

Governor tours state to tout new transportation package

Brown stops in five cities

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — Gov. Kate Brown’s tour of the state Monday and Tuesday to celebrate signing into law a \$5.3 billion transportation funding package possessed the energy of a campaign blitz.

The governor stopped in Ontario, Bend and Medford Monday and Eugene and Portland Tuesday to re-enact signing the bill and to highlight projects that will benefit those areas.

Her last stop was at Portland Community College’s Southeast campus at 82nd Avenue and Division Street Tuesday.

“The transportation package is truly a roadmap to Oregon’s future,” Brown told a crowd of about 200 at the campus. “Not only will it improve the safety and condition of our roads and bridges, it will support thousands of family-wage jobs and help local businesses get their goods to market more efficiently.”

Brown actually signed the legislation into law Aug. 18, the deadline to enact bills from the Legislature, which adjourned early last month.

The transportation package was a chief victory for both Democratic and Republican lawmakers during the legislative session.

As the bill appeared ready to combust over discontent among interest groups, Brown intervened to help negotiate a deal that would save the package she’d been promising to constituents for the past two years.

“Passing the transportation package was no easy feat,” Brown said Tuesday. “We faced some significant challenges this last legislative session but we worked across the aisle and toward a shared vision for a better Oregon.”

Brown, just two years into her position, faces a challenge in 2018. Moderate Republican state Rep. Knute Buehler, a surgeon from Bend, announced his candidacy earlier this month and is expected hit \$1 million in campaign funds by the week’s end. Brown has about \$1.5 million cash on hand for her campaign.

Political insiders say the transportation package gives the governor a bipartisan triumph to tout in her presumed reelection bid.



Jaime Valdez/Pamplin Media Group

Gov. Kate Brown holds up copies of the signed transportation funding bill during a signing ceremony at Portland Community College Southeast Tuesday.

Her tour of the state shows she can turn political rhetoric into results, said one statewide political operative unassociated with Brown’s campaign.

“I was very committed to delivering on a transportation package because I saw the critical importance for keeping Oregon moving and keeping our economy humming,” Brown said. “I was pleased we were able to get bipartisan support: Republicans, Democrats, urban and rural working together to deliver on this package to make Oregon a better place for all of us.”

Jim Moore, director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University, said transportation is unlikely to be a top 10 issue in the gubernatorial campaign. That’s because most voters aren’t in tune with legislative developments or even whether the state or local government fixes the roads they traverse, he said.

“Transportation is kind of a political nerd sport,” Moore said. “Because of that it may or may not make a good issue at the center of that campaign.”

However, the statewide tour still gives some momentum to her campaign.

“Her face is being seen out there; she is talking to people,” Moore said. “It gives you a reason ... to go around the state.

Transportation is good because it is not a natural disaster. It is: ‘Hi, here I am, your emissary from Salem. I have brought you something. It is classic incumbent behavior.’”

Brown’s campaign funds were not used to pay for the statewide tour, said Bryan Hockaday, a press secretary in Brown’s office. He said last week he did not yet know the cost of the tour to taxpayers and was not immediately available for comment Tuesday.

The eight-year transportation plan includes staggered hikes in the gas tax, increases to registration and title fees, and new taxes on payroll, new vehicle purchases and bicycles priced more than \$200. The package also calls for congestion-priced tolling at some of Portland’s bottlenecks, which could include certain lanes on Interstate 5 and Interstate 205, to pay for congestion-busting projects.

Among major projects specified in the plan are congestion relief on Highway 217, widening northbound I-205 from Powell Boulevard to Interstate 84 and initial investment in adding new lanes to I-5 through Portland’s Rose Quarter.

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

Task force looks at pension deficit

Brainstorming options to close gap

Associated Press

EUGENE — Gov. Kate Brown’s special task force is looking at ways to ensure the state has enough money to pay pensions for eligible state employees amid a multibillion-dollar pension fund deficit.

The state is considering commercializing its state-run liquor system, pulling money from public reserves or imposing new surcharges of up to 10 percent on all state-issued permits, licenses and registrations.

The advisory task force, made up of seven private- and public-sector executives, is charged with drafting a

plan to take \$5 billion off the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System’s \$24.5 billion unfunded liability without touching government workers’ retirement benefits.

The task force stressed that school districts, local governments and universities should take a greater stake in paying down individual pension unfunded liability.

“I know some of these things are very sensitive,” said Don Blair, a former Nike chief financial officer. “I think that’s unavoidable.”

The task force, according to The Register-Guard, is floating a new state tax of between 1 percent and 10 percent on liquor sales with the proceeds — between \$10 million and \$50 million — being dedicated to the pension fund.

The task force also is looking at state govern-

ment’s two big reserve funds — the Rainy Day and Education Stability funds — that currently contain more than a combined \$1 billion. Between \$100 million and \$500 million of that could be used for a pension down payment.

Traditionally, however, those funds have been left untouched in good times, so the state can tap them to temper budget cuts during downturns.

“None of our choices are free from downsides,” task force member and former state agency director Cory Streisinger said.



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Needle exchange program delayed

By **JACK HEFFERNAN**
The Daily Astorian

The launch of a pilot needle exchange program in Clatsop County has been delayed.

Originally scheduled to offer exchanges for drug users in Astoria and Knappa locations last Friday, the program will likely begin in late September or early October. When the six-month program — funded by a \$50,000 donation — does start, nurses will be on hand to collect used syringes and pass out clean ones in a one-for-one trade.

The launch was delayed to give nurses more time to study how other counties, mainly Multnomah, conduct exchange programs, Public Health Director Michael McNickle said.

When dates, times and exact locations are finalized, they will be shared through social media and word of mouth among those known to use syringes.

The Public Health Department will consider the viability of a permanent program based on how many needles are collected. Clatsop County would become the ninth in the state to implement such a program.

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Q: Muscle spasms can be a thing of the past.

A: Charlie horses in the leg, facial tics and back spasms are all deficiency symptoms — muscles are irritated and working too hard — they don’t have the nutrients they need. Muscles need calcium, magnesium and Vitamin D taken together. Seventy-six percent of Americans are deficient in those nutrients. People may be OK until an injury when the increased activity in the hurt area causes the deficiency symptoms. It is easy and quick to correct. Time of day and dosage are important and need to be adjusted until the spasms stop. If you need help figuring this out, call Dr. Goldeen or Dr. Sears.

September 9, 2017

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