

Potholes ahead for Trump's upcoming public works proposal

By ZEKE MILLER
and JOAN LOWY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration will soon release its long-anticipated public works plan, trying to fulfill a campaign pledge but set to fall short of some ambitious goals.

As a candidate, Donald Trump promised to generate at least \$1 trillion in infrastructure spending. As president, he is relying on state and local governments to pony up a significant share of the total.

Trump told mayors at the White House this week that he would present his proposal after Tuesday's State of the Union address.

"We're also working to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure by stimulating a \$1 trillion investment, and that'll actually probably end up being about \$1.7 trillion," Trump said.

Officials said Washington's commitment will be far smaller — and the benefits contingent in large part on state and local support.

The administration's plan

calls for \$200 billion in federal spending over 10 years, according to a six-page summary reviewed by The Associated Press.

The summary, widely and unofficially disseminated in the capital, is a snapshot of the administration's thinking. While details may change, the broad outlines are expected to remain the same, according to officials familiar with the document. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the internal document.

Half the money would go to grants for transportation, water, flood control, cleanup at some of the country's most polluted sites and other projects.

States, local governments and other project sponsors could use the grants for no more than 20 percent of the cost. That's consistent with comments from administration officials that they want to use federal dollars as incentives, and that most of rest of the money would come from other sources.

The summary also includes \$14 billion over 10 years for current

programs that use taxpayer money to attract private investment or lower financing costs.

White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters said Trump and his team "are ready to work with Congress to move legislation forward quickly. America shouldn't have to wait any longer for better infrastructure."

Congress, however, is already bogged down on immigration and the budget, so the prospects seem slim for approving major new spending before the November elections.

VETERINARY: Grant created after Hillenbrand's request

Continued from 1A

Shadee Williams, another veterinary assistant, said the new room has space for all the veterinary equipment, which is attached to the ceiling instead of the wall to avoid tripping hazards. Williams said the old room needed to double as a preparatory space and didn't have all the equipment in one place.

Other features of the building include a room where families have space to grieve over euthanized animals with access to a separate exit, and boarding kennels with automatic water dispensers and indoor and outdoor play areas.

Hillenbrand said "auxiliary" services like doggie daycare, boarding kennels and canine acupuncture will help offset the costs of running a modern clinic.

"Veterinary medicine is very expensive," she said.

Although the launch of these new services didn't coincide with the Dec. 18 opening of the clinic, Hillenbrand hopes to have them running within the next month.

The Fresh Start grant was created in the wake of Hillenbrand's request, when the commission realized it had no grant program for developers looking to establish new buildings in the urban renewal district. Applicants to the program can apply for up to \$100,000 in grant funding.

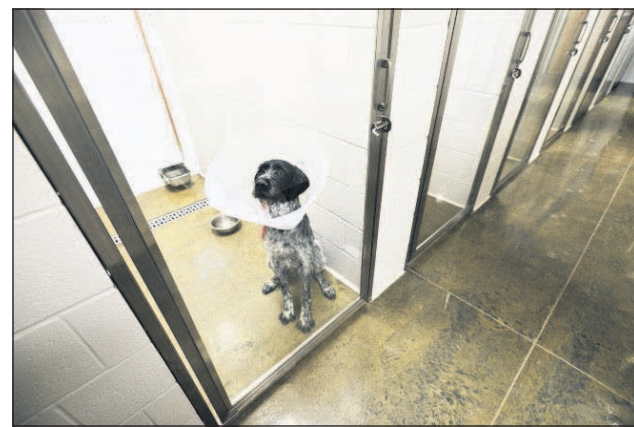
Although she said she would have been able to build the new facility without the commission's assistance, it helped make the process easier and more relaxing.

Charles Denight, the associate director of the development commission, pointed to the new possibilities the grant could open.

Denight said the urban renewal district was created



Veterinary assistant Amy Kline towels off a cat after a procedure in a recovery area on Wednesday at the Pendleton Veterinary Clinic.



Farrow sits in a kennel after having a procedure on Wednesday at Pendleton Veterinary Clinic.

under the premise that it would bring in revenue from new development.

While the commission has been active in restoring and remodeling the city's existing building stock, new commercial or housing development in the downtown area has been hard to come by.

"Zippo, practically," Denight said.

While the Pendleton Veterinary Clinic is the Fresh Start program's only

project to date, Denight said there's been interest from a "half dozen" developers in using it for a downtown housing project.

