

State Senate committee considers transportation plan

By PETER WONG
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Although described as the equivalent to a Hail Mary pass in football, a state Senate committee Wednesday heard voices for and against an 11th-hour effort to couple a transportation funding plan with alternatives for greenhouse gas reductions.

Oregon lawmakers must adjourn their 2015 session no later than July 11.

"I believe all of us wish this could have happened earlier in the session," said Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, one of the Senate negotiators who came up with what the committee considered.

Their proposal, thrashed out behind closed doors in the past few weeks, has something for almost everybody to dislike.

Among other things, the plan calls for an increase of 4 cents per gallon in the current 30-cent state tax — plus increases in vehicle registration fees — to raise money for road and bridge repairs and specified state highway projects.

A separate \$10 surcharge on driver's license fees would pay for a computer upgrade already underway for the Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division.

In exchange for a repeal of Oregon's recently enacted low-carbon fuel standard — an effort that has drawn opposition from

environmental groups and some House Democrats — alternatives include a gradual reduction in carbon content of fuels as they become available commercially, plus conversion of more cars and buses to electric or natural gas, and improvements in bus systems and traffic flows.

Both sides heard

Motorists and local government and business groups, some with reservations, backed the 73-page proposal that would amend House Bill 2281.

"We felt the odds of getting a transportation package were very difficult," said John Carter, president of the Oregon Business Plan, a coalition of business groups that listed it as one of its three top priorities for the session.

"It's an important thing for Oregon and its citizens to maintain its competitive position in the global economy" by quicker movement of people and goods.

But environmental groups questioned the extent of the greenhouse-gas reductions projected in the alternatives to a low-carbon fuel standard. The director of the Oregon Department of Transportation said later that one of them was overstated.

"The replacement package just does not add up," said Christy

Split, external affairs director for the Oregon League of Conservation Voters.

Johnson defended the alternatives.

"We have produced a product that I think will stand up to scrutiny," Johnson said before the hearing. "If the real goal is a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, I believe we have demonstrated we can achieve more than the previous bill through a different methodology."

Johnson was the only Senate Democrat — and one of a handful of Democrats in the Legislature — to oppose a low-carbon fuel standard in Senate Bill 324 that Democratic majorities passed over Republican opposition earlier this year.

Republicans then broke off talks on a transportation funding plan, although a group of eight — including Johnson — reconvened in Gov. Kate Brown's office in late May to devise the elements of the plan considered Wednesday.

Although Republicans are minorities in both chambers, at least one Republican vote in the House is required for the 60 percent supermajority to pass a revenue-raising measure.

Plan details

Under the plan, the gas tax would go up by 2 cents on Jan. 1

and 2 cents in 2017. Vehicle registration fees would go up by \$10 annually, from \$43 to \$53; motorists pay them every other year. For owners of electric and hybrid cars, which use little or no fuel, the fee would jump to \$188.

Under the Oregon Constitution, fuel taxes and license and registration fees must be spent on road and bridge work.

The plan would fund \$202 million annually for state and local roads — 50 percent for state highways, 30 percent for counties and 20 percent for cities — and \$400 million in bonds for highway projects specified in the bill. Repayment would come from ODOT's \$103 million share.

The rest of ODOT's share would go toward bridge work, including seismic reinforcement, and highway maintenance.

It also would authorize mass transit districts that already levy a payroll tax on employers — TriMet, Lane, Wilsonville, Canby and Sandy — to charge a lesser tax on employees to generate more money for transit operations. TriMet would get about \$70 million of the estimated \$80 million annually.

Low-carbon repeal?

Alternatives to the low-carbon fuel standard would reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated by

the transportation sector by 9 to 10 million metric tons, according to estimates released by Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, and developed by state experts.

The target under Senate Bill 324, which lawmakers passed and Gov. Brown signed, was 7.7 million metric tons after 10 years.

While lobbyists for oil companies and distributors said that an alternative scenario for graduated reductions in the carbon content of fuels was more realistic, environmental lobbyists assailed it and the overall estimated reductions in greenhouse gases.

Whatever those numbers, the plan still faces a long political road ahead.

Last week, 19 of the 35 House Democrats — but not the leadership or the House negotiators of the plan — signed a letter in opposition to any repeal of the low-carbon fuel standard. If the Senate passes the proposed amendments to House Bill 2281, it would return to the House, where it would require 36 votes for passage.

"The House is somebody else's neighborhood," Johnson said. "I don't know (whether it will pass) because I haven't counted votes there."

