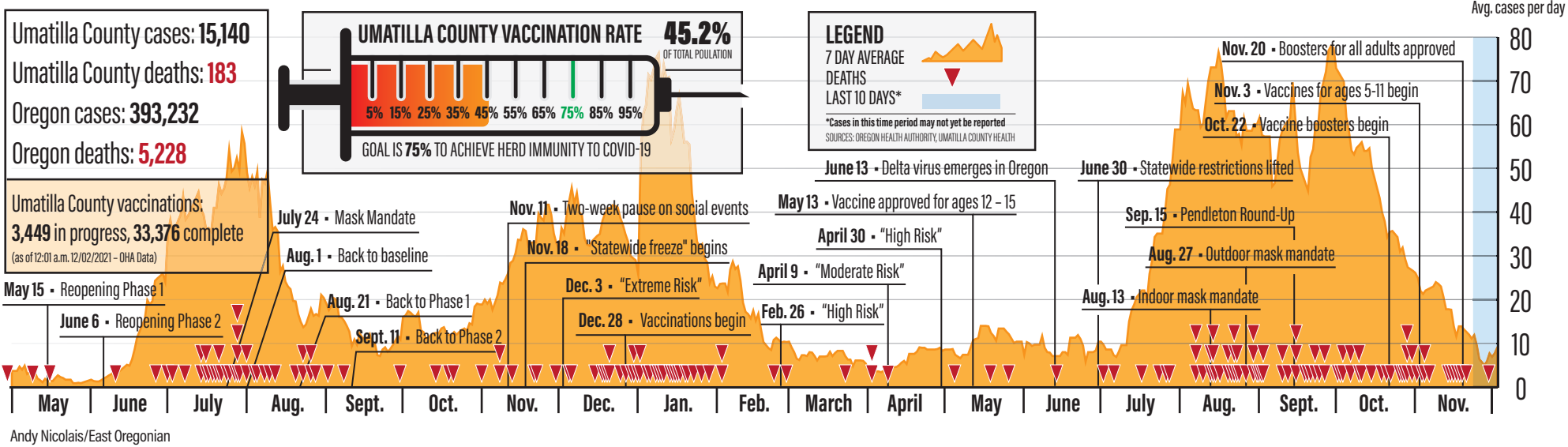


UMATILLA COUNTY COVID-19 TREND - AS OF DEC. 2



Further street pavement at mercy of asphalt plant

By ANTONIO SIERRA
 East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton's summer street construction season is continuing into December.

Several streets in downtown Pendleton remain closed as road reconstruction projects that were supposed to finish by the end of September remain in progress. But torn up roads aren't the Pendleton street system's only affliction: cuts into street asphalt to replace underground utility lines, including water and sewer, are filled in but haven't been paved over, leading to uneven driving conditions.

Bob Patterson said the city is at the mercy of the contractor and the asphalt plant. According to city officials, several street construction projects were delayed after contractors discovered natural gas lines weren't buried as deeply as anticipated. While Cascade Natural Gas sent workers to rebury the lines, city officials said the contractor chose to send their work crews out to other projects rather than work on other Pendleton streets unaffected by shallow gas lines.

Patterson said the late fall weather compounded the problem. Asphalt production slowed, he said, because it requires warmer temperatures. And simultaneous

road projects in Pendleton, Stanfield, Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla, he added, mean contractors are spread thin.

The good news for Pendleton's roads is that temperatures have been warm enough lately to allow the asphalt plant to reopen. Patterson said the pavement contractor was set to return to town Wednesday, Dec. 1, and after working on a road project for a housing development, work crews will return to the unfinished downtown streets. Additionally, Patterson said the smaller street repair projects, like some of the utility cuts, could be covered with patching material, which

doesn't require the same kind of warm weather to apply.

Patterson described the 2021 street paving season as the most challenging in his career. The city has assessed the pavement contractor penalties for its late work, and the city's work in trying to put a wrap on street construction this year has pushed back planning time for next year's road projects.

This year's road construction was bolstered by an extra \$1.2 million from the urban renewal district to reconstruct poor-quality roads in the downtown area. But the city has even more ambitious plans for 2022, with plans to spend



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Gravel fills a utility cut along Southeast Second Street near Southeast Byers Avenue on Thursday, Dec. 2, 2021, in downtown Pendleton.

\$7.5 million to improve the overall quality of Pendleton's street system. Patterson said staff intends to request coun-

cil approval to contract with engineering firm Anderson Perry to help engineer the road repairs.

Umatilla County OKs contract for jail renovation

By PHIL WRIGHT
 East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Umatilla County now has a contractor for renovating the county jail.

