

# STORM: Concern about packed snow becoming icy

Continued from 1A

priorities, he said, are school routes and arterial roads that connect to state highways, followed by lower volume collector and residential roads.

The issue with plowing, Patterson said, is it pushes snow into on-street parking lanes and driveways. He said gravel trucks were scheduled to run through Thursday night, if needed.

Mark Morgan, Hermiston assistant city manager, said the road department was primed and ready for the storm since Wednesday morning. Workers spent all day plowing, and employees from the water and sewer department also pitched in to shovel the sidewalks around city property.

"It's all hands on deck," Morgan said.

## Morgro, not salt

Umatilla County's facilities crew hits snow-covered work sites starting at 6 a.m. Facilities manager Mark Tanner said that's a must-do to attack the recent winter storms.

"The big thing is to get on it as soon as you can," he said, before people trample and compact the snow.

A three-person crew clears walkways around the courthouse and its parking lot at 216 S.E. Fourth St., which takes up the whole block, and the public health building across the street. Tanner said they heft snow shovels for tight places, including ramps and stairs, but they use a John Deere riding mower with chains on the wheels and a blade on the front to push snow from the long straight stretches.

Workers also give walkways a coating of Morgro Sno Plow, a non-toxic, USDA-approved snow and ice melter. Tanner said that's better than salt, which can be hard on concrete.

Some Pendleton businesses reported they are sold out of ice and snow melters. But D&B Supply, 850 Southgate Place, still had some, though it was selling fast. The business already had two deliveries of the product this week.

And Eastern Oregon Rental & Sales, Pendleton, also is selling melters, and while it does not rent snowblowers, it has equipment



A train passes by a railroad switch at a crossing on Southwest Third Street on Thursday in Pendleton.



Snow tops the statues of Jackson Sundown and Chief Clarence Burke on Main Street Thursday in Pendleton.

available to remove snow. For more information, call 541-276-7368.

Cecil Jones, who has worked for county for 18 years, said fertilizer spreaders work well to disperse melters. The spreader allows him to accomplish the job around the courthouse and the health building in about half an hour, he said. Dealing with this storm, though, required four 50-pound bags of the stuff.

Tanner said the county has a lot of sidewalk.

That includes the Stafford Hansell Government Center, Hermiston, and the justice center outside Pendleton, which is home to the sheriff's office, the jail, the communications center and parole and probation.

## Treacherous highways

Tom Strandberg, spokesman with the Oregon Department of Transportation in La Grande, said their

crews were also burning the midnight oil, running day and night to keep highways clear.

"There's somebody on shift pretty much at all times," Strandberg said.

Even that was not enough Thursday, as Interstate 84 was closed by afternoon from Pendleton to Baker City due to multiple backed up trucks and spun-out vehicles blocking route along Cabbage Hill.

Looking ahead, Strandberg said there is additional concern about packed snow becoming icy over the next few days, causing additional hazards. He recommended people use extra caution, and check [www.tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com) for the latest updates on traffic conditions.

"It's going to be a challenge to keep things moving," he said.

Forecasts are calling for bitterly cold temperatures heading into the weekend,

reaching minus-5 degrees in the basin Friday night and minus-10 degrees in the mountains. Wister said the region should gradually begin to warm up Sunday, getting as high as 35-40 degrees Tuesday, before becoming cold again for holiday traveling.

"We could see some winter-type weather toward the end of (next) week," Wister said.

The sudden onslaught of snow could also pose a potential danger for people recreating in the mountainous backcountry this weekend. Victor McNeil, avalanche forecaster with the Wallowa Avalanche Center, said some locations in the Wallowa and Elkhorn mountains have received 2 feet of snow or more over the last week, which could tip the strength-to-stress relationship in the early season snowpack.

"When you get a lot of new snow in a short period of time, it takes a while for the snowpack to adjust to that new load," McNeil said. "It looks like there's all this fresh snow for the taking ... You have to make smart decisions for yourself and the group you're with."

A more complete advisory is available at [www.wallowaavalanchecenter.org](http://www.wallowaavalanchecenter.org).

Contact George Plaven at [gplaven@eastoregonian.com](mailto:gplaven@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4547.

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A marshmallow peeks out from a layer of snow on an inflatable Christmas decoration on Southeast Emigrant on Thursday in Pendleton.

# KINDNESS: Frank Brown, 89, busy clearing driveways

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helped push them through an intersection or out of an embankment. In Pendleton, Elizabeth Conkey said the driver of a Round-Up Plumbing van jumped out and helped her clear the snow off her car.

"It was really nice to know someone was looking out for me," she said.

Ashley Chandler, who lives off Highway 730 near Irrigon, got off work at 2 a.m. When she tried to turn onto the side street where she lives, her car got stuck. After trying for half an hour to dig it out and get moving again, a man she didn't know turned his truck around at the next side street and came back to help her out. She said she felt the man was God's way of watching out for her.

Timmy Clark of Pendleton spent the day taking people to and from doctor's appointments for free. Thursday afternoon he was at the pediatrician's office with a mother and her baby. He said after posting a Facebook message offering free rides to "places of importance" he had picked up five people so far and had two more he still needed to get.

"Honestly, this wasn't my idea," he said in a private Facebook message from the doctor's office, crediting his friend Max Driskell. "He came up with it during our last snowstorm, because he was sick of listening to people complain about what the city 'isn't' doing, instead of people finding something we CAN do!"

Driskell said he had

posted on a community Facebook page on Sunday, making the same offer of free rides, but hadn't had any takers. He was glad to hear that Clark was having more success.

"There was plenty of negativity and people were jumping on the bandwagon, but if you put out a little bit of positivity people will jump on that just the same," he said.