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

ACCUWEATHER® FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

Astoria 5-Day Forecast

Tonight

Mainly clear

58°

Shown is tomorrow's weather. Temperatures are tonight's lows and tomorrow's highs

Friday

Mostly sunny; breezy in the afternoon

75° 58°

Saturday

Mostly cloudy and very warm

80° 59°

Sunday

Clouds breaking at times for some sunshine

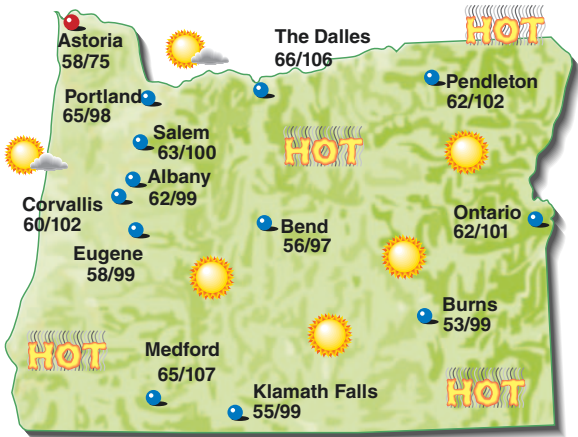
71° 57°

Monday

Delightful with clouds and sun

72° 56°

Oregon Weather



Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2015

Astoria through Wednesday.		Sun and Moon	
Temperatures			
High	75°	Sunset tonight	9:11 p.m.
Low	52°	Sunrise Friday	5:25 a.m.
Normal high	65°	Moonrise today	2:44 p.m.
Normal low	51°	Moonset today	1:33 a.m.
Precipitation			
Yesterday	0.00"	Full	July 1
Month to date	0.71"	Last	July 8
Normal month to date	2.20"	New	July 15
Year to date	27.37"	First	July 23
Normal year to date	35.56"		

Regional Cities

City	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Baker City	88	48	s	95	53	s
Bend	90	56	s	97	64	s
Brookings	75	58	s	73	57	s
Eugene	93	58	s	99	63	s
Ilwaco	67	57	pc	69	57	pc
Klamath Falls	96	55	s	99	60	t
Medford	99	65	s	107	71	s
Newport	65	53	pc	64	53	s
North Bend	69	56	pc	68	56	s

City	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Olympia	89	58	s	92	58	s
Pendleton	95	62	s	102	67	s
Portland	92	65	s	98	69	s
Roseburg	95	65	s	102	70	s
Salem	93	63	s	100	67	s
Seaside	69	57	pc	70	55	s
Spokane	90	62	s	97	68	s
Vancouver	91	64	s	98	69	s
Yakima	99	63	s	104	67	s

Under the Sky

Tonight's Sky: High above the southern horizon is planet Saturn before midnight.

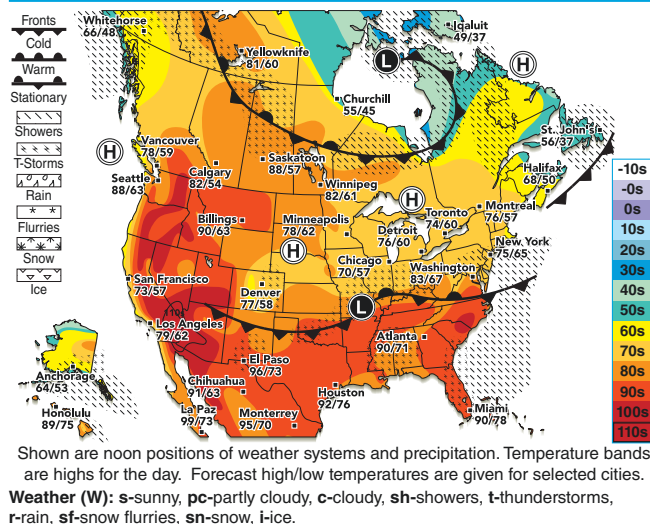
Tomorrow's Tides

Astoria / Port Docks			
Time	High	Time	Low
9:57 a.m.	5.8 ft.	3:55 a.m.	1.6 ft.
9:52 p.m.	7.9 ft.	3:29 p.m.	2.3 ft.

