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# EAST OREGONIAN

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High hopes for transportation bill as legislators visit Eastern Oregon



Semitrailers drive through the ODOT weigh station at the intersection of Interstate 82 and Highway 730 on Friday in Umatilla. ODOT would like to move this port of entry to a spot further south on Interstate 82 to ease traffic congestion in town. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

EOTEC PROGRESS

## Frew to manage all remaining construction

Except for rodeo arena

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

A special meeting of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center board on Friday clarified Frew Development Group's role in the project going forward.

The company will be the general contractor and construction manager for all remaining components — including barns, fencing, lighting, landscaping and food stalls — except the rodeo arena.

During the EOTEC board's June 24 emergency meeting, John Frew, president and CEO of Frew Development Group, told the board that constant meetings with stakeholders over every detail were hindering progress to the point that the project would not be ready in time for the 2017 Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo unless changes in process were made. The board voted to give the company more direct control by changing their contract from project manager to general

See EOTEC/10A

## Destination development

Committee gets firsthand look at needs of Umatilla and Morrow counties

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Eastern Oregon officials have different ideas of how to spend state transportation funding, but they were all united in one aspect of their message to legislators visiting Hermiston this week: It is past time to update Oregon's transportation infrastructure.

"Are we embarrassed to live in a country that is this progressive, and this wealthy, and this



The city of Hermiston would like to overhaul the intersection of North First Place and Orchard Avenue to reduce congestion. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

smart and we have such backward transportation systems?" Port of Umatilla Manager Kim Puzey asked.

He testified Wednesday at Hermiston High School in front of the Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization, a bipartisan group of senators and representatives tasked with doing the groundwork for a transportation

spending package lawmakers hope to pass during the 2017 legislative session.

Last year a bipartisan group of eight lawmakers hammered out a deal on a \$343.5 million transportation package that would have increased gas taxes and vehicle fees in order to pay for road and bridge repairs. But the deal fell apart after Republicans and Democrats couldn't

"It isn't a linear cost, it's exponential, and the longer we wait, the more it will cost."

— Andy Perry, of Anderson Perry & Associates, on keep up with road maintenance

find a compromise on whether to alter the state's newly passed clean fuel standards, which would have also raised gas prices.

The two parties plan to try again in 2017.

On Wednesday the joint committee was in Hermiston to hear from Eastern Oregon cities about the top spending needs in the area, followed by a two-hour bus tour through Umatilla County and Morrow County to see the areas of concern firsthand.

Rep. Greg Smith (R-Hep-

See TRANSPORTATION/10A

PENDLETON

## Study: Modest progress in housing market

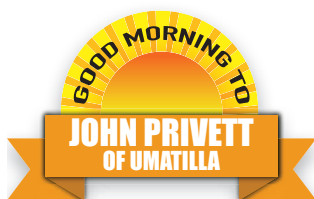
By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

Pendleton's housing market is in a better place than it was five years ago, but the need is still there.

Sabino Community Development Resources recently released a draft of a housing study commissioned by the city of Pendleton and other local organizations, that conclusion coming at the end of a 54-page analysis.

"The original housing market analysis (was) written during a period of considerable economic uncertainty and when financing for conventional apartment development was, at best, difficult to obtain," the study states, referencing a housing study Sabino conducted in 2011. "The number of higher-rent apartments has increased over the past five years, making feasible projects that would not have been so, particularly when construction and long-term commercial financing

See HOUSING/10A



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## Premature baby defies doctors

Elliot Wegner born at just 24 weeks

By ALEXA LOUGEE  
East Oregonian

When Pendleton resident Sebrina Wegner gave birth to her seventh and last child in October 2008, she was afraid to even breathe near the tiny infant.

Baby Elliot was born at 24 weeks and weighed just 1 pound 13 ounces. He was the size of an ear of corn.

In order to stay alive, he was on a ventilator and a feeding tube.

Sebrina had been flown to Legacy Emmanuel Hospital in Portland shortly before he was born. She stayed at the Ronald McDonald House while Elliot was

kept in the neonatal intensive care unit.

"I can't count the number of times he quit breathing while at the hospital," Wegner recalls. A couple of weeks after Elliot's birth, while trying to get some rest at the Ronald McDonald House, Wegner received a call from the doctors to come back to the hospital. They showed her an X-ray of Elliot's lungs, which revealed problems. The doctors told Wegner the outcome didn't look good and asked her to consider taking Elliot off life support.

After speaking with the doctors, Elliot's mom went to the hospital chapel and prayed.

All of Sebrina's children had been born premature; her first two children were born at 21 weeks and lived less than an hour. Elliot's three surviving older siblings



Elliot Wegner plays with Legos at his home Wednesday in Pendleton. Wegner was born premature at 24 weeks and weighed just 1 pound 13 ounces. Staff photo by E.J. Harris

See ELLIOT/10A



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