He said these buyers are interested in purchasing the Edwards Apartments, a derelict complex on Southeast Court infamous for drug use and public safety problems that was closed by city injunction in 2010.

Under these developers' plans, they would buy the property from its current

owner, use the commission's demolition grant to clear the existing building and apply for a Fresh Start grant to build new housing units on the property. Denight said another developer is interested in restoring the existing building, a project that could garner a different set of grants from the commission.

While potential buyers consider the Edwards Apartments, Denight said another property owner is moving forward with plans for a different downtown space.

At a special meeting Tuesday, the development commission will consider giving a demolition grant to John Fenton, who plans to use it to clear away a dilapidated house he owns at 356 S.E. Third Street. If he gets approval from the commission, Denight said Fenton wants to apply for a Fresh Start grant to build a new duplex on the site.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

DISASTER: Preparedness plan is still in draft form

Continued from 1A

"OEM in particular is understaffed, despite repeated budget requests to the Legislature, which inhibits the agency's capacity to coordinate emergency management efforts in the state," the report states.

The Secretary of State's audit was based on interviews with OEM staff and surveys of local and state emergency management programs.

The report comes at the heels of a year of disasters, from Hurricane Maria in Dominica and Puerto Rico to devastating wildfires in California and Oregon.

Earlier this week, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake in Alaska prompted officials to issue a tsunami watch along the Oregon coast, putting local emergency management systems to the test.

But when it comes to "the big one" — specifically, the well-publicized prospect of a 9.0 magnitude earthquake along the Cascadia Subduction Zone along Oregon's coast — the audit says Oregon should "do more" to prepare.

According to the report, state planning efforts for mitigating, preparing for, responding to and recovering

from disasters are "incomplete."

More specifically, the state is at risk of losing federal emergency funds if it can't maintain an "enhanced status" for its emergency plan.

The report also found that the state's preparedness plan is both incomplete and still in draft form. It includes undeveloped details that define actions for organizing resources, training personnel and exercising disaster scenarios.

Additionally, more than a dozen annexes in the Emergency Operations Plan are not up-to-date. Such annexes include transportation and public works action items during emergencies.

The state's recovery plan, meanwhile, has not been signed by Gov. Kate Brown, who is responsible for the emergency management system per state statute.

The office also offers recommendations for improving the state's emergency response network. Recommendations include continuing to advocate for funds through the state budget and clearly defining responsibilities for preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

FARMERS: Discussed the upcoming vote on an extension service district

Continued from 1A

varieties," she said. "Farmers are paying a premium to have modern genetics."

Wheat farmer Sam Myers noted that OSU is a land grant college, and that money they make from seeds should be put back into the community.

"Is there a way to produce or fund seed that's open variety, but augmented on the purchase or breeding side?" he asked.

Some farmers mentioned the drawbacks to open variety.

"I actually think that open variety is holding us back," said Roger Morter, a Morrow County farmer. "If you want something better as far as disease control, you have to pay for it."

Morter also expressed concern at the level of involvement of seed companies when farmers are trying to buy product.

"I don't know why, as an industry, we've allowed the seed industry to go that direction," he said. "I don't mind paying the royalty. My issue is that I can't pay without the seed company getting involved."

When a new variety of seed is developed, whether by a private company or a public university, it is patented. Buyers then pay a royalty to the developer every time they plant those seeds.

"That's the way they're able to recover the cost of producing the seeds," Hagerty said. "It's also a way varieties can be upheld to the highest quality."

The price differs per variety and, Morter said, can become prohibitive for small establishments.

"In a low-production area, that's a big deal," he said.

Myers, who hosted the event at his farm near Heppner, also asked scientists about ways to mitigate disease without having to buy new seed.

"Is it the consensus that there's no disease resistance we can do — it's all new varieties?" he asked.

Hagerty said there was research being conducted to look at disease as a function of tilling versus direct seeding.

Producers said in the future, they'd like to meet further with scientists to discuss other issues.

"Understanding disease from a farmer's perspective," said one. "Something like that, I would get a lot out of."

Mary Corp, regional administrator of the extension service, briefly discussed the upcoming vote to bring an extension service district to Umatilla and Morrow counties.

She said passage of the measure, which will be on ballots in May, would support extension activities in the county, but the funding would also support the work of OSU scientists at CBARC and HAREC (Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center).

"Right now [we] go to the county and request general fund support," she said. "This would be a dedicated stream of funding that could only be used for the service district and ag research."

