

BUS: One in five residents live at least one mile from a grocery store

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be withheld. If those funds come in and other projections hold true the city expects to spend an estimated \$150,000 per year to subsidize both the bus system and the city’s taxi ticket program for senior and disabled residents.

Mayor David Drotzmann said fiscal conservatives might question why the city would not charge for bus rides. But Tovey said Kayak Public Transit currently has a ridership of 80,000 per year and has calculated that it would not be cost-effective to charge riders until it hit 250,000 per year due to the rules of the tribal transit grant that funds the majority of the system.

“Any income we take in counts against that grant,” he said.

He said routes and schedules will be found on the CTUIR’s website for now, but they are also working on a separate website and a mobile app that would allow riders to use GPS to track where the bus is and when it will next arrive at a stop.

Assistant city manager Mark Morgan said the city would love to add more hours to the bus schedule but for now this is what it can afford. He said some people had questioned why the route did not start earlier or end later to accommodate the work day, but pointed out that many Hermiston residents without cars do shift

work. The Wal-Mart Distribution Center, Hermiston’s largest employer, runs shifts from 5 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 1 a.m. for example.

He said the city has surveyed taxi ticket riders the past three years and has discovered that more than half of their rides take place in the afternoon, and two thirds of rides are either to Wal-Mart or Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Morgan said one in five Hermiston residents live in a “food desert” at least one mile away from a grocery store, and those people are disproportionately Hispanic residents living on the west side of town. The bus system can help them get to the store without carrying groceries

more than a mile.

Councilors and the mayor said they were excited to see the system finally come to fruition after years of work. Doug Primmer said gathering input from the community and working with the transit advisory committee that put together the recommendation was “the best process I’ve ever been involved with.”

“Where else are you going to get this much bang for this much buck?” he asked.

The council voted unanimously to approve the contract with the CTUIR. A survey asking for opinions on names for the new bus system is still open at www.hermiston.or.us until Nov. 28.

HEALTH: 130k Oregonians signed up through HealthCare.Gov

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organizations around the state providing for Oregon Health Plan members, echoes other health care officials in saying it’s unlikely Republicans will strip millions of Americans of their health care.

“I think it would be a crazy disaster,” he says, “The hospitals and the pharmaceutical companies would argue against doing that because they’re making too much money.”

Robert Gootee, president and CEO of Moda Health, which operates the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization, also sounded a note of optimism. “I remain confident the uncertainties of today will transition to opportunities for sustainable long-term solutions, so that our members throughout Eastern Oregon can secure broader choices, with lower costs, and greater flexibility in their access to health care,” he said.

Trump has proposed turning Medicaid into a

program that gives states block grants rather than placing restrictions on the spending. Republicans in Congress, meanwhile, have long sought to add conditions to the program such as premiums or work requirements.

Oregon could avoid any major changes under an application for a five-year waiver from standard Medicaid rules. President Barack Obama could approve the plan before leaving office.

State budget

Oregon faces a nearly \$1.4 billion budget hole over the next two years.

The state’s waiver application includes a request for \$1.2 billion over the next five years from the federal government, which could do a lot to help plug that hole. A similar request by Gov. John Kitzhaber in 2012 yielded \$1.9 billion.

But even if the state’s Medicaid waiver request is approved by Obama, any funding that goes with it could be cut off by the Trump

administration at any time, officials say.

Obamacare private insurance

More than 220,000 Oregonians not covered by employers or Medicare buy their own insurance policies in a market that has undergone a radical makeover under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Obamacare bans insurers from discriminating against people with pre-existing medical conditions and levies a tax penalty against many of those who don’t have health coverage, while offering subsidies to those with incomes of 400 percent of federal poverty level or less.

About 130,000 Oregonians signed up through the federal website HealthCare.Gov, and of those 95,000 qualified for tax credits to offset their premiums, averaging \$250 a month.

Premiums for the 130,000 Oregonians who don’t receive subsidies have skyrocketed, however. On the national

level, such hikes have driven the push to repeal Obamacare.

Since being elected, Trump has said he favors preserving Obamacare’s guarantee that sick people can’t be denied coverage — triggering speculation that the changes to Obamacare may not be as widespread as advocates of the law feared.

Lisa Morawski, a state spokeswoman, says people should keep enrolling for 2017 private health insurance. Those who do are guaranteed no changes in terms for the coming year.

