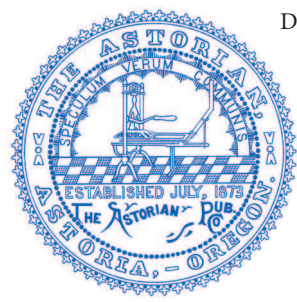


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# Governor must make leadership her strong point

Now that the election is over and Oregonians have spoken, one thing is abundantly clear: the state needs leadership from those elected to lead.

It all starts at the top with Gov. Kate Brown, whose leadership hasn't been a strong point since she ascended into the governor's office through succession when Gov. John Kitzhaber resigned amid an influence peddling scandal in 2015.

Flash forward to the present. Voters elected Brown last week to fill the remaining two years of Kitzhaber's term, and heading into the next legislative session Oregon faces a \$1.35 billion deficit in the next biennium. The state faces soaring public employee pension costs; a public school system ranked 47th in the country in graduation rates; a failing foster care system that is in crisis; an overburdened transportation system that has urgent needs; and an urban-rural divide that is continuing to grow rather than shrink. Those problems cry out for leadership. They have been building for years because past governors and legislators failed to work together to creatively find solutions.

### Complications

Complicating things even more, many of the state's politicians put all their eggs in one basket in this election, including the governor, by counting on voters to approve Measure 97, the highly controversial tax on corporate sales that they believed would provide \$3 billion in annual revenue. That money, they thought, would alleviate Oregon's funding woes. Voters saw it otherwise, and decisively defeated the flawed measure, thereby demanding accountability from those they elected to solve the problems. One clear message Brown and others should see is that across the country voters mandated that legislative gridlock end. The message is just as applicable in Oregon as anywhere else.

What that means is our leaders need to lead and not just manage the state's affairs. Managing doesn't solve problems, it simply allows them to persist.

Brown and those now in the Legislature need to put Oregonians' interests ahead of party platforms, partisan politics and special interests. They need to fully embrace bipartisanship and work together. They must be vocal, visible advocates for solutions that can arise from creative, innovative thinking. They don't have much time, either. The next legislative session will begin in about two months.

### Where to begin

A place for Brown to begin is by getting behind a bipartisan effort led by Democrat state Sen. Betsy Johnson of Clatsop County and Republican Sen. Tim Knopp of Bend to find fixes for the bloated Public Employees Retirement System.

The challenges of PERS are well documented. The program's unfunded liability exceeds \$21 billion and continues to grow. It is a root cause of the looming deficit. Costs to school districts and local governments are scheduled to jump by \$885 million next year, forcing massive cuts.

When the two senators formed the work group, Brown chose not to involve herself. Instead, the governor campaigned and endorsed Measure 97, which was backed by public employee unions. Brown touted it as the state's funding solution without mentioning PERS. Instead of giving up without the governor's active support, the PERS group pressed on and developed reforms its members believe will pass constitutional muster. They include:

- A \$100,000 cap on the final average salary used to calculate retirement benefits, significantly reducing payouts to highly compensated public employees.
- Move all new public employees to a defined contribution plan, much like those in the private sector.
- Prevent unused vacation and sick time from inflating final average salaries to increase benefits.
- The use of market rates, rather than a fixed rate, to calculate annuities.

As a leader, Brown should embrace change and study the work group's conclusions. If the reforms have the success potential as the work group believes, the governor should be a vocal advocate for their adoption and should credit those who developed them.

Doing so would be a beginning, not an end. As the adage goes, "leadership is an attitude before it is an ability."

Brown can enhance her leadership stature by initiating political momentum that goes far beyond PERS to help Oregon get past inertia in the state capital. She just needs the attitude to do it.



## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# Bike lanes in the tsunami zone

By R.J. MARX  
*The Daily Astorian*

**A** Gearhart Transportation System Plan makes a lot of sense. But in a place that may experience a 9.0 earthquake and tsunami in the next 15 years, there are some special considerations.

City Planner Carole Connell and city staff were able to win \$100,000 grant about two years ago, Connell said in October.

Gearhart's grant proposal had the usual requests for sidewalks and bike paths, but "the one that got their attention was the tsunami evacuation plan," Connell said.

After the grant was awarded, the process of hiring a consultant followed. The city contacted the Portland-based consulting firm DKS. "We're telling a story," Kevin Chewuk of DKS said at the Gearhart presentation. "Each part is a basic part of the story."

Consultants present an "aspirational project list" to address all of the city's transportation needs, whether the city can pay to fund them or not. Analysis is geared to the next 20 years, to 2040.

They considered state, county and local rules and identified areas of "transportation enhancement" and "transportation improvement."

Elements of the enhancement project consider traffic-calming devices on city streets, tsunami route identification, bike parking, "way-finding" signage for bicyclists and pedestrians and Ridge Path enhancements.

Chewuk is right: the plans will tell a story: how the city perceives its audience and its users.

