

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

MARISSA WILLIAMS
Regional Advertising Director

MARCY ROSENBERG
Circulation Manager

JANNA HEIMGARTNER
Business Office Manager

MIKE JENSEN
Production Manager

OUR VIEW

Transload facility a game changer for Eastern Oregon ag

Officials in southeast Oregon are calling a proposed rail transload facility in Malheur County a game changer for the local agricultural economy.

It's big news, particularly after a disastrous winter that saw local farmers lose 100 million pounds of onions from last year's crop when heavy snows destroyed 60 storage sheds.

The \$5.3 billion transportation package passed by the Oregon Legislature includes \$26 million to create the facility near Ontario.

The facility will be a big benefit to the area's agricultural sector, particularly the onion industry, Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, said.

The 300 growers in the Treasure Valley of Oregon and Idaho raise 1.5 billion pounds of Spanish big bulb onions each year. There are 30 packer/shippers.

Much of the crop is shipped to East Coast markets by rail now. But to do that, the onions first have to be trucked more than 200 miles to the nearest transload facility in Wallula, Wash. Shippers say that costs about 50 cents per 50-pound bag of onions, and wipes out the geographic advantage the area has over competitors in Washington.

Packers say the facility could put \$15 million a year back into the hands of farmers, and turn a trip to the final market that now takes weeks into days.

"This thing is huge," Paul Skeen, an onion farmer who is president of the Malheur County Onion Growers Association, told the *Capital Press*. "It's a big, big deal. It will allow us to move product faster and cheaper."

Getting onions to market faster and cheaper is a big deal in itself, but growers also see the opportunity to expand the region's market share once its access improves.

Kudos go to Bentz, who has been working over the last couple of years to get Oregon's urban legislators to pay a bit more attention to the needs of rural Oregonians, particularly those in his far eastern district.

At Bentz's invitation, House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, made a three-day trip to Eastern Oregon last year and saw first-hand the challenges farmers and other businesses in the region face.

That eventually led to the passage of House Bill 2012, which provides \$5 million for a special economic development region in Eastern Oregon.

In the context of a \$5 billion spending package, a \$26 million investment in Eastern Oregon is small potatoes. But it will produce a big return for people in a region that hasn't had a lot of good economic news over the years.



