

BUS: Obsession with buses started with a fascination with trolleys when he was young

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cities I have to rent a car.”

Perpetually brimming with enthusiasm about every aspect of bus travel, Lawrence is the editor in chief of the Bus History Association’s quarterly magazine about buses. He was sampling Kayak Public Transit’s offerings on his way to the association’s national convention in Vancouver, Washington.

When he arrived in Stanfield via Greyhound bus he had just finished traversing a number of Idaho bus systems, including Boise and Caldwell. Before his three and a half week journey is through he plans to loop up through Washington cities like Spokane and Yakima, and then travel south to hit Bend for a total of 38 bus systems this trip.

Lawrence said his obsession with buses started with a fascination with trolleys when he was young and went from there. Over the years he has developed three key things he looks for in a good bus system: buses that are clean and well-maintained, friendly drivers, and an efficient route that incorporates a good number of stops without causing the buses to perpetually run late.

“The schedules need to be very carefully planned out so they can drive the speed limit and still get there on time,” he said.

Lawrence’s favorite bus lines tend to be the more luxurious rides offered by private companies such as Indian Trails in Michigan. He enjoys finding bus systems with unique naming systems, like Peter Pan Bus Lines in Massachusetts, which names each bus after a different character or place in the iconic play. He also pays attention to how state and municipal governments prioritize public transit, and said Oregon’s Department of Transportation “in particular needs to be commended” for the grants it gives to support cities in having their own bus systems.

He said riding buses and trains tends to be more comfortable than air travel and driving, and he gets to meet a lot of interesting people like the New Zealand couple he got to know on his train ride out west.

“Some of the politicians in Washington (D.C.) think Amtrak is losing money and we should get rid of it, but they don’t realize how many foreigners it draws in,” he said. “They don’t want to see America from 30,000 feet



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Loring Lawrence stopped by the Hermiston Conference Center late Friday afternoon.

and they don’t feel up to driving across a foreign country. Almost every train trip I take I meet travelers from another country.”

Every ride that Lawrence rides, he takes pictures with his 1970s-era Mamiya C330 camera. It’s hard to find someone able to develop the film, but that hasn’t stopped him from collecting what he estimates is over 35,000 photos of buses and trains.

After the buses in Hermiston stopped for the day, Lawrence stopped by the visitor center in the Hermiston Conference Center. He chatted with the staff inside, then studied the kiosk of information in the corner of the parking lot. He was interested to know that Hermiston’s name came from a Robert Louis Stevenson novel, as he once visited Stevenson’s estate in Samoa.

“When you visit systems in cities you learn things you didn’t know,” he said.

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BUDGET: Unions and other advocates are still jostling for increased business taxes

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state’s public pension system, was contingent on passing a “significant” revenue package.

Additionally, some changes wouldn’t kick in until 2018, in which case the full financial impact on the state’s two-year budget won’t be felt until the cycle starting July 1, 2019.

The first proposal, SB 1067, is a collection of various cost curbing measures, such as combining two separate benefit boards serving public educators and other public employees, limiting the annual growth rate of health care expenditures for public employees and tying the rates paid for employee health care services to a percentage of Medicare rates.

It’s estimated that, upon full implementation, the measure could save about \$691 million in the 2019-21 biennium.

Some provisions in the legislation haven’t been quantified, such as changing the state’s debt collection and contracting practices.

The second proposal, SB 1068, has to do with public employee pension benefits. The bill would require a percentage of current public employees’ annual contributions to an individual account to go instead to a risk-sharing account that can be used by the Public Employee Retirement System’s Board to pay

benefits accrued after July 1, 2018.

Legislators consulted with unions in developing that proposal.

According to the Senate President’s Office, the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal office says the PERS measure could save employers — such as school districts and counties — about \$106.7 million in the upcoming two-year budget, and \$434 million in the 2019-21 cycle, although that includes all funds, not just the general and lottery funds.

The risk-sharing account could only address costs of the system going forward, and not the unfunded liability of the system, which corresponds to the amount the state owes that has already been accrued by public employees and is estimated to be at least \$21 billion. Legally, the state cannot reduce benefits employees have already accrued.

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said Monday that the proposals represented a “serious attempt to do cost containment.” Business groups, such as the Brighter Oregon coalition, have repeatedly called for reductions to the cost of the public pension system and other costs before they’ll get on board with changes to the state’s tax structure.

With about a month to go before the Legislature

adjourns, unions and other advocates are still jostling for increased business taxes.

While lawmakers consider switching from a corporate income tax to a tax on gross business sales, the Oregon Education Association filed a ballot measure Friday that would create a gross receipts tax on businesses with annual sales of at least \$5 million.

Another OEA proposed measure would allow the Legislature to raise business taxes by simple majority vote if certain school funding levels aren’t met.

Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, said the PERS proposal unveiled Monday was insufficient. He argued for “robust restructuring” of the system.

Earlier legislative proposals on PERS, such as one that would have placed a \$100,000 limit on the final average salary used in an employee’s benefits calculation, appear unlikely to move forward.

Rebecca Tweed, a coordinator for Brighter Oregon, said that both proposals represented a step in the right direction, but were not enough to right the state’s finances. While calling the cost-sharing provisions “important,” Tweed said that the proposal “would do little to slow the runaway increases schools and state agencies must pay into PERS.”