There are those needing bus transport to Warrenton and Astoria. Hikers and walkers who want to trek through the city's magnificent sheltered trails. Parents who want to drive the babysitter home without making two dangerous left-hand turns to go one block, from Salminen to Hillila and home again.

Even with a signal at Highway 101 and Pacific Way, "You're standing in that little space waiting for the light," Connell said. "So far, the east-side people are frustrated by those constraints. We know that's where the problems are."

### More than 50

Fifty-two improvement projects are listed in the consultant's September document. They connect walking and biking facilities and address the need to cross the highway. "A lot of the projects we identified are trail projects that could facilitate tsunami evacuation, but also act as recreational facilities through the year," Chewuk said.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

**Gearhart Planner Carole Connell and consultant Kevin Chewuk discuss the city's proposed Transportation System Plan.**

About 10 people a day use Sunset Empire Transportation District buses in Gearhart, according to the memo. Improvements to bus stops near Wild Rose or Cottonwood lanes could make the prospect more appealing, featuring "new sheltered stops" to keep riders out of the rain while they wait.

Another proposal suggests a traffic signal being considered at Highway 101 and Gearhart Loop Road, what the state identifies as a high-collision location.

"Biking and walking on the highway are dangerous," Connell said in October. "Crossings don't exist."

The highway — innocuously called "Park Avenue" on maps — gets the bulk of consideration as the city seeks to make it easier for bikes and walkers to cross the 80-foot roadway. Options include narrowing portions to three lanes, buffered bike lanes and widening for sidewalks.

The most costly approach would widen the highway to five lanes with a sidewalk and bike lanes.

The least expensive alternative? Do nothing.

The memorandum now goes before the Planning Commission, where they'll be presented with the first draft, consider options and narrow down the list. Their findings will be refined to maximize funds, minimize impacts to environment, and "balance investments across all modes of travel," according to Chewuk.

"They're going to finish the plan and hopefully get it adopted," Connell said.

Once adopted, Gearhart is eligible for additional state funding. If grant funds are acquired, the city can start prioritizing them by importance.

### Future what-ifs

While analyzing options, city and residents should consider not only the memo at hand, but future what-ifs.

Will the Gearhart fire hall be replaced, and if so, where?

When Gearhart Elementary School relocates, what will replace it?

Where will residents find the greatest access to cache sites in case of a long-term need for emergency supplies?

Could new construction east of the highway call for additional, previously unconsidered roads and crossings?

Most towns don't need it, but for Gearhart, which lies almost entirely within the tsunami zone, the emergency component should be an opportunity to meet multiple goals — emergency evacuation, pedestrian safety and improved roads for bicyclists and drivers.

City Administrator Chad Sweet said last month the state responded to the city's ideas about planning for tsunami and quake hazards, "which was part of the reason we were selected for the grant."

The other reason, he added, was that the city didn't have a transportation systems plan.

We think, as the state did awarding the grant, the first reason — the threat of hazard in the Cascadia Subduction Zone — is the most compelling. The tsunami safety aspect of the program drew the state to funding this grant. A bike lane is terrific, but in a tsunami, drivers may swerve.

Here's my plan: Put money into scooters and motorbikes for emergency getaways. Install large, readable maps. Test loudspeakers to make sure they are clear and can be heard throughout the city. Give each residence an individualized evacuation plan. Establish an emergency database accessible by registered users. Construct pedestrian bridges over every waterway. Inform every resident about tsunamis, landslides and quakes.

And while we're at it, put a covered shelter on that bus stop.

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian's* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Long overdue

**I**m thankful this election is over. I'm thankful that a road block has finally been set up to stop the hard-left wing element in Washington, D.C. Thankful that today the Clintons at long last have been permanently retired from public life.

Thankful that the adults finally won a presidential election. Thankful adults learned how to use social media to get news from other sources to be better informed about the issues. I'm so thankful the people rejected all the polls, the denials and the lies perpetrated by Hillary and most of the main stream media.

Thankful that Obama's so-called legacy is going to come crashing to the ground in January, and that we

will return to a nation of laws not of men.

I don't expect Trump will turn Washington upside down overnight, or convince all the establishment RINOs (Republicans In Name Only) to just suddenly roll over the first day. The Democrats will fight him every step of the way, because the hard left still controls the leadership positions in D.C.

The moderates in the Democratic party have all but been pushed out of government, so any compromise will be hard fought. If nothing else, maybe the Democrats will take a new tack and move to the center; it may take a few election cycles to get there, but they have to.

In the end, Obama has done more

for the GOP in the last eight years across the nation than any Democrat or Republican in American history. It was a hellish eight years, but maybe some sanity will return to the government and American life.

I want to believe that Trump is sincere about rolling back all of the nonsense that's been forced down our throats the last eight years. Hopefully, Republicans in D.C. learned a lesson that the old establishment party has been wiped clean, and a new attitude and agenda must turn the country back to the right.

God bless America, it's a new day, and it was a long overdue, and right on time.

JEFF JACQUES  
 Astoria