

Should debate about transportation be a one-way street?

Slow the cars. Transit should be ridiculously convenient. Public sentiment is the biggest obstacle to more people-centered streets.

Those are some of the ideas of Charles Marohn in his new book, “Confessions of a Recovering Engineer,” and expressed on his organization’s website, strongtowns.org.

He’s coming to Bend to speak on Nov. 8 at the Tower Theatre. Building a Better Bend, a local nonprofit, is bringing him here. And the Bend Metropolitan Planning Organization voted this week to sponsor his speech. The MPO hasn’t done something like that before, apparently. Should it?

Marohn offers a vision of how cities can leverage transportation in new ways. Many of the ideas — slowing cars down, less parking, transportation systems that usurp the preeminence of the car — are very much the approach the city of Bend has been taking. He’s one of its champions. Not all of his ideas may line up with what the city is doing. At least from reading through the website and his new book, it’s mostly consistent.

We found the most powerful argument in his book was the way he used the death of a 7-year-old child, Destiny Gonzalez, to learn about roads. She was killed when she tried to cross State Street in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 2014. She was killed, he argued, in part because we don’t do enough to design streets for people. We design them for moving cars quickly. Cars. Speed. Stopping. Turning. It’s almost a guarantee that people will die. He wants more done to slow cars down in towns. He advocates for more walking/biking/cycling.

Marohn is an engineer by training and has been the subject of complaints from his board of licensing for criticizing the profession. Yes, that can happen. Perhaps also, he isn’t always neatly predictable. He argues against a sales tax for supporting transit, because he wants transit to be used to build wealth in communities. He wants more traf-

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fic enforcement done by mail, instead of police making traffic stops. He doesn’t like congestion pricing — raising the cost of using a route during peak periods to discourage use — because it prices people out.

We like policy debates. That’s pretty much a prerequisite to be involved in editorials. So we are pleased to see him coming; though, we may see things differently. That’s why the issue of the Bend MPO sponsoring his visit is interesting. The MPO is a policy board. MPOs are required by federal law for urbanized areas with populations of more than 50,000. The Bend MPO is made up of representatives of local governments, in this case members of the Bend City Council and the Deschutes County Commission. It makes decisions about local transportation projects and funding. It is supported by federal tax dollars.

So that means federal tax dollars are being used to have a policy discussion about transportation. That makes complete sense to us. But would the Bend MPO support sponsoring a speaker with a different point of view — one that wasn’t as friendly to the approach of the city of Bend to transportation?

That’s arguably the prerogative of the elected officials on the MPO board. Voters chose them. They then get to choose how to spend the public’s money, right? Should they only sponsor speakers that represent certain sides of a public policy debate? Then there is really not much debate.

Most pharmacies do not participate in safety program

The Oregon Patient Safety Commission has the same old problem. If health care organizations don’t participate in its patient safety programs, it’s harder to keep Oregonians safe from medical errors that injure and kill.

We saw an announcement recently that the commission updated its website, oregonpatientsafety.org. It’s nicer. Easier to navigate.

