

Union Pacific resuming oil trains in Columbia Gorge

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Union Pacific plans to resume transporting oil by train through the Oregon side of the

scenic Columbia River Gorge at some point this week.

It will mark the first time trains carrying barrels of crude oil will move through the area since June 3, when

a train derailed near Mosier. The fiery derailment caused 42,000 gallons of oil to spill.

The company's latest plans, announced Wednesday, stand at odds

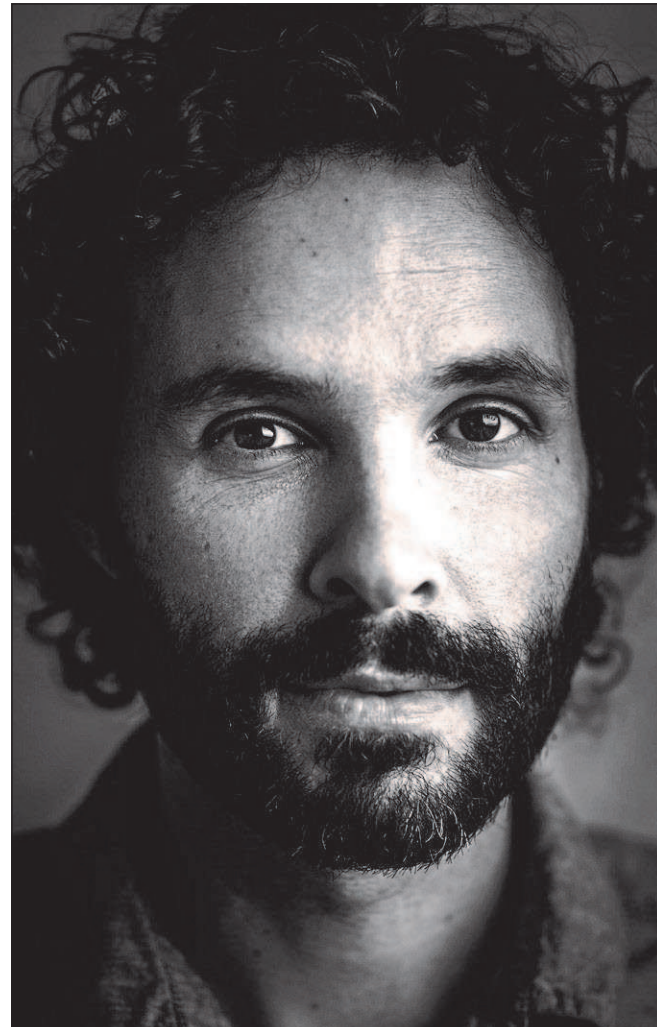
with several government and private-sector leaders in Oregon and Washington state, who say oil-by-train is too dangerous and are urging their governors, Congress and the

White House to push for a moratorium on the practice.

Union Pacific defended its decision, saying its oil train operations are a federal obligation.



Submitted Photo



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Horse Feathers will perform at Liberty Theater on July 13.

Theater: 'I want to see that generational gap start to bridge'

Continued from Page 1A

The trio spearheaded the project and secured \$8,000 in seed money from the city's Promote Astoria fund. The theater had requested \$20,000 in tourism promotion money.

However, the grant will only cover about one show, Bovenizer said. Productions beyond Blind Pilot's opener will likely be funded by ticket sales and local donations. The organizers plan to hold one show every month, but know that scheduling conflicts may prevent that. The bands that'll follow Blind Pilot will be announced soon,

Bovenizer said.

"It will probably carry into next spring with the last couple shows of the season," Orange said. "And we'll fire it back up again as long as we have participation from the community."

Once the inaugural series gains traction, "we'll have a budget to keep putting on these shows," he added.

Eventually, ticket sales may go toward helping the theater stay afloat financially, Bovenizer said.

Generational gap

If the Liberty doesn't become more relevant to a younger crowd, it may be in

trouble over the long run, according to Carol Shepherd, the interim theater director.

"Our regular audience is going to start dying off, and we won't have anybody to replace them," she joked, "so this is an effort to do that."

Orange said he has noticed a generational gap affecting local nonprofits; the people running them are usually established residents, often retirees, with plenty of spare time.

As a result, the community's working youth don't get much representation. "I want to see that generational gap start to bridge," he said.

The Sunset Series, which

aims to bring together patrons young and not-so-young, may be vital to keeping the community-owned Liberty alive. More than one source noted that many of the North Coast's 20- and 30-somethings have never even stepped foot in the theater.

"There was nothing there to bring them in," Orange said. "But if they can get behind the amazing space that's in their backyard, I think they'll be proud of that space and take ownership of it, and be invested in their community theater, and grow to appreciate and then support it."

Israel Nebeker



Photo Courtesy of Alex Loops

Mandolin Orange, a duo consisting of Andrew Marlin and Emily Frantz, based in Chapel Hill, N.C., will be in concert at Liberty Theater on July 13.

OT rules: Oregon is home to more than 17,000 nonprofit organizations

Continued from Page 1A

"Fundraising events are a lot of work and require staff to put in a lot of hours leading up to them," Mickelberry said. "We will need to look at either paying overtime or re-evaluating how we run those events. We are very supportive of the changes, but it is affecting the way we think about how we do our work to make sure we are compensating and supporting staff through those times."

Getting a raise

The new rules by the U.S. Department of Labor could give up to 4 million Americans a raise, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

President Obama first proposed the changes in 2014 with a memorandum directing the labor department to update the Fair Labor Standards Act overtime regulations. The department received more than 270,000 comments on proposed rules, including from pro-business groups such as Associated Oregon Industries.

"The proposed overtime wage threshold increase unevenly affects Oregon businesses due to Oregon's lower wages while failing to address the varying characteristics of local and regional economies," Associated Oregon

Industries and other business groups wrote in a letter to the labor department. "Instituting such an increase endangers both job security and advancement opportunity for far too many Oregonians."

Nonprofit staff

While for-profit employers have been vocal about how the changes will impact their bottom lines, nonprofit organizations also anticipate a boost in costs or a reduction in services due to the new rules.

There are more than 17,000 nonprofit organizations in Oregon. A vast majority of those have no paid staff. But between those that do, there are about 172,000 employees, said Jim White, executive director of the Nonprofit Association of Oregon.

It's unclear how many of those are exempt from overtime and how many are hourly.

In discussions with the association, nonprofit leaders have generally been supportive of the new overtime rules but have felt burdened by the fact that the new rules will take effect shortly after Oregon's new higher minimum wage rate takes effect July 1.

"We have heard concerns that it wasn't one or the other but the back-to-back succession," White said. "Non-

profits have expressed concerns: How are we going to do this? How are we going to make these changes simultaneously? They are concerned with being able to absorb changes without cuts in program services or cuts in staff."

Oregon SMART (Start Making a Reader Today), a nonprofit organization that provides one-on-one reading support in schools, has five to 10 employees out of 36 who could be eligible for overtime under the new rules, said Nell Whitman, director of finance and administration.

"We are, like many organizations, trying to ride the right line between fair compensation and making sure we keep the business side within budget and provide all the services to the community," Whitman said. "I think we can make the rules work. I think they provide a pretty reasonable balance between those things."

SMART will review its positions and determine whether to make some of them hourly or raise salaries to make employees exempt from overtime, she said.

"Organizations with a lot of government contracts and a set amount to spend will have more difficulty with the new rules," she said. "We are not in that situation."

'... We are very supportive of the changes, but it is affecting the way we think about how we do our work to make sure we are compensating and supporting staff through those times.'

Noel Mickelberry
executive director of Oregon Walks



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