportation infrastructure and in particular Oregon’s new rebate for electric vehicles,” she said.

The electrical vehicle rebate runs between \$1,500 and \$2,500 dollars, depending on the size of the vehicle’s battery pack and the electric range. The average range of an electric vehicle is approximately 80 miles — however, newer electric cars can drive on one charge for more than 200 miles, according to Forth.

Shaw said Forth is talking with PacifiCorp power company about installing more charging stations in Oregon and throughout the U.S. And she added, “We just received a grant through Washington [WSDOT] to put more chargers up the I-5 corridor.”

Funding for the new package will be derived from three new taxes as well as increases in vehicle registration fees and a gas tax. Right now, Oregonians pay a gas tax of 30 cents per gallon. In 2018, the gas tax will increase by another four cents and incremental increases of two cents every two years until 2024.

Electric vehicle registration will increase incrementally until 2024, when drivers will pay around \$115 annually, because EV cars won’t contribute to the gas tax.

“In addition, the weight-mile tax on heavy trucks will increase to ensure that trucks pay their fair share for their wear and tear on the roads,” according to ODOT documents.

Oregon State Sen. Lee Beyer, who represents Springfield, said that a group of 14 legislators came together and worked on the bill.

“What you are looking at is the largest, most comprehensive transportation package that’s ever been passed by the state of Oregon,” he said. “It addresses climate issues with the electric cars and also with the buses. We’ve never had a funding source for transit; we do now from the state level. We’ve also addressed the seismic issues.”

Improvements made to highways and bridges by ODOT will be earthquake resilient, according to ODOT.

Safe Routes to Schools will receive a new source of funding through the package. Safe Routes is a program that upgrades walkways and bikeways for students walking and biking to school. It will receive \$10 million annually, and eventually, will be funded at \$15 million per year.

“This is a significant investment and making sure that children have safe paths to get to school whether it’s elementary or middle school,” Brown said. ■