



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A logging truck travels over a damaged section of state Highway 202 southeast of Astoria.

ROUGH ROAD

landslide plagues drivers on 202

A persistent bump near milepost 7

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Drive state Highway 202 from Astoria to Olney and you will encounter what seems like an eternally slipshod section of road near milepost 7.

Orange “rough road” and “bump” signs have become almost permanent installations, warning of a sunken patch not far from where a bend takes drivers out of sight of Youngs River before Walluski Loop Road.

It is a stretch of highway that has cost the state an estimated \$30,000 a year to repair. Crews routinely put down more asphalt, only to see the road sink and slump again. The Oregon Department of Transportation has repaired it every year, sometimes multiple times a year.

A more recent and, the state hopes, longer-lasting fix to the landslide at the root of the problem cost around \$400,000 and involved a reinforced wall and a new guardrail. The wall is a way to strengthen the unstable ground and slow the slide using a combination of steel rods, or “nails,” drilled through the soft material, grout and a backfill of concrete.

The new wall has been in place all winter but the land is still settling, the asphalt still visibly warped, the road still bumpy.

Don Miller, a state transportation maintenance manager based out of Warrenton, said he was advised by contractors to wait as long as possi-



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A sign on the side of Highway 202 southeast of Astoria warns motorists about a damaged section of road.

ble before crews went to smooth and repave the road.

There are local stories and theories about why this section continues to be such a problem. Historic photos seem to indicate it has always been an issue. The state has identified a slower-moving landslide as the culprit.

Mike Tardif, a senior engineering geologist for the state, says photos dating back to the 1950s show multiple applications of new asphalt, evidence of past efforts to repair the highway.

In 2012, Tardif was involved with an evaluation of the site. Instruments went into the ground to monitor the depth of the unstable soil and better illuminate what kind of fix might be necessary.

They lucked out, Tardif said. They were able to get information about where and how quickly the slide was

moving in just a few months.

With some sites it can take much longer — even years — to figure out what’s going on.

“It’s like, ‘Good news! You’ve got a landslide. Bad news! You’ve got a landslide,’” Tardif said.

Highway 202 takes a beating from heavy truck traffic, but Tardif says it isn’t clear if traffic or land development have exacerbated the slide. Certainly, though, these things have been factors with other slides.

Weather, specifically rain, can also have a major impact. Often it is the intensity of the precipitation that can trigger slides.

Tardif responded to Oakridge in Lane County earlier this week after state Highway 58 had to be closed

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Lawmakers unveil new tax package

Money would help schools

By MARK MILLER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregonians could pay less on their state income taxes but pay more for some goods and services, under a legislative proposal to raise money for the state’s struggling public school system.

The long-awaited proposal, which was unveiled Thursday afternoon, would tax businesses just under one-half of 1% of their gross receipts over \$1 million, plus \$250, while cutting income tax rates by one-quarter of a percent for all but the top bracket. Sales of groceries, gasoline and diesel would not be taxed under the proposal.

The smallest businesses — those that make less than \$1 million in taxable revenue per year — will not be subject to the tax, nor will hospitals. Businesses that are taxed will be able to allay the impact by deducting one-quarter of either their labor costs or the amount they paid to other businesses during the course of the year.

A small group of state senators and representatives from both parties, led by Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, and Rep. Nancy Nathanson, D-Eugene, has been meeting for weeks to hammer out a business tax proposal. In addition to taxing businesses on their sales, they have agreed to cut personal income tax rates as a way to offset costs that companies will likely pass along to consumers.

Gov. Kate Brown called last year for law-

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Vaping interests steamed over tax increase

Several proposals to raise money for health care

By AUBREY WIEBER
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Of the handful of nicotine-related tax initiatives, Gov. Kate Brown’s proposed \$2 a pack tax increase on cigarettes has gotten the most attention. However, a proposed vaping tax ended up being the hot-button issue when the proposals got public hearings this week.

Sixty-five people showed up Wednesday and Thursday to tell the state House Revenue Committee how they felt about five bills being considered. Many others came to watch, packing the hearing room.

If all passed, the proposals would collectively increase the tobacco tax by \$2 per pack of cigarettes, remove the 50-cent tax cap on cigars and impose a 95 percent wholesale tax on electronic cigarettes.

It was the first time the proposals faced real public opposition at the Legislature.

Witnesses testifying were pretty much split. Those in favor were primarily doctors and public health workers, while those against were almost entirely business owners selling vaping or tobacco products, or representatives on their behalf.

Vape store owners came in droves. They largely argued their mission is to get adults to quit smoking and raising the price on vaping products would push people back to cigarettes.

Jason Weber owns a vape shop in Roseburg and told the committee he’d helped

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Local musicians open recording studio

The Rope Room is on Exchange Street

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Local musicians Brian Bovenizer, Graham Nystrom and Nathan Crockett all had home studios. But they longed for a professional space without having to travel to Portland.

The trio, with help from other local musicians and friends, recently opened the Rope Room, a recording studio tucked inside a back room in the former Overbay Museum and Antique Autos Building on Exchange Street.

The studio hopes to also attract artists from Portland and Seattle looking to get out of their usual environments, come to Astoria and make records.

“The opposite being true for us,” Bovenizer said of local artists. “We want to stay in Astoria. We love Astoria. So to be able to stay here and make a record seems great.”

Inside, the Rope Room appears like an acoustically engineered hull of a ship, lined with acoustic panels and Persian rugs to absorb

sound. Along the walls are thick maritime tow lines, the studio’s namesake, arranged like intestines inside wooden frames by local artist Andie Sterling.

“The ropes were in here, and we were kind of clapping, which can tell you what a room sounds like, and we thought, ‘Wow; this room sounds pretty good,’” Nystrom said. “And we went next door where there wasn’t any rope, and it didn’t sound very good.”

Nystrom, the station manager of Coast

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Caitlyn Faircloth sings into a microphone in the Rope Room recording studio in Astoria.

