

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Avoiding Portland traffic at all costs

It doesn't take a traffic engineer to determine that Portland is high-way-impaired. Traffic in Oregon's largest city is slow.

How slow is it, you ask?

A few years ago, the state Department of Transportation estimated that 34,600 hours a day were wasted in Portland traffic jams. That's nearly four years of people's time that was wasted each day. We'd bet the number is much larger now.

And just think of what all that stalled traffic does to the climate. A car or truck stuck in Portland traffic is producing carbon dioxide but getting zero miles per gallon. By that standard alone, Portland must be a major contributor to climate change.

Portland traffic is so bad people headed for the airport often have to factor in an extra hour of drive time just to avoid missing their flights.

Getting goods to market

Portland traffic is so bad the state Legislature set aside \$25 million to help agricultural shippers in the nearby Willamette Valley avoid it.

The plan is to build an "intermodal facility" somewhere in the Willamette Valley south of Portland. Trucks will haul containers full of hay and other agricultural commodities from farms and processors to a loading terminal where the containers can be loaded onto railroad cars. From there, trains would go to ports in Tacoma or Seattle for export overseas, thus avoiding Portland traffic snarls. The Port of Portland handles only a tiny number of container ships, making the trip to Tacoma



Associated Press

Traffic in Portland is a challenge for North Coast drivers looking to get anywhere else fast.

and Seattle necessary.

It should be noted that there are already three such intermodal facilities in the region — including one at the port — but all are in Portland. Trucks hauling containers to those facilities are just as likely to get caught in traffic.

If Interstates 5, 205 and 405 had adequate capacity, and if traffic not bound for Portland could avoid its multi-lane parking lots, many problems could be solved. But, for whatever reason, that is not to be.

Having a \$25 million intermodal facility in the valley represents the next best thing for valley growers and processors who still have to get their crops and goods to ports for shipment to overseas customers.

In the running are two proposals. One would be built in Brooks, a few miles north of Salem. The other would be a repurposed paper mill in Millersburg, a few miles south of Salem.

What about the rest of us?

North Coast drivers have to make hard decisions when planning trips to points east. Do we try to avoid the ever-growing rush hour time windows, just brave the traffic, or plan lengthy detours that can add hours to a journey?

Any solution appears to be years away, and expensive to boot.

The Oregon Transportation Commission voted unanimously recently to seek federal approval for tolling Interstates 5

and 205 through the Portland area and to study creating a seamless loop of tollways around the city. Those tolls might also extend to Interstate 405, Interstate 84, U.S. Route 26, State Highway 217 and sections of U.S. Route 30.

Unless there's a massive national investment in public transportation networks, such as passenger rail — highly unlikely — we will have to rely on our automobiles for decades to come. And tolls may be the only way to get new roads built.

Those of us who have experienced East Coast traffic snarls sincerely hope the Portland planners take to heart the lessons learned there. Any toll road that forces drivers to stop and make change creates miles-long backups.

Only systems like EZPass that allow vehicles to whiz by and record the toll electronically have any hope of reducing congestion. Drivers without passes could have their license plates scanned, with automated bills arriving in the mail, much as camera speed traps operate. It smacks of Big Brother, but it works.

Any solution that allows us to travel around Portland, rather than through it, is worthy of pursuing — even tolls. No one likes to pull out their wallet just to get from point A to point B in their automobile. But to do nothing, and allow our roads to become ever more unusable, isn't an option.

We need to think big for the future. President Eisenhower thought big in the 1950s when he built the national interstate system. It transformed our nation. What will transform travel in the 21st century?

LETTERS

Vote Herman for Astoria City Council

Joan Herman has long been a quiet force for good in our community and will be an outstanding Astoria city councilor representing Ward 3.

Joan has been a calm and thoughtful volunteer for many community organizations, including our beloved KMUN radio, Indivisible North Coast Oregon (INCO) and the Lower Columbia Diversity Coalition. She has the capacity, compassion and empathy needed to listen and then help to build a consensus for moving forward.

She knows small business ownership, and what makes Astoria so special to us. I do, without reservation, support Joan Herman for Astoria city councilor, Ward 3, and encourage your vote for her in November.