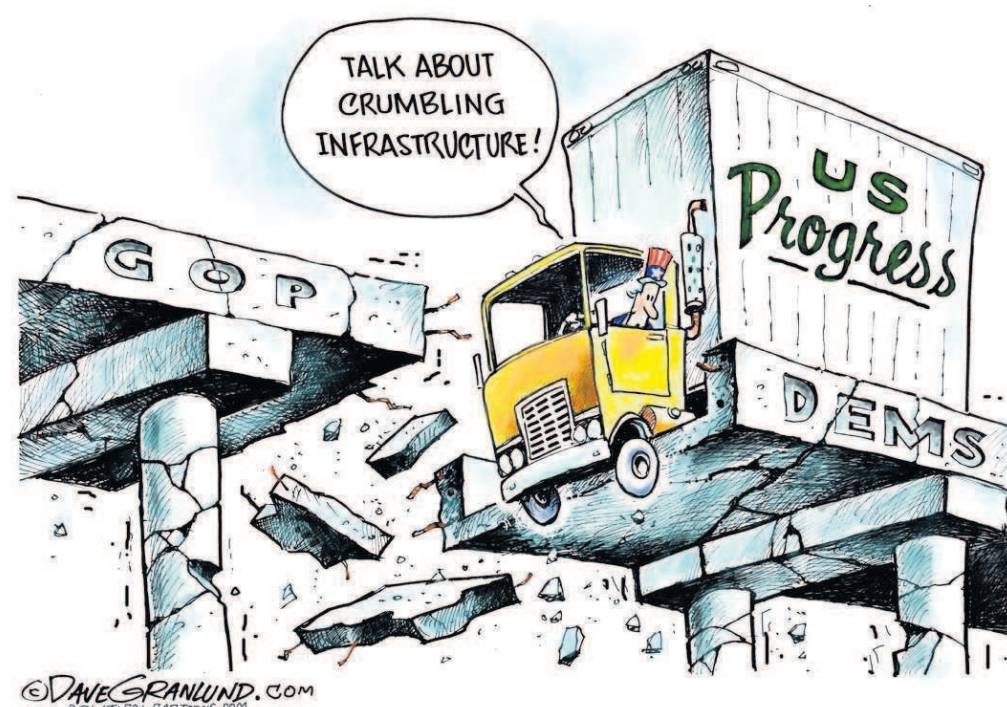
Sean Ellis/Capital Press File

Onions are sorted at a packing-shipping facility in southwestern Idaho last year. A rail transload facility planned in Oregon's Malheur County could save onion shippers in the region up to \$15 million a year and speed delivery of their produce to East Coast markets.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

What if Hitler had invaded Britain?

For more than a thousand years, the tribes of Europe have stared into the gun-metal-gray chop of the English Channel and thought of conquest. "We have six centuries of insults to avenge," said Napoleon. I was just there, on the same spring week when the great bedraggled scraps of the French and British armies were cornered for slaughter by the Nazi war machine 77 years ago.

Perhaps many people did not know, as Donald Trump says about obvious things that he just learned about, that the miracle of the Dunkirk evacuation continues to prompt one of the great historical "what-ifs" of all time.

Alternative history is all the rage now. One television series imagines a United States under German and Japanese rule ("The Man in the High Castle"). Another series in development at HBO will ask us to envision an equally horrid new world: the slaveholding Confederacy continuing to the present day.

Both scenarios are preposterous. But the question of whether the swastika could have flown over the Thames is much more than Hollywood fiction.

Thanks to the film "Dunkirk," an improbably intimate look at what Winston Churchill called "a colossal military disaster," minds otherwise gone soft by the heartless current governing policies of the United States can turn to a day when bigger minds guided Western democracies. Aside from slighting the French, the film is an energy drink of speculative fuel.

Between May 26 and June 4, 1940, the British were able to evacuate more than 330,000 allied troops from the French beach at Dunkirk, aided considerably by a flotilla of fishing boats, pleasure craft and other small ships. They had been routed; those who remained were sitting ducks for a fatal blow. Home, as the soldiers who queued up in the sand while the Nazis shelled and strafed them, was almost close enough to touch.

By the close of summer of 1940, most of Western Europe was under German control or that of puppet states. Would England fall as well, and usher in a Nazi empire, with its horrific Jewish genocide, that might have lasted well beyond the war's end in 1945?

The first big question is, why didn't the Germans finish off the stranded forces of good? Shockingly, one day before the evacuation, the Blitzkrieg took a break. Historians say German troops needed rest, and wanted to consolidate their forces for a final push of the allies into the sea. Plus, there was concern about tanks getting bogged down, and the weather was less than ideal for aerial bombing.

And the French, still ridiculed for letting Paris fall in barely a month's time, heroically

held back the Germans for a few days at the Dunkirk perimeter. They may have saved upward of 100,000 lives with their rear guard action.

Later, a German commander called the halt order one of the biggest blunders of the war. Most of those rescued soldiers would live to fight another day, many landing at Normandy, when the Allies returned to retake the continent four years later.

The fiasco at Dunkirk became a psychic triumph in England. But that brings up the second big question: At the height of their power, why didn't the Germans cross the channel and march to London?

"Hitler knows he will have to break us in this island or lose the war," Churchill told his countrymen on June 18, 1940. "But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new dark age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted by the light of perverted science."

And here we have the prospect of the Nazis developing an atomic bomb. Imagine the Germans controlling all of Europe to the Ural Mountains, giving the most evil of men enough time to develop the most lethal of weapons.