Medicare

More than 750,000 Oregonians receive benefits under Medicare, the health insurance program for people 65 and older.

Trump has vowed to preserve and modernize Medicare, but congressional Republican leaders want to turn it over to private insurers.

Nick Budnick is a reporter for the Pamplin Media Group’s Portland Tribune.

PROTEST: Trying to coordinate with counterparts in other cities

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several days has been an exceptional event.”

The decision came as a surprise to some of those charged and their supporters who packed a courtroom in downtown Portland. They reacted with smiles and subdued calls of “yes!” when a woman from the DA’s office made the announcement about the more serious charges.

Earlier in the day, students walked out of at least four high schools and began an anti-Trump march through Portland, stopping first at city hall. Police did not interfere, but tweeted: “Parents encouraged to tell their kids to go back to school.”

Greg McKelvey, a protest organizer in Portland and head of an anti-Trump group

called Portland’s Resistance, said local protesters are trying to coordinate with counterparts in New York, Washington, Austin, Texas, Oakland, California, Boston and several other cities.

“We’re going to go national, where we’re all organizing together,” he said in a telephone interview.

“Trump is going to be president, so we need to prepare for that,” McKelvey said. “Our group thinks the time to stop Donald Trump from becoming president was last Tuesday.”

He said Portland’s Resistance aims to make sure city and state governments are working on issues such as limiting climate change, advocating for single-parent health care and addressing racial disparities.

An online fundraising

campaign to raise money for small businesses that were vandalized in the protests has received over \$54,000. McKelvey, whose group renounces violence, is helping push for the funds.

Hales told Oregon Public Broadcasting that demonstrations can be peaceful, but he believes those in Portland are being used as cover for “outrageous, bad, criminal behavior.”

Police, meanwhile, announced that an 18-year-old who had been arrested in the shooting and wounding of an anti-Trump protester early Saturday was being released, after further investigation determined he was not the suspect.

They instead arrested a 14-year-old boy and placed him in a juvenile detention

home on charges of attempted murder and unlawful use of a weapon. The driver of the car whose occupants confronted protesters is also charged in the case.

MOSQUITO: Morrow County passed its levy

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that tested positive for West Nile — the highest in the state. That was compared to 27 in 2015, a “handful” each year from 2010-2014 and a high of 90 in 2009.

A little further west, the North Morrow Vector Control District passed its levy which asked for 10 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. About 82 percent of voters approved the measure.

For many people, the disease presents no symptoms or feels like a mild flu, but in serious cases it causes severe health problems through encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. It has also been known to kill horses, birds and other animals. There is no vaccination for humans, but there is one for horses that owners can get from their veterinarian before the start of mosquito season in the spring.

The other mosquito-borne illness on everyone’s mind — the Zika virus — so far has not been

shown to be carried by any of the species of mosquitoes that live in Oregon. Gerard said much is still unknown about the disease, however, and so the West Umatilla Mosquito Control District will be participating in federally funded efforts to watch for new vectors.

“My concern right now is travel-related,” Gerard said. “If I had to say something about Zika right now it would be that people need to take precautions when they travel.”

The district sprayed for mosquitoes from March through October, and Gerard said numbers of mosquitoes around the district were kept relatively low. But a long summer and warm fall means people are still seeing mosquitoes around.

Gerard said people can help control mosquitoes in the area by cleaning their yards of places mosquitoes can breed — including stagnant water in old tires, buckets, bird baths, clogged gutters and other items.

MARIJUANA: Businesses can not be within 1,000 feet of a park

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secure a local license.

If the city opts to keep that language, prospective marijuana business owners would need to submit a land-use compatibility statement, undergo background checks, show a boundary sketch, floor plan and operating plan and pay thousands of dollars to the state before they would apply for a license at the city level.

Because Pendleton’s newly passed land-use regulations keep marijuana stores from being located within 1,000 feet of a park, none of the several downtown smoke shops, like Pandora’s Box at 28 S.E. Emigrant Ave., would be able to expand their inventory to include marijuana without opening

in a new location.

Pandora’s Box manager Nate Ralston said the business is considering its options but was unsure if it was going to enter the market, citing the high licensing fees.

“I hope whoever does it has good customer service,” he said.

Although marijuana isn’t on the agenda, council members will discuss other issues, like declaring the lands west of the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport as a Regionally Significant Industrial Area, which would allow the city to access new grants and expedite the state regulatory process.

The council will meet Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

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