TESSA JAMES SCHELLER
Warrenton

US shouldn't bail out energy producers

The question, "Should the U.S. bail out failing energy producers?" (The Daily Astorian, Aug. 10) can be answered in one word: No. While the harm is less than bailing out failed banks it, like other bailout schemes, is bad business.

The true cost of things should be known to the consumer, even if it means the consumer cannot afford these things. If the consumer does not know the true cost, the resources will be largely wasted — something that is not in the best interest of the world and succeeding generations when it comes to energy.

Happiness is not necessarily the destiny of the human race. Ask the man on any Ethiopian street.

BENJAMIN A. GREAVES
Seaside

Thank you for bar pilots trip

We attended the Astoria Rescue Mission Talent show earlier this year, and were lucky enough to buy the winning raffle ticket for a trip with the Columbia River Bar Pilots. What a blessing that trip has been.

Growing up in Astoria, I have always respected the bar pilots group, having many as neighbors. Besides doing the tremendous job they do with moving ships across the bar, they do many wonderful things for the community.

They drop the golf balls for the Assistance League's annual Golf Ball Drop, and you will see their name all over town on things that they sponsor, from a bench at the Maritime Memorial to donations to Clatsop Community College and many, many more.

I want to especially thank bar pilot Capt. Nick Christian and Boat Operator David Fas-



tabend, who gave us a very exciting trip across the bar to see several pilot boardings and retrievals of both Capt. Christian and Capt. Chris Farrell. Capt. Christian also spent a lot of time with us showing their facilities and a full tour of the Pilot Boat Columbia.

This was a trip of a lifetime, and again, saying thank you is not nearly enough for all we were given. This group of people are true professionals, and a privilege to have working in our community. Thanks, bar pilots.

DONALD C. ROESSLER
Astoria

Celebrate centennial of Bernstein's birth

On Saturday, Aug. 25, we celebrate the centennial birthday of Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) — America's greatest conductor, one of our finest composers, an accomplished pianist, an influential teacher and writer, a notable humanist, and our most famous native-born musician.

He insisted that it is the artists of the world — not the politicians and business barons — but the thinkers and feelers who will ultimately save us by articulating, educating, defying, insisting, singing and shouting the big dreams.

I'll always remember his energetic con-

ducting of the New York Philharmonic and other great orchestras, his articulate, imaginative, sometimes poignant "Young People's Concerts," his movie scores ("On the Waterfront," "West Side Story," et al), Broadway hits ("Candide," "On the Town"), and numerous compositions like "Mass."

Bernstein's reply to violence, always, was to make music more intensely, more beautifully, and more devotedly than ever before. Hailed as a hero, Bernstein was able to popularize the classics in a way that no other musician had ever done. No musician in the history of America touched so many people so deeply and in so many ways.

Winner of 17 Emmys and many other awards, Bernstein was a flawed genius, but a prolific performer who represented what was truly great about America. And that's worth remembering, when so many Americans believe we need to "Make America Great Again."

ROBERT BRAKE
Ocean Park, Washington

A journey in time

Time is with us — no matter what. When one is young, life is exciting but you can't wait to grow up. Then it is hard to wait to get to what we think is adulthood. When we are an "adult," we can't wait to accom-

plish ... whether it's the military, advanced training, a job, college, marriage or whatever. Time goes on. This is what the universe is.

Now I wake up, blink my eyes and realize the last 20 years has passed like it was yesterday. I think of the journey in time in 20-year periods.

Twenty years ago I was beginning the last of my professional life as a rehabilitation consultant. I stopped, having moved to Astoria in 2015. Stopping was easy.

From the beginning, around age 4, I recall worrying about toys I may have left outside during a nighttime rain storm. I also remember my good mother disciplining me for misbehaving in church. She sat me in my high-chair — and did I cry.

Some 20 years later, after the military, my first teaching job was at Edwards Air Force Base in the Mojave desert. I never did sports in school. At Edwards, a boy's junior high school coach was also needed. That was me. Then, I was married with one child.

Again, some 20 years later, after years of teaching and casework, I was on faculty at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Dallas with six children.

So here we are today — a journey in time. Enjoy the journey.

NORM HOUGE
Astoria