Bill to expand rural self-service gas moves forward

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A bill that would expand the hours of self-serve gas stations in rural counties in Eastern Oregon is headed to the floor of the House of Representatives.

The legislation by Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, expands on a law passed in 2015 that allowed self-service between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. in 18 counties with a population of less than 40,000.

Oregon is one of only two states that prohibit customers from pumping their own gas at fueling stations. In 2015, the Legislature passed a law to allow customers to pump gas in rural counties between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. The idea was to protect travelers from being stranded in remote places.

However, in Eastern Oregon, some locally-owned gas stations have been at risk of closure due to the expense of hiring fueling attendants to pump customers' gas.

"We are trying to preserve these stations out in the middle of nowhere so that we have fuel available," Bentz said.

"This is a question of access, not convenience we are trying to preserve the jobs of the owners who own these stations and not just the employees at the islands."

The House Committee on Transportation Policy voted 8-to-1 Wednesday, March 8, to move the bill to the House floor with a recommendation for approval.

The proposed change affects 16 counties in Eastern Oregon: Malhuer, Union, Wasco, Hood River, Curry, Jefferson, Crook, Baker, Morrow, Lake, Grant, Harney, Wallowa, Gilliam, Sherman and Wheeler.

The original proposal included Clatsop, Curry and Tillamook counties. However, opposition to expanding self-service hours prompted proponents to exclude the coastal counties from the change.

Opponents feared expanding the hours when self-service was allowed would threaten the jobs of those who pump fuel for a living. Another amendment requires an attendant to be available to pump gas at stations that have an attached business, such as a convenience store or restaurant.

"We realize there are isolated areas of the state, some in Western Oregon and some other places that may still have issues with fuel availability," said Paul Romain, a Portland attorney representing the Oregon Fuels Association. But proponents agreed to modify the bill to make sure it could pass, Romain said.

Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, a member of the transportation policy committee, voted against the bill Wednesday.

"My district is surrounded virtually by self-serve gasoline, two sides by coastal counties and two sides by the state of Washington," Witt said. "I am very sympathetic to the problems that they have, but self-serve gasoline has now surrounded my district, and that has created problems for me."

The legislation that passed in 2015 has enabled some rural stations to remain open at night for travelers. Yet some gas station owners have not had the resources to take advantage of the 2015 law because the self-service card-lock devices used to take credit cards cost between $20,000 and $25,000, gas station owners testified in February.

CLOSE: Exhibit kicks off Friday, runs through April 29

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includes a presidential portrait of Bill Clinton owned by the National Portrait Gallery.

As a boy in western Washington, Close struggled in school because of dyslexia and a neuromuscular condition that kept him from playing sports. The painter, who now lives in New York, has worked from a wheelchair since 1988 when a rupture of his spinal artery left him paralyzed with only partial use of his limbs.

Though Schnitzer has collected Close's work for decades, he remains in awe of the painter.

"Chuck Close is the master portrait artist of our time. For tens of thousands of years, artists have drawn faces, but no one has taken the art of portraiture to the same level as Chuck Close. He is a brilliant artist," said Schnitzer. "His portraits are a mirror of not only his subjects, but of all of us."

Close didn't start with abstract art. His early work involved taking small-scale black-and-white photos of faces and creating a super-sized painted version on canvas. The paintings, detailed and lifelike, appeared almost as photographs. As the years passed, Close explored other techniques. The Pendleton exhibit features the artist's diversity.

"This exhibit is so informative, not just from an artistic point of view, but also a technical one," Lavadour said. "The technical expertise and collaborative skill is breathtaking. Some of the works in the exhibit feature more than 100 ink colors and many dozens of trips through hand-operated printing presses. Several of the works feature pulp 'painted' handmade paper."

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The Chuck Close collection is on loan from Portland art collector Jordan Schnitzer and will be on display starting Friday at the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

To see a video of the process, search "Chuck Close Pace Prints" at www.youtube.com. The piece featured in the video is on display in Pendleton.

The exhibit also features two woodburytype portraits of actor Brad Pitt where Close intertwined the traditional 19th-century technique with high-power strobe lights. In the gritty black-and-whites, Pitt's eyes are magnets as the rest of his face blurs away.

The exhibit kicks off Friday with a public reception from 5:30-7 p.m. and runs through April 29.

