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A truck's tires cross the median strip along Westport Ferry Road.

Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

County offers new option for heavy truck traffic in Westport

Hope is to divert traffic from residential streets

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

WESTPORT — A plan for a new road designed to divert heavy traffic away from residential streets will come before the community next week.

Residents have long voiced concerns about vehicles, particularly commercial trucks, that turn north off U.S. Highway 30 onto Westport Ferry Road. The traffic, they argue, makes the road less safe and the neighborhood less livable.

At a public meeting on Feb. 15 at Westport Community Church, the Clatsop County Public Works Department will present a new option: a proposed site for a new road northwest from Westport Ferry Road.

The Oregon Department of Transportation allows only so many access points on Highway 30. Building a new road would close Westport Ferry Road access to everyone but emergency responders. Residents will still be able to drive on Westport Ferry Road, they just won't have direct access from the highway.

For a couple of years, Teevin Bros. Land & Timber Co. has brought regular rock-laden truck traffic through the community. From the company's Bradley Quarry west of Westport, the trucks haul rock to a dock on the Westport Slough, where the rock is then barged upriver, mainly to Portland-area markets.

As development increases, so will Teevin's truck traffic. "I expect it to get worse," Ted McLean, the county's



A notice for a Feb. 15 meeting about county plans for a new road is posted on a telephone pole along Westport Ferry Road.

public works director, said.

The new road would allow Teevin trucks to reach the barging dock and all vehicles to reach the Westport ferry and boat ramp.

The community has wanted to divert traffic from residential streets for at least a decade.

In 2011, the county finalized a Westport Corridor and Community Plan, which included a proposal for a new road through Teevin-owned property.

The wetland mitigation turned out

to be too expensive, however. Both the Department of Transportation and the Portland & Western Railroad rejected the plan because they could not build an at-grade railroad crossing. And the county didn't get a state grant it had applied for to fund the project.

The county has explored the idea of diverting traffic onto Old Mill Town Road, which runs roughly parallel to Westport Ferry Road.

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CORONAVIRUS

State to lift indoor mask mandate

Requirement to end no later than March 31

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

Oregon will lift a mask mandate for indoor public places after health leaders determined that hospitalizations from COVID-19 will significantly decline by late March.

The announcement by the Oregon Health Authority on Monday came as the state issued a new rule extending the indoor mask mandate that was set to expire on Tuesday.

According to the state, the extension will run no later than March 31. The mask requirement at schools will be lifted on March 31.

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Earnings growth boosts public pensions

Unfunded liability apparently declined

By PETER WONG
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon's projected unfunded liability for public pensions apparently shrunk significantly last year, mostly attributable to healthy investment earnings that pushed the fund past the \$100 billion mark for the first time in its 75-year history.

A final accounting will come later this year, but preliminary numbers for 2021 peg the unfunded liability at either \$19.7 billion or \$14.4 billion, depending on whether side accounts are excluded or included. Side accounts are amounts of money that participating governments set aside to cover part of their future pension liabilities, but not all of the 900 government employers in the Public Employees Retirement System have set up such accounts.

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A Boy Scout looks to build membership

DeVos sees club as community asset

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Although Mason DeVos was originally drawn to the Boy Scouts by the "cool patches," the organization has taken on much more meaning to him since his rise among the ranks.

With membership numbers of the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the USA in steep decline, DeVos, a fresh-

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people

man at Warrenton High School, worries other kids won't pick up the valuable skills and lessons he learned.

"In Boy Scouts, they teach a lot of survival skills, but they also teach a lot of real-life skills," he said. "If kids nowadays aren't getting those real-life skills, they won't be prepared for the future."

School and other activities may also teach life skills, DeVos said, but the Boy Scouts are able to go more in-depth while offering an engaging experience.

While the downward trend of Boy Scout membership traces back further than the coronavirus pandemic and a nationwide sexual abuse controversy, the organization — like many other social and civic clubs — has seen a significant drop in membership over the past two years. The Boy Scouts reportedly lost hundreds of thousands of members just through the first year of the pandemic.

DeVos, as a senior patrol leader of Troop 509, is doing what he can to build back some of the membership along the North Coast.

He convinced several of his friends to join. A booth his troop set up at Warrenton's Fall Festival brought a few more recruits in, as well.



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Mason DeVos has risen through the ranks of the Boy Scouts.



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