The proposed rate for the service district tax would be 33 cents per \$1,000.

Corp said they plan to hold a few more shop talk events before the winter is over, talking to dryland farmers around the Columbia Basin.

"As you can tell from this morning's conversation, they have some pretty specific needs within their micro-climates," Corp said.

Duncan Kroese, a scientist who was at the event, said the meetings have been informative for those who spend most of their time on research.

"We grow such little plots, we don't have to think about the economic aspect as much," he said. "It's always eye opening to talk to growers."

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at 541-564-4534 or jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com

CHARTER: Voters adopted the home rule charter in 1992

Continued from 1A

board member Dan Dorran of Hermiston; attorney Sally Anderson Hansell of Hermiston; Darla Huxel, police chief of Umatilla; and Hermiston's Glenn Youngman, who served as county commissioner when voters adopted the home rule charter in 1992.

Anderson Hansell said she grew interested in serving on the committee after talking with county commissioners about the process and observing Hermiston recently revise its charter.

"The charter is the cornerstone of county government," she said, and thus worth attending meetings for 16 months to make sure the charter provides the government structure to serve the community now and into the future.

She said she has not read the charter and has no comment on its status. She said she plans on going into the review process with an open mind and would strive to serve the community as best she could.

Oregon in 1958 gave voters the right to adopt charters to organize county governments and prescribe what powers they have and procedures they should follow. According to the Oregon Association of Counties, Umatilla County is one of nine counties operating under home rule. Benton, Clatsop, Hood River, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Multnomah and Washington are the others. The rest of Oregon counties

operate under state laws. Douglas County voters in November rejected home rule.

Umatilla County's charter runs seven pages, and begins with the preamble:

"We, the people of Umatilla County, Oregon, in order to avail ourselves of self-determination in county affairs to the fullest extent permissible under the constitution and laws of the state, by this charter confer upon the county the following powers, subject it to the following restrictions, and prescribe for it the following procedures and governmental structure..."

The charter establishes the three-member board of nonpartisan commissioners to oversee county government. They, along with the sheriff, are the county's elective offices. The charter did away with the assessor, clerk, treasurer, and surveyor as elected positions.

"The more elected officials you have, the more fiefdoms that exist," Murdock said. "I don't know if I really appreciated that when I became commissioner [in 2013]."

The charter grants the board the power to make local laws, hire and fire department heads and employees, as well as reorganize, combine and abolish departments. The charter dictates the election process, how to fill vacancies and it allows the county to form intergovernmental relations.

Olsen said the first charter

review in 1995 resulted in a recommendation to do away with paid, full-time commissioners and instead use five, part-time volunteer commissioners and a full-time county administrator. Voters in 1996 rejected the proposal.

He also said the delay in conducting the review stems in part from changes to the board of commissioners and staff in recent years, but now the ball is rolling. Murdock said the time is right for a review in no small part because he and fellow commissioners Larry Givens and Bill Elfering are seniors.

Youngman said it was high time for the review and there is no excuse for the delay. He said he pushed in the mid-1990s for the change to a county manager system of government and continues to advocate for that.

"I feel it should come back before the voters and give them a chance to vote on it," he said.

Given his stance, Youngman said, the county might not appoint him. But government is becoming more complicated year after year, with changes to state and federal law that affect the local level. A professional, full time manager would be better suited for dealing with those changes, he asserted, along with the county's \$74 million budget, while a board of five to seven members would set policy and have the power to hire and fire the manager.

"The way it is now, the board is the policymaker

and the manager of county government," he said. "I don't think you can wear two hats."

Youngman said he would keep the sheriff as an elected official because the people should have the right to make that choice, but otherwise it was time for the county to move out from under a 19th century structure and operate more like city governments. He also said the review committee needs to be transparent and not operate behind closed doors.

The board of commissioners decide whether recommendations warrant getting on a ballot. If they do, county voters have the final approval of amendments to the charter.

"We just present the recommendations, and the board can turn it down," Youngman said. "But I think there would be some problems."

Olsen said Oregon law may prevent completely removing commissioners, but the committee can recommend what form their roles take. Murdock said he is looking forward to having a diverse panel of citizens examine how the charter is working more than 25 years after it was written.

"If it takes a new form it takes a new form," Murdock said. "We can be pragmatic about that."

If you would like to serve on the Umatilla County Charter Review Committee, the application can be found at: <http://www.co.umatilla.or.us/bcc/notices/Charter-ReviewApplication.pdf>