Lavadour praised Schnitzer for his willingness to loan his art. She said the Portland businessman attends the Pendleton Round-Up each year and has a soft spot for the town. Last year, he responded almost immediately to an email from Lavadour asking him to consider lending art to the PCA. He invited her to Portland to peruse his collection.

Schnitzer is funding outreach activities to connect students with the exhibit. Lavadour said every sixth-grader in Pendleton will visit the gallery. Other student groups are coming from as far away as Baker City. The Wildhorse Foundation and the Education Foundation of Pendleton provided additional funding.

Lavadour wants as many eyes on Close's work as possible. The arts center is open from Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m., but "if someone can only come at 8 at night or on a Sunday, we can have somebody meet them," she said. Tours can be arranged by calling 541-278-9201.

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DRONE: ArcticShark is equipped with a 60-horsepower engine

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fine-tune the aircraft and get their pilots up to speed in preparation for the 2018 mission. Flight testing and training began Feb. 27 at the Pendleton UAS Range, led by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Washington.

Project leaders hosted an open house Wednesday afternoon at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport to give members of the public an up-close look at the ArcticShark.

"I think we're making history here," said Beat Schmid, associate director of the Atmospheric Sciences & Global Change Division at PNNL.

Developed by Navmar Applied Sciences Corporation, an engineering firm based in Pennsylvania, the ArcticShark was originally created for military applications. It is based on the TigerShark model used for surveillance and reconnaissance by the U.S. Navy.

Instead, the system was revamped for the Department of Energy as a climate measuring tool. Schmid, who manages the Atmospheric Radiation Measurement aerial facility at PNNL, said the agency has pushed for some time to determine what value drones can add to their research.

"You can take a little more risk with an unmanned aircraft," he said.

PNNL has flown smaller drones before at the Pendleton range, which is part of the Pan-Pacific UAS Test Range Complex and one of six official test sites across the country designated by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Marcel Piet, president of UAS services for ArgenTech Solutions, talks about how his company's involvement with the ArticShark program on Wednesday at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport.

The ArcticShark, however, is a different animal. It took about a year to get FAA approval to fly the vehicle because of its size and capabilities.

Marcel Piet, president of UAS services for ArgenTech Solutions in Vancouver, Washington, said his company provided technical assistance for getting the operation certified. Normally, a drone license will allow flights up to 400 feet for vehicles under 55 pounds, but the ArcticShark is more than 10 times as big and able to fly up to 15,000 feet. By comparison, most commercial jets cruise at an altitude of 33,000 feet.

Piet said the FAA is famously risk-averse, and it was a lengthy process to prove PNNL could handle the unconventional drone.

"You have to demonstrate to the FAA you know how to fly," Piet said. "They want to make sure you know what you're doing."

The Department of Energy took ownership of the ArcticShark on Sunday, and pilots are now being trained how to monitor the aircraft from a specially manufactured mobile flight center on the ground. The drone is equipped with a 60-horsepower engine and can fly up to eight hours at a time.

Both wings are capable of holding 50 pounds of laser mapping instruments, which will be used to take precise measurements of things like water vapor, carbon dioxide gas and aerosol particles in the Arctic atmosphere.

Schmid described the Arctic as one of the planet's most sensitive regions, a place where climate change is happening at a much faster rate than previously predicted. The data captured by ArcticShark will allow scientists to better understand the processes at work.

"We really think this is just the front edge of an incredible economic development opportunity."
— **Steve Chrisman,** City's economic development director and airport manager

"It's ultimately, of course, about better predicting the Earth's climate," Schmid said.

Testing will continue on and off at the Pendleton range throughout the year before ArcticShark is sent to an atmospheric research base on the North Slope of Alaska.

Darryl Abling, Pendleton UAS Range manager, said it is their biggest project to date. More potential clients have also shown interest in the range, he said, but couldn't specify.

"For the city and the range, ultimately we desire to become a high-tech UAV center," Abling said.

Steve Chrisman, Pendleton's economic development director and airport manager, said the city is excited to capitalize on new opportunities the drone industry may bring to the area.

"We really think this is just the front edge of an incredible economic development opportunity," he said.

