

PENDLETON



Contributed photo

Bike shop rallying support for trails near airport

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Pendleton city officials have long talked about increasing activity at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, although it usually wasn't done with cycling enthusiasts in mind.

Pendleton bike shop Echo Bike & Board posted a flier on its Facebook page rallying support for a network of bicycle and running trails west of the airport.

City Planner Evan MacKenzie said he has been gauging community interest in recent months, and the owners of Echo Bike & Board have been some of the people receptive to the idea.

MacKenzie said establishing an airport trail system is less about his own

proclivity for cycling, but rather a way to improve an unused piece of city land.

"I think it is a classic case of turning a liability into an asset," he said.

MacKenzie said similar parks have succeeded in Eagle, Idaho, Sammamish, Wash. and Boulder, Colo. He added that the lure of nearby outdoor recreational opportunities could in turn help the city lure more industry to the airport area.

Because of the lack of unpaved running trails, MacKenzie said the trail park found another ally in Pendleton High School track coach Nicole Stewart.

"It's cross country in the purest sense," MacKenzie said.

MacKenzie said he, Stewart and Echo Bike &

Board co-owner Shayne Myers ran the idea by the airport commission, whose members were supportive of the proposal.

If approved by the city council, the park wouldn't happen overnight.

Although he was the one to first suggest the concept, MacKenzie said he hopes community members like Myers and Stewart would lead the charge in getting the park approved and established.

Those in favor of the project will make a presentation to Pendleton city council on Feb. 2 at 7 p.m. and supporters are encouraged to attend.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

BPA upgrades Celilo Converter Station

Facility part of 846-mile connection

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

Bonneville Power Administration has flipped the switch on its new and improved Celilo Converter Station near The Dalles.

The project, which began in 2012 and cost \$370 million, modernizes a key piece of infrastructure connecting the Northwest power market to customers in Los Angeles.

Originally built in 1970, the Celilo Converter Station anchors the north end of what's known as the Pacific Direct Current Intertie — a 500-kilovolt, 846-mile transmission line stretching from Wasco County to a second converter station managed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

The Pacific DC Intertie is the longest commercial transmission line of its kind in the country. In order to maintain the link, BPA decided to replace converters at the Celilo station, which project manager Erich Orth said had surpassed their operational lifespan.

"As it got older, maintenance needs got a lot more cumbersome," Orth said. "It made sense for a wholesale replacement of the converters."

Most of the new equipment at Celilo was manufactured in Sweden. It was delivered across the Atlantic Ocean, through the Panama Canal, up the Pacific Coast and barged to the Port of The Dalles. Construction finally got underway last fall, and Celilo was shut down for more than three months.

The station came back online Wednesday evening, and Orth said they expect the latest upgrades to last another 40-50 years.

"It's going to be able to perform with a higher degree of reliability," he said.

Converter stations work



Photo contributed by Gustav Mortenson/ABB

Two massive transformers are barged from Vancouver, Wash. to The Dalles as part of the Celilo Converter Station installation.

"The new equipment not only supports the western transmission grid with greater security, reliability, capacity and flexibility, but will be able to work harder."

— **Richard Shaheen**,

BPA's senior vice president of transmission services

by taking electricity from alternating current and changing it to direct current, which allows the juice to travel more efficiently over long distances. The Pacific DC Intertie does this at both ends in The Dalles and Los Angeles. The result is the regions are able to swap low-cost power during times of peak demand.

BPA owns and operates Celilo, as well as 265 miles of transmission line down to the Oregon-Nevada border. The agency is in the process of updating the line as well, which should be finished by fall. The total project cost is estimated at \$498 million.

"These significant steps to improve the backbone of the regional grid will both strengthen reliability and increase our capacity to deliver energy, contributing to the vitality of the Northwest," said Richard Shaheen, BPA's senior vice president of transmission services.