North of Hermiston, neighbors were grateful for Frank Brown, who at age 89 was out with his tractor clearing everyone's driveways. Cindy Gammell-Thompson said the Brown family has a long tradition of helping her family and other neighbors any time there is a tree to be trimmed or a driveway to be cleared.

Frank's son Tom Brown confirmed that his dad has "always" been dedicated to helping others, and his age hasn't changed that.

"He's had that tractor forever," Tom said. "He's used it for putting out fires and clearing snow and keeping the street out here graded."

Umatilla police Sgt. Bill Wright and officers Natalia Tovey and Derrick Williams helped citizens though the night and into the morning.

"We pushed quite a few cars and shoveled a few driveways," Wright said.

Aiding people in need is of the department's standard, he said, but he was proud of the effort his officers gave in the freezing weather.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

# New taxes, fewer deductions offered to raise revenue

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A menu of tax increases that could be introduced in the House of Representatives in 2017 has the potential to raise several billions of dollars in new revenue for the state, according to a Legislative Revenue Office document.

The list of ideas has been widely distributed around the Capitol and characterized by some lobbyists as "House Democrat Revenue Plan Options," but Legislative Revenue Officer Paul Warner said the list is a routine product his office puts out each biennium to serve as a "starting point" in discussions in raising revenue. The options often include ideas that have proposed in the past.

"We put those options together every biennium as part of our regular job," Warner said. "We were not asked (by Democratic leadership) to come up with a list."

Specific options from the list limit several personal income tax deductions, increase taxes on corporate income, tobacco and alcohol, and levy new taxes on corporate sales, soda and meals.

After the failure of Measure 97 last month, lawmakers are looking for ways to raise new revenue. The state faces a \$1.7 billion revenue shortfall in 2017-19 and increasing costs in health care and public

retirement benefits. There also is interest in increasing investments in education, health care and senior services, all of which require new revenue. Some of the options listed are similar to the 2.5 percent corporate sales tax measure that voters rejected Nov. 8, but the rates are lower and apply to a broader base.

## Personal income tax limits

Ideas for curtailing personal income tax deductions account for about \$1.5 billion of the options. They include a variety of choices for limiting deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes and itemized deductions. The state now has no limits on mortgage interest deductions, unless a filer owns more than one home. There also are no limits on property tax deductions.

The highest revenue raiser the possible personal income tax changes would limit itemized deductions to 80 percent of total deductions, which would yield an estimated \$498 million in revenue for the 2017-19 biennium, according to the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office.

## Corporate sales tax options

LRO estimated ha 0.39-percent "gross receipts" tax on corporations' Oregon sales exceeding \$1 million would generate \$1.6 billion in 2017-19 and \$2.4 billion in 2019-21. Another option for 0.75-percent tax on sales

exceeding \$1 million would provide nearly \$3.1 billion in 2017-19 and \$4.6 billion in 2019-21.

"We will look at different (sales) thresholds and different rates as we continue this discussion," Warner said.

## Corporate income tax

One option increases the corporate income tax from 6.6 percent to 7 percent for companies with less than \$1 million in income and 8 percent for companies with more than \$1 million. That tax hike would provide \$57 million in revenue in 2017-19. Another item converts the corporate minimum tax to 0.1 percent of total sales, which would yield \$88 million in revenue in 2017-19 and \$97 million in 2019-21.

## Property tax

Eliminating the 2 and 3 percent property tax discount for early payment would bring in an estimated \$337 million in 2017-19 and \$366 million in 2019-21.

## Sin taxes

The list of options also examines a mix of sin taxes: a new 5-percent tax on meals and a 2-cent tax on every 12 ounces of soda. The meals tax would provide about \$278 million in 2017-19 and \$520

million in 2019-21. Other ideas call for increasing the beer tax by \$5 a barrel, from \$2.60 a barrel, and the wine tax by \$1 a gallon, from 67 cents a gallon.

Tobacco tax options include increases of 25-50 cents per pack, raising \$48 million to \$88 million in 2017-19. The cigarette tax is now \$1.32 for a 20-pack and \$1.65 for a 25-pack. Lawmakers also could consider boosting taxes on other tobacco products by 20 to 35 percent.

Gov. Kate Brown has called for a tobacco tax hike of 85 cents in her proposed budget, released Dec. 1.

## 911 tax

Another item would raise the 911 tax from 75 cents to \$1.

Rep. Phil Barnhart, D-Springfield, who chairs the House Revenue Committee, was not immediately available for comment Wednesday afternoon, when snow had driven many lawmakers from the Capitol.

House Minority Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, said any tax increase negotiations need to accompany efforts to curtail spending and promote economic development.

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# BRIEFLY Santa Claus is coming to town

HERMISTON — A holiday breakfast offering people a chance to have fun decorating their food before eating it is featured this weekend.

Pancakes with Santa is Saturday from 8:30-10:30 a.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Tickets are \$10 for ages 16 and up, \$8 for ages 2-15 or \$30 for a family of four. Tickets must be purchased by 5 p.m. Thursday.

The event also includes photos with Santa, art projects and a Christmas story shared by staff from the Hermiston Public Library.

For more information or to buy tickets, call 541-667-5018 or stop by Hermiston Parks & Recreation, 180 N.E. Second St.

# Illinois students seek Hermiston tidbits

A fourth grade class at Aviston Elementary School, located in southern Illinois, is learning about the United States and are hoping area residents will provide information about Eastern Oregon.

The class is studying about climates, natural resources and highlights from towns across the nation. The kids recently sent a letter asking *Hermiston Herald* readers to send postcards, souvenirs or anything else they would like to the class.

Located about 35 miles west of St. Louis, Missouri, Aviston's population is around 2,000.

To add to the children's learning experience, send information to: Fourth grade at Aviston Elementary, 350 S. Hull St., Aviston, IL 62216.

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