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EOTEC: Commissioners Givens and Elfering responded with caution

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event center continues to be as the new home for the annual fair, Murdock said, while Hermiston has broader interests of tourism and benefit to the business community. Under his proposition, the county would use the facility for the fair and pay a lease of $25,000 a year for five years, then renegotiate the deal. He also suggested the county could have a permanent storage area at the site and office space.

He said the county was at a crossroads with EOTEC, which "stands to be a wonderful addition to Umatilla County," while also being a potential liability. The county and Hermiston are each on the hook for three years to cover shortfalls in EOTEC's operational expenses.

He emphasized the break from EOTEC is a long-term goal and a notion he considered long before Hermiston city councilor John Kirwan suggested last week that the council take over as EOTEC's acting board until after the end of construction and the 2017 fair and rodeo.

"This is a position I've held for some time relative to the ultimate future of EOTEC," Murdock told his fellow commissioners Larry Givens and Bill Elfering. "It's a position I have shared openly ... it's a matter of record. ... it's simply making clear that's ultimately where we need to move."

Givens and Elfering responded with caution.

"Turbulence comes up in a marriage from time to time," Elfering said. "And I'm not ready to divorce yet from the proposal we've had."

Elfering said Hermiston taking over the event center makes about as much sense as the county taking it over and that the parties need to hold more discussions.

Givens said EOTEC is about to move from a construction phase into operations. The EOTEC board on Friday is looking at contracts for the fair and Farm City-Pro Rodeo and a proposal for a new management structure, he said. Finding the best management style is the crux of the issue, according to Givens.

"I agree," Murdock said. "But I don't know of any successful business that would give their checkbook to someone else."

Don Miller serves on the EOTEC and the fair boards and urged the county to stay on as a co-owner. Pulling out at this juncture is premature, he said, and could harm economic opportunities.

Murdock said his proposal was just a matter of discussion and not for action. He also said he supported the EOTEC board and would not agree with Hermiston City Council taking over the project.

PENDLETON: Discussed transferring ownership of Vert collection of historical artifacts back to the tribes

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to convene in August.

The city and tribes also share some similarities in their economic development efforts.

Bill Tovey, the tribal community and economic development director, called Pendleton and the CTUIR "friendly competitors" when it came to their dueling industrial parks.

In many ways the tribes' Coyote Business Park is ahead of the airport industrial park.

Tovey said Coyote Business Park has 140 shovel-ready acres replete with all the necessary infrastructure while Pendleton is still trying to extend utilities to industrial land made accessible by the Airport Road extension.

Despite continual interest in the land, Tovey said development has slowed at Coyote Business Park since 2011, spurring the tribal government to consider building a $2 million-$3 million, 60,000-square-foot spec facility to help attract industry.

"We have the hooks in the water all the time, and we get nibbles every once in a while ... we just want to catch that one little fish," Tovey said.

The most concrete proposal for direct collaboration between the city and tribes came from Tamástslikt Cultural Institute director Bobbi Conner, who made a brief presentation about the Vert collection.

Conner said Pendleton resident John Vert willed the city his collection of historical artifacts about 60 years ago, which included culturally significant items from the CTUIR.

The city oversaw the collection until the mid-1990s, when it reached an agreement with the tribes to loan Tamástslikt the Native American artifacts.

The city has extended the agreement a few times since then, and with the agreement up for review again, Conner said she's spoken with Pendleton city manager Robb Corbett about transferring ownership of the Vert collection back to the tribes.

Conner said the transfer is complicated by the fact that six items in the Vert collection, some of which are not associated with the CTUIR, are subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which requires them to be returned to their lineal descendants and culturally affiliated American Indian tribes.

Furthermore, Conner said there is no complete item-by-item catalogue of the Vert collection.

Regardless of the topic, elected officials from both sides continually stressed the importance of working together.

"We have some history between Pendleton and the tribe, and it hasn't always been good," she said. "But at the same time, there are some benefits to the partnership and collaboration."

Board member Woodrow Star suggested the council and board meet with officials from the city of Marysville and the Tulalip Tribes in northwestern Washington, whose governments have collaborated in the past to some success.

Turner proposed the two bodies meet again in June, where they could continue to delve into the heavily discussed issues and further flesh out others that were mentioned, such as a sports complex and an educational forum on CTUIR treaty rights.

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