The board of commissioners at its meeting Wednesday, Dec. 1, voted 3-0 to award the \$2.88 million contract for the project to 2KG Contractors Inc. of Portland. The board also approved the bid with two additional alternates, one for \$55,000 and the other for \$320,000.

The county does not bear the full cost for the project — \$1.8 million is from the state.

Commissioner Dan Dorran said he was impressed with the county's process for reviewing the bid, and commended Sheriff Terry Rowan for continuing to try to find funds for the project and commended staff on their work to make this project move forward. He said this is "without a doubt a county function that needs to take place."

Board Chair Geroge Murdock



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File
A Umatilla County Sheriff's Office mural adorns the wall of the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on April 22, 2021. The county board of commissioners on Wednesday, Dec. 1, approved the \$2.88 million contract to renovate the jail.

gave credit to the city of Pendleton's legislative committee for pushing for state lawmaker support for the jail renovation. Rowan also joined the chorus, thanking those who stayed on this "roller coaster ride for the last two years" to secure legislative support and funding for the project. Murdock called the project a credit to "remarkable example" of what bipartisanship can accomplish.

The board voted 3-0 in favor of the contract

"It's exciting to see it come forward," Murdock said.

The meeting was Murdock's penultimate as chair of the board, and at the end of the meeting Dorran took a moment to recognize Murdock for his leadership of the county board, particularly on economic investments that will benefit the county.

Yet as Murdock wraps up his chairmanship of the county board, he already stepped into a new leadership role: The Association of Oregon Counties at its annual conference in November elected him as its president.

Man goes to federal prison for shooting cousin, dealing meth

East Oregonian

PORTLAND — A Pendleton man was sentenced to federal prison Wednesday, Dec. 1, for shooting a family member with a semi-automatic pistol and distributing methamphetamine.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon in a press release announced Royce Francis Speedis, 34, was sentenced to six years, five months in federal prison and three years supervised release.

According to the press release, in early March 2019, Speedis and co-defendant Lavella Ruth Thompson, 28, also of Pendleton, arranged to purchase methamphetamine on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. On March 7, 2019, three individuals drove to the reservation to meet and sell methamphetamine to Thompson. Thompson arrived in a sports utility vehicle and tried to convince the three people to follow her to a second location to complete the sale. When they declined, Thompson returned to the SUV. Three men then exited the SUV with guns and opened fire into the sellers' car.

One passenger in the sellers' car was struck in the back of the head. The press released reported the injury was not life threatening.

The meth sellers provided conflicting accounts of Speedis' involvement in the shooting. A ballistics analysis later linked a Ruger rifle recovered from Speedis' family's residence on the reservation to spent cartridge casings at the shooting scene. However, no arrests were made following the shooting.

Then on April 17, 2019, Speedis and his sister engaged in an argu-

ment with their cousin on the reservation. When the cousin attempted to leave, Speedis pulled a black semi-automatic pistol from his waistband and fired a single round that traveled through his cousin's right leg into his left leg.

Six days later, a federal grand jury in Portland returned a two-count indictment charging Speedis with assault with a deadly weapon and using a firearm in connection with a crime of violence. On Aug. 19, 2020, Speedis was indicted a second time, along with Thompson, on one count each of conspiring with one another to distribute and possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine and interference with commerce by robbery.

Speedis a little more than a year later on Aug. 23 pleaded guilty to assault with a deadly weapon and conspiring to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

Thompson a couple of weeks later, on Sept. 7, pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge. Her sentencing is Dec. 10.

Acting U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug of the District of Oregon made the announcement.

The Umatilla Tribal Police Department and the FBI investigated the case. It was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon.

State court records show Speedis has criminal convictions going back at least 14 years, including for burglary and second-degree assault (2007), third-degree assault (2008), felon in possession of a firearm and unlawful use of a weapon (2014). State court records also show Speedis faces a third-degree assault charge in Columbia County.

LOCAL BRIEF

Man dies by suicide during traffic stop

IRRIGON — A man died by suicide during a traffic stop Thursday, Dec. 2, with Morrow County sheriff's deputies in Irrigon, according to a press release from the sheriff's office.

Pilot Rock police requested help

during the morning of Dec. 2 from the sheriff's office in locating and checking on a 28-year-old man. Police pinged his phone, which showed he was "in the Irrigon area," police reported.

Deputies searched the area and reported seeing the man driving 12 mph over the speed limit heading southbound on Paterson Ferry Road near Highway 730. Deputies

stopped the vehicle on Paterson Ferry Road, and as three deputies approached the vehicle, they heard a gunshot. The man was alone in the car, the sheriff's office reported.

Medics confirmed the man died at the scene. The sheriff's office also reported Pilot Rock police notified his relatives.

—EO Media Group

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