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VIEWPOINTS/5A

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Lights out in Oregon

Where to go, what to expect during the Aug. 21 solar eclipse

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Eastern Oregon emergency workers anticipate a flood of tourists seeking to witness the Aug. 21 total solar eclipse.

Two paths to experience the path of totality in our region are Highway 26 and Highway 395, which wind through rural counties. Tom Strandberg with the Oregon Department of Transportation said the focus is on a safe flow of traffic over the narrow roads.

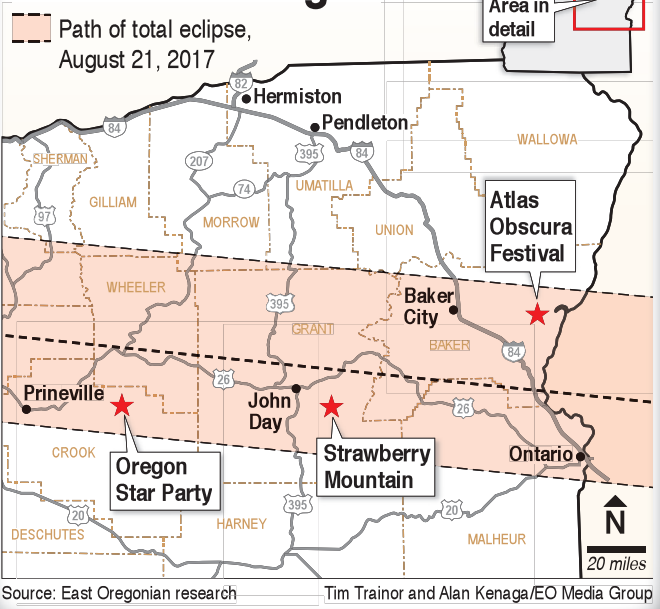
“Our two-lane highways can only accommodate so many vehicles per hour safely,” he said — a rate of about 1,200-1,500 vehicles.

But if 40,000 or more drivers decide to leave Grant County at once, Strandberg said traffic will bog down and one crash or stalled car would make for even longer delays.

To counter some of that, he said ODOT maintenance workers are undertaking “push, pull and drag” training.

“If it’s a stalled or stranded vehicle that is blocking traffic, our

Where to watch the eclipse in Eastern Oregon



More inside

Five ways to view the eclipse in Eastern Oregon/Page 12A

The moon passed between NASA’s Solar Dynamics Observatory and the sun. The image combines individual frames from two wavelengths of extreme ultraviolet light.

Photo contributed by NASA



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Sen. Jeff Merkley congratulates Michael Shafer, son of Athena Mayor John Shafer, at right, on his acceptance to Harvard during a tour Friday in Athena.

Sen. Merkley tours smallest towns of Umatilla County

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

Sen. Jeff Merkley knew just what to order as a side for his hamburger.

“This may be the first time a U.S. senator has had the Senator’s Clam Chowder,” he said. “I have to order it.”

Merkley was studying the menu at Long Branch Cafe & Saloon in Weston, where he and his staff stopped for lunch on Friday during a tour of some Umatilla County’s smallest incorporated cities. Seated across from him was Mayor Jennifer Spurgeon, who was there to talk about challenges facing her town of

less than 700 people.

Three of the city’s bridges are not considered sturdy enough to drive a fire engine across and the sewer system needs a major upgrade. The problem, of course, is finding the money for such projects with a small tax base.

“It’s a very common theme,” Spurgeon said.

Indeed, Merkley had already heard from the city of Echo about their sewer system and the city of Helix about a bridge problem of its own. Each time he asked questions and made sure the mayors had the contact information to follow up with

See **MERKLEY/3A**

Pendleton denied earmark funding

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

For Pendleton, House Bill 2017 was passed a day early but a dollar short.

The Oregon Legislature passed the \$5.3 billion transportation package a day before the 2017 session ended, and although every town and county in Eastern Oregon will receive some sort of benefit from it, Pendleton was shut out when it came to earmarked projects.

While Hermiston, Milton-Freewater and the Port of Umatilla all received multimillion dollar earmarks for street projects, Pendleton’s requests went unfilled.

Pendleton Mayor John

Turner said he lobbied Pendleton’s legislative representatives — state Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, and state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena — to include an Interstate 84 interchange project in the package.

Current plans call for the four-way intersection of Southwest Emigrant Avenue and Southwest 20th Street near Exit 209 on Interstate 84 to be moved west, where some homes and retail spaces are now.

Instituting such a change would require realigning 20th Street and building a new road to access the Southwest entrance and exit,

See **ROADS/12A**

PENDLETON

An unconventional manager

Beard jumps into first week managing convention center

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Pat Beard opened one of the back doors of the Pendleton Convention Center Thursday morning, achieving two things in the process: shedding some light in the Happy Canyon Room, where he can’t yet find the light switch, and providing a visual aid for one of his future ideas for the building.

The convention center doors open up to the Happy Canyon arena. And Beard likes the idea of working with the Happy Canyon Board of Directors to rent out the room (which features a bar) and the arena as one package for parties and celebrations.

“I’m happiest on horseback, and that’s how I thought I would be forever.”

— **Pat Beard**, Pendleton Convention Center director

Beard is finishing his first week as the convention center manager and he’s already filling a list with ideas.

Beard sits near the convention entrance, wearing his ever-present cowboy hat, as staff set up for the Linebacker’s Club Hall of Fame ceremony on Friday in the main hall.

See **BEARD/9A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Pat Beard is settling in to his new duties at the director of the Pendleton Convention Center.



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