Prior to upgrades, the intertie had capacity for 3,100 megawatts. That's enough power for 2-3 million homes in Los Angeles, or nearly half of Los Angeles

Department of Water and Power's peak capacity.

With the upgrades, the system is expected to increase capacity to 3,220 megawatts.

"The new equipment not only supports the western transmission grid with greater security, reliability, capacity and flexibility, but will be able to work harder," Shaheen said.

Mukhles Bhuiyan, manager of grid planning and development for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, said the intertie is a great value for the entire West.

Deputy Secretary of Energy Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall commended BPA and Southwest utilities for their cooperation on the intertie.

"This accomplishment is an example of the types of infrastructure advancement that will help the region and our nation maintain the economic vitality in a changing energy market," she said.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

BRIEFLY

Students safe after lockdown of Athena-Weston Schools

Three Athena-Weston schools were locked down for about an hour Thursday due to an incident with a parent at Weston-McEwen High School and Weston Middle School.

According to Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan, Calvin Sumpter, 37, made some suicidal comments before leaving work Thursday at the Walla Walla State Penitentiary.

Sumpter then traveled to the middle school and high school, where he was observed driving erratically, and tried to request that his children be pulled from school. School officials refused.

Sumpter then drove away, and was in Milton-Freewater when was detained by local authorities.

Rowan said Sumpter was charged with disorderly conduct and was transported to St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton for a medical evaluation. He could also face a reckless driving charge.

The lockdown affected Athena Elementary, Weston Middle School and Weston-McEwen High School from about 11:45 a.m. to 12:50 p.m., according to information release by the InterMountain Education Service District.

Bingo games benefit Relay for Life

PENDLETON — Bingo games this weekend will help raise money for Pendleton Relay for Life.

The event is Saturday beginning at 6 p.m. in the theater room at The Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. RSVP or pre-sale bingo cards (five callings) are \$5 each or three for \$10.

For more information, call Heather at 541-377-0350.

Hermiston Elks set Crab Feed

HERMISTON — Tickets for the annual Hermiston Elks Crab Feed must be reserved by Tuesday.

The event is Saturday, Jan. 30 with happy hour

from 5-6 p.m. and the crab feed from 6-8 p.m. at the lodge, 480 E. Main St., Hermiston. The cost is \$30 per person.

For a ticket or more information, call Jim Voss at 541-571-5116 or the lodge at 541-567-6923.

Agape House serves murder mystery

HERMISTON — Dave Hughes is cooking up fun for another Agape House murder mystery dinner.

Hughes, Agape House executive director, participated in a cruise workshop teaching him the Jack Pachuta Murder Mystery Writing System. His latest effort, "The Murder of Handsome Jack," will be staged Saturday, Jan. 30 at 5:30 p.m. at Agape House, 500 Harper Road, Hermiston. The cost is \$35 per ticket, with \$20 tax-deductible. The price includes a prime rib dinner and dessert.

Each table of guests will serve as an investigative team for the murder mystery. After an introduction and case summary, the suspects will share their memories of Jack and any interactions they had earlier

in the day prior to his death. During the dinner break, investigative tables may purchase additional clue packages of six for \$5, 15 for \$10 or 25 for \$15. During dessert, the crime lab and autopsy reports will be read. Audience members will have an opportunity to solve the mystery for a chance to win tickets to an upcoming murder mystery presentation.

All money raised from the event will go to support the missions of Agape House and Martha's House in helping those in need. For more information, call 541-567-8774.

Cultural center group serves breakfast

IRRIGON — The Irrigon Multicultural Arts Center committee is hosting a fundraising breakfast.

The meal is Saturday, Jan. 30 from 7:30-10:30 a.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 N.W. Opal Place, Irrigon. The cost is \$4.50 per person.

The group of volunteers is raising money in hopes of preserving Irrigon's 1921 school building. For more information, call Peggy at 541-567-3806.

Rachel Dagley
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Ready to get your hands dirty?
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