As Churchill said, it was not just Britain at stake, but lands under imperial control, including the Middle East oil fields. The United States, which had its own appeasement movement at odds with Franklin Roosevelt, was a long way from entering the war.

Hitler's generals drew up plans for an invasion of Britain, Operation Sea Lion. Before there could be an invasion, the Luftwaffe would have to destroy the Royal Air Force.

England held — what became its "finest hour," in Churchill's best-known phrase — because the Royal Air Force bested Hitler's air force in the months-long Battle of Britain.

But even if England were occupied, it's fair to think a vigorous resistance movement would have forced Germany to keep a huge reserve of troops in place to hold down the island kingdom. And Hitler, of course, had other things in mind: the invasion of the Soviet Union.

Walking along the sand of the English Channel, you can't help seeing those shivering boys at Dunkirk, part of the World War II generation that will soon be gone entirely. Before they disappear into the churn of history, we owe them another deep thanks, for the speculation that can remain just that.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for *The New York Times*, first as the *Pacific Northwest* correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter.



TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

Here we have the prospect of the Nazis developing an atomic bomb.

OTHER VIEWS

Making bipartisan progress on safe drinking water

All of us in Oregon and across the country deserve access to safe, clean drinking water. That's why the Energy and Commerce Committee — where I serve as chairman — just passed bipartisan legislation to modernize the nation's drinking water infrastructure.

Today, drinking water flows to our homes and businesses through more than one million miles of pipes operated by both publicly and privately owned water systems. Many of these pipes were laid in the early to mid-20th century with an expected lifespan of 75 to 100 years. In fact, some communities in Oregon still rely on wood stave water pipes that are reaching the end of their life. While in most places drinking water quality remains high, we also have



GREG WALDEN
Comment

seen horrible problems from Flint, Michigan to drinking fountains in Oregon schools.

Our legislation focuses on addressing drinking water systems' physical needs, aiding states and utilities with compliance and operation of the drinking water program, and encouraging the wisest use of money that is spent.

For the last 20 years, Congress has helped drinking water delivery systems meet the challenge of providing consumers with safe and affordable water through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. From the end of 1997 through 2016, Oregon has received more than \$274 million in grants to help improve the safety and quality of tap water, comply with drinking water rules and reporting requirements, and give a helping

hand to the most economically distressed communities struggling to provide their residents safe drinking water. This fiscal year, Oregon is set to receive nearly \$12 million in funding to improve its water systems.

Many rural communities across Oregon struggle with failing infrastructure and a limited ability to afford these increasingly costly projects. They turn to the drinking water fund for help. In Malheur County, rural communities such as Vale and Nyssa are completing new water treatment and storage facilities to bring safe drinking water to their residents. In Umatilla County, the city of Pendleton is upgrading more than 30 miles of water lines that are nearly a century

old — Mayor John Turner said this project would be impossible without the program.

Our bill, the Drinking Water System Improvement Act, continues those important investments and authorizes \$8 billion over five years for the drinking water fund while also expanding the number of ways in which the fund can be used to improve delivery systems. In fact, we're authorizing an increase of \$350 million in funding for next year from which states such as Oregon could benefit.

Perhaps most important is how the bill looks to the future, using smart technology to monitor drinking water quality in real time. This allows us to better prevent,

detect, or rapidly respond to contaminants in our water systems. The ability to have up-to-the-minute information helps ensure water is safe and clean, system leaks and recent contamination are identified quickly, and the accuracy and availability of compliance data is maintained. We also included a program to help our schools replace drinking fountains that might contain lead.

These are just some of the highlights of the bill. As this measure heads to the House for a vote, I will continue working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure it passes and we do our part to make sure the water Americans drink is safe.

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River), represents Oregon's second congressional district, which includes 20 counties in central, southern and Eastern Oregon.

Many rural communities are struggling with infrastructure.