GRADUATION: ‘It was epic, man’

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seemed like two years ago that she first dropped off her son, Peter Wallace, for his first day of kindergarten.

Now he stood beside her with his high school diploma and a plan to attend Blue Mountain Community College, where he’ll study forensics.

Lidwinner Machado was trying to grab a few pictures of her son, Stephen Jr., as he and his friends congratulated each other.

“It was exhilarating and it was exciting” to see her son walk the stage, Lidwinner said. She added that it was a “smooth journey” toward graduation, with Stephen Jr. obtaining his diploma with “high honors,” a designation for students with a 3.75 GPA or higher.

Stephen Jr. will carry those honors to Oregon State University, where he’ll major in biology.

Mike Gillam said his daughter, Daysha Denight, was raised by her mother in Pendleton while he lived in Oklahoma.

Gillam traveled from Oklahoma to see his daughter graduate with honors, and although there were challenges during high school, he said the future University of Oregon freshman’s journey was only starting.

“It was wonderful,” Gillam said about the graduation. “It was epic, man.”

While many parents and



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Sebastian Corona gives Administrative Secretary Becky Anderson a hug as he and his fellow 2017 Pendleton High School graduates wait to process into the Round-Up Grounds on Saturday morning. Corona is flanked by Fernando Gomez and Anthony Coleman.

seniors were already starting to discuss the future, there was also time to reflect on the past.

Several students took the to the podium to remember Buckaroo playoff runs, the #YoungmanOnEllen campaign and all the PHS staff that helped them make it to graduation.

Class speaker Brayden Pulver said future classes might be able to drop the Pendleton-Hermiston rivalry, with Hermiston High School set to play in a different competition class next year.

Although he envisioned trips to Dutch Bros. Coffee in Hermiston where both sides could be friendly, he couldn’t resist ending his speech with a little extra ribbing.

“If we weren’t Bucka-

roos, then we’d be Bulldogs, and no one wants that,” he said.

Pendleton High School Principal Dan Greenough also paid tribute to the kids, highlighting the four boys who had made Eagle Scout by the end of their high school career, the student who was earning a BMCC degree along with her diploma, and the hundreds of scholarships students had received to help pay for college.

After each name was read and the caps were thrown (although many students were inhibited by the canopy used to shade them from the sun), Greenough presented the class of 2017, which earned a single, unified standing ovation from the audience.

FORKLIFT: Operator with best score won \$500

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cally put a contestant in the winner’s circle.

“Speed isn’t as important as safety,” Long said.

Employees from Overton Safety Training of Aloha were monitoring the courses, deducting points from competitors for unsafe practices like bumping into objects, reversing the forklifts without turning their heads around, and failing to use a seatbelt.

Although they may not place within the top three in terms of time, Long said rodeo winners often make up for it with their safe maneuvers.

Maneuvering wasn’t a simple task in the two obstacle courses.

One course had contestants use the forklift to pick up a plank with a pipe on it before driving it through narrow brackets, a test of the competitors’ spatial reasoning.

The other course had the

operators pick up and drop off wooden planks from one designated spot to another before circling barrels in a narrow corral.

People weren’t just competing for the pride of being the safest forklift operator in Eastern Oregon.

The person with the best score earned \$500, while the second and third best earned \$400 and \$300, respectively. The top three also received belt buckles with a forklift design.

Although it was mostly smiles at the rodeo, workplace safety can be a life-or-death matter.

According to the Oregon OSHA, there were 61 workplace deaths in 2016. Vehicle crashes were the leading cause of fatalities while contact with objects came in second.

Four people died while on the clock in Umatilla County last year — one in a transportation farming incident, one in an explosion related to agriculture or forestry

and two after coming into contact with objects. One person died in a Morrow County workplace in 2016, a transportation-related death.

Conference attendees were also given an up-close-and-personal example of unsafe practices right in front of the convention center. The Oregon Department of Transportation loaned out the wreckage from a drunk driving occurrence 2009, where a teenager from Idaho with a blood-alcohol level of 0.21 fatally crashed into an electric pole in Annex, Oregon.

While the safe practice of manual labor isn’t always rewarded, it spurred plaudits and cash prizes at the forklift rodeo.

Chris Evans of Boise Cascade Elgin Plywood took home the top prize while Juan Cambero of the Lamb Weston plant in Boardman was a close second. Rounding out the top three was Juan Silva, also of Lamb Weston.

Little Darlings!

This special section will be filled with photos of and messages for adorable little darlings from Umatilla County. Families will want to keep this special keepsake for their child and family for years to come.

Safe Sitter Class

SATURDAY, JUNE 10TH • 9:00 AM - 3:30PM • ROOMS 1 & 2

WHO: Potential babysitters grades 6 and above.

- Safety Skills • First Aid and Rescue Skills
- Child Care Skills • Life and Business Skills

Cost: \$30 ~ Includes book and lunch
To Register ~ 541-278-2627 or emilysmith@chiwest.com
Deadline for registration is Thursday, June 8th

CHI St. Anthony Hospital
2801 St. Anthony Way,
Pendleton, OR. 97801

Olivia,
I loved you from the very start.
You stole my breath, embraced my heart.
Our life together has just begun.
You're part of me, my little one.
Love, Mom

Your Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Child's Name: _____

Message: _____

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Send in, or drop by, a full color high resolution photo, your child's name and a message to your child today!

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