National Cities

City	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Atlanta	94	76	t	90	71	t
Boston	79	61	s	67	57	pc
Chicago	75	60	t	70	57	c
Denver	87	58	t	77	58	t
Des Moines	83	66	pc	76	61	t
Detroit	73	59	t	76	60	pc
El Paso	95	74	t	96	73	t
Fairbanks	82	60	pc	74	56	c
Honolulu	89	75	pc	89	75	pc
Indianapolis	79	66	t	75	60	t
Kansas City	91	70	t	77	61	sh
Las Vegas	110	84	s	112	86	pc
Los Angeles	81	61	pc	79	62	pc
Memphis	98	78	s	93	72	t
Miami	92	79	pc	90	78	t
Nashville	95	74	c	91	69	t
New Orleans	89	77	t	90	77	t
New York	83	65	pc	75	65	r
Oklahoma City	94	73	s	91	65	t
Philadelphia	86	68	t	78	64	r
St. Louis	95	73	t	80	64	t
Salt Lake City	96	68	s	97	69	s
San Francisco	76	56	s	73	57	pc
Seattle	86	61	s	88	63	s
Washington, DC	87	71	t	83	67	t

Tomorrow's National Weather



Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day. Forecast high/low temperatures are given for selected cities. Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.

Fire training exercise scheduled

The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The Clatsop County Firefighters Association along with Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Army National Guard and Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center will be conducting a prescribed fire training exercise this weekend.

The annual training event, "Northwest Oregon Wildfire School 2015," is scheduled for Saturday through Sunday at Camp Rilea in Warrenton.

The purpose of the event is to further firefighting skills in a prescribed live

wildland fire situation using the incident command system, according to organizers.

This training fosters the cooperative working relationships between Clatsop County Emergency Services, local structural fire departments and the state Department of Forestry.

The skills and lessons learned at this event can carry over easily to any emergency situation such as severe winter storms or tsunamis, organizers said. The prescribed fire reduces the threat of range fires.

Smoke and aircraft will be visible Sunday west of Highway 101 in the Camp

Rilea and Sunset Beach areas.

About 100 firefighters will be training over the weekend.

Astoria, Cannon Beach, Gearhart, John Day-Fernhill, Knappa, Lewis & Clark, Olney-Walluski, Seaside and Warrenton fire departments will partner with the state Department of Forestry, state Military Department and the state fire marshal's office in a live fire exercise.

For questions or concerns, contact ODF spokeswoman Ashley Lertora at the local office at 503-325-5451.

OSU grad to intern for local paper

The Daily Astorian

Oregon State University graduate McKinley Smith has joined the staff at The Daily Astorian as a summer intern.

Smith comes to the Astorian through the Snowden Internship Program, run by the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication.

While at OSU, Smith spent four years working for the student paper, The Daily Barometer, where she specialized in science writing and worked as an editor her final year.

Her dream is to be a full-time science or environmental reporter. "As a science writer, I get to learn something new every



McKinley Smith

time I go on a story," Smith said.

Astorian Managing Editor Laura Sellers said, "We are eager to put McKinley's science and storytelling talents to great use over the summer. We also plan to make sure she gets a wide variety of experiences, from council meetings to events, from breaking news to feature stories."

After more than a decade living in the Willamette Valley, Smith said she is excited to get to know Clatsop County.

"I received a fly-fishing rod for Christmas, and I'm looking forward to embarrassing myself trying to fish with it," she said.

Smith has lived in the Pacific Northwest all her life, but still carries an umbrella, she said.

Memorial

Friday, June 26
RASMUSSEN, Clegg — Viewing from 4 to 7 p.m., Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service, 1213 Franklin Ave.

Lotteries

OREGON	Wednesday's Powerball: \$100,000
Wednesday's Pick 4:	Wednesday's Keno: 01-04-06-10-12-15-18-20-36-38-42-50-53-59-63-66-68-70-74-76
1 p.m.: 9-8-5-2	03-05-10-22-32, Powerball: 7, Power Play: 4
4 p.m.: 5-4-2-1	Estimated jackpot: \$40 million.
7 p.m.: 4-1-7-7	WASHINGTON
10 p.m.: 2-7-7-1	Wednesday's Lotto: 02-22-36-37-40-45
Wednesday's Mega-bucks: 03-05-08-10-13-46	Estimated jackpot: \$3.2 million
Estimated jackpot: \$2.2 million.	Wednesday's Daily Game: 4-0-1
	Wednesday's Hit 5: 11-24-28-33-34
	Estimated jackpot: 09-18-24

Public meetings

THURSDAY	Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St., Cannon Beach.	FRIDAY	Cannon Beach Emergency Preparedness Committee, 10 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St., Cannon Beach.
Recreational Lands Planning and Advisory Committee, 1 to 3 p.m., fourth floor, 800 Exchange St.			

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