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PENDLETON

City streets continue to crumble

Report shows, even with recent work, that conditions are getting worse

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

The rubber has met the road in the city of Pendleton, and it's starting to show. Despite the city nearly tri-

pling its annual street maintenance budget within the past few years, the Pendleton City Council received a report Tuesday that showed that the town's roads were continuing to degrade.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson said consultant Capitol Asset & Pavement Services drove around Pendleton's 76-mile street system and graded each road segment on a 0-100 scale

called the pavement condition index.

According to the most recent report, Pendleton's pavement condition index is 61, down seven points from a 2013 analysis.

Additionally, the share of roads that are considered to be in "good" condition fell from 61.4 percent to 43.1 percent.

Leading up to the 2013 report, Patterson said the

city's pavement score was aided by state and federal grants that paid for a new overlay on Tutuilla Road, street improvements at the Airport Industrial Park, and the Airport Road extension.

The city also benefited from an increase in the state gas tax and a change in the distribution formula that netted the city more than \$200,000 in extra street funding, Patterson reported.

He said the city didn't receive those same grants between 2013 and 2018, but the city did assume 3 miles of below-average streets from Umatilla County in exchange for a county contribution to the Eighth Street Bridge project, and the street system endured a few harsh winters on top of the usual wear and tear.

Prior to 2015, the city mostly relied on its cut of

the state's gas tax to supply its annual road maintenance budget, which was \$300,000 per year.

Beset with widespread complaints about road maintenance, the city council proposed a 5-cent gas tax and a street utility fee to bolster street funding.

While voters rejected the gas tax, the council was able

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PENDLETON

Police will begin wearing body cameras by 2021

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Pendleton police will finally get body cameras.

The department received a grant from the United States Department of Justice to help pay for the equipment. Police Chief Stuart Roberts said he estimated the program will cost \$70,000 and the grant pays for half.

"There were 12 grants awarded, and we received one of them," he said. "I'm pretty surprised that we were successful given the level of competition."

He explained the federal agency earlier this year opened the grants to smaller departments for the first time and defined smaller as agencies with 250 or fewer sworn officers. Pendleton has about two dozen.

Hermiston and some other local agencies have body cam systems. Roberts has cited cost as the primary obstacle to Pendleton officers donning the devices and the Pendleton Police Department has no money in its budget this year for cams. Roberts said the grant gives the department until 2021 to have its camera program

See **CAMERAS/10A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Oregon National Guard Spc. Ammare Broncheau looks up while placing the Oregon flag in a stand as Spc. Zachariah Kellogg does the same with the U.S. Flag during the grand opening for the BMCC Veterans Resource Center on Wednesday in Pendleton.

A space of their own

BMCC provides vets with a refuge

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Without looking at the name, the Blue Mountain Community College Veterans Resource Center would look like a lot of study spaces at the college's Pendleton campus.

The room includes some desk-top computers, a pair of couches, a mini-fridge, and a couple of offices. But a key signifier of the veterans center's intent is represented by a picture hung on the wall, a painting made by Jacob Gunnels, a BMCC alum and a veteran.

BMCC officials unveiled the painting as a part of the center's grand opening Tuesday, an event that featured speakers from BMCC and various veterans organizations.

Between the suits and business casual dress that defined the administrators and the uniformed personnel from the Oregon National Guard, Gunnels' black sleeveless shirt that read "Tattooed Veteran" and his streak of green hair stood out.

His painting was similarly eye-catching: a man in a red mask and an Army jacket holding a large gun, comforted by a woman in a white mask.

In a caption that accompanies

See **SPACE/10A**



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Gus Bedwell, veterans specialist with the Oregon Housing Authority, speaks during the grand opening for the BMCC Veterans Resource Center on Wednesday in Pendleton.

Counties look at joint transit plan

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
East Oregonian

Mass transit is big-city fixture, but rural ride-sharing could soon be making a surge in Eastern Oregon.

Morrow and Umatilla county commissioners held a joint meeting Wednesday to hear a presentation about transit strategies for the region, which looked at the needs in each county for getting people to work, and some possible shuttle services that the counties could

implement.

Commissioners from both boards said they will likely approve the plan at meetings later this month.

The Portland planning firm Kittleson and Associates spent about two years collecting data to complete the transit study, which included a breakdown of how many people work in each county, the major employers in each, the percentage of people that live and work in the same county versus those that

commute, and the public transportation options currently available in each county.

The bulk of the report, which is available on both counties' websites, was devoted to identifying several transit strategies to target the region's current needs, along with each strategy's priority level and a time frame in which it could be implemented (near-term or long-term). Five potential new bus or shuttle services were identified, as well as two that would

modify existing services. The services included four high-priority projects: transit from Boardman to Hermiston, from Pendleton to Kennewick, from Heppner to Boardman, and a shuttle within the Port of Morrow. The report also included a strategy for a shuttle from Arlington to Boardman, ranked as a medium-level priority.

The report also offered plans to modify existing services between

See **TRANSIT/9A**