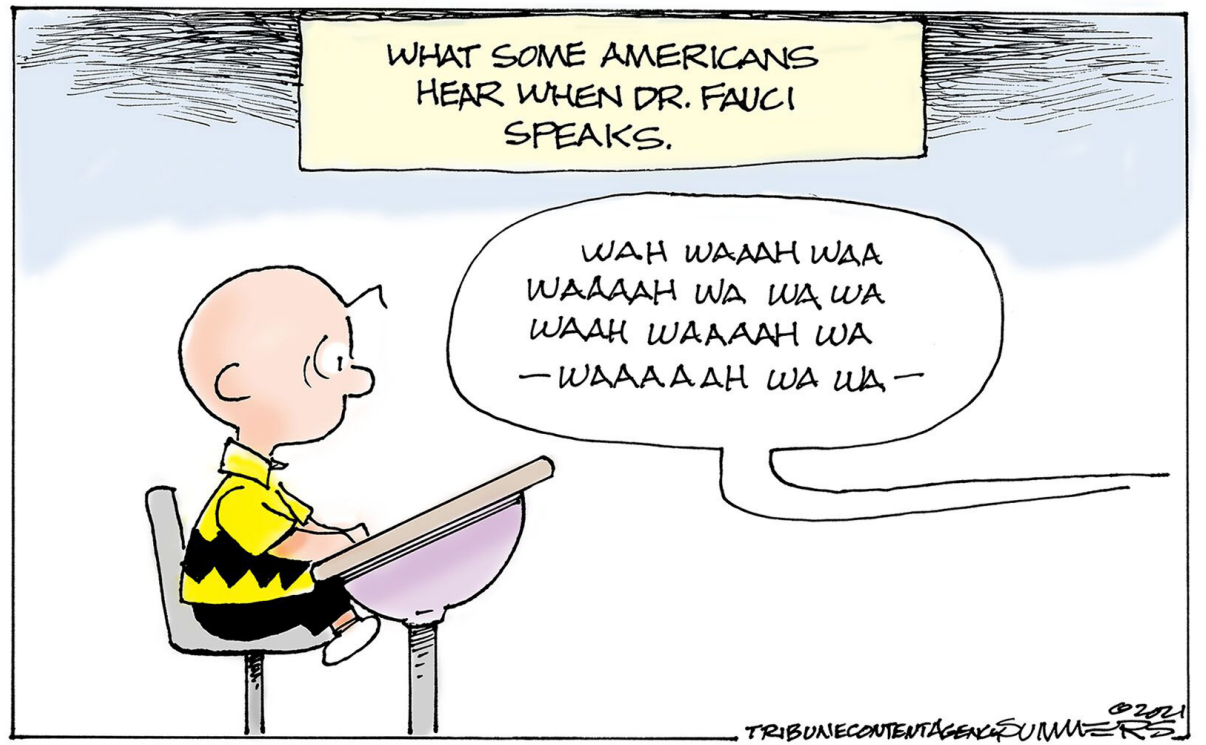
We navigated straight to the orga-

nization’s annual reports. According to the most recent one, every hospital in Oregon participates in this program designed to reduce medical errors. That’s great.

Some 66 out of 93 eligible ambulatory surgery centers participate. Of the 129 eligible nursing facilities, 106 participate. And of the 695 eligible pharmacies, only 119 participate.

Is that good enough for Oregon patient safety?

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin’s editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O’Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.



My Nickel’s Worth

Inequity in our schools

In regards to the editorial on Oct. 15 about equity in Bend-La Pine’s magnet schools, I commend the school board and editor for raising the question of equity.

As a community, we should be asking if our programs and actions are just.

However, I find the editorial to be too narrowly focused. Instead of criticizing popular programs, such as those at Highland and Bear Creek, perhaps the bigger question is if neighborhood schools (the way our entire district is organized) serve children equitably?

Having spent time in both east- and west-side schools, I can say that it is not simply the inequity of magnet schools, but a larger issue of inequity within our community that is echoed in all of our schools.

We have sought an answer to that larger question for more than 50 years and have made little progress. However, there are some solutions that could make all schools more equitable.

For example, research has proven long summer breaks have a negative impact on education.

While they hurt almost all children, the long break is especially consequential to our children with the fewest resources.

If we want more equitable schools — and that seems like a good place to begin creating a more just community — then perhaps we should look beyond a few magnet programs and into holistic changes that would best serve all children, regardless of ZIP code.

— Amy Bahrman, Bend

We need Build Back Better Act

I encourage our elected officials, Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Rep. Cliff Bentz, and our potential future congressman, Rep. Kurt Schrader, to get together and pass the Build Back Better Act including clean energy provisions. Congress must invest for future generations and those investments must consider our climate, clean energy, justice and jobs at the scale that science demands. Clean energy is the fastest-growing industry in the United States, and it provides an enormous opportunity to offer high-quality jobs — many that don’t require a college education — and help rebuild the middle class.

Clean energy is the economic and healthy path to a prosperous future. The U.S. should be the global leader, providing a 100% clean energy path in the transportation and power sectors. As the country takes a clean energy path, we must prioritize justice to the communities most harmed by toxic pollution; the low-income communities of color should be ensured the benefits they desperately need, including quality education, clean water and high-speed internet. This plan will provide good-paying jobs for the building trades, teachers, researchers and more. The cost of inaction is too great, and the price will continue to get higher. I appreciate the strong climate leadership of Senators Wyden and Merkley, and encourage my current Representative Bentz, and potential future Representative Schrader to vote in favor of the Build Back Better Act. We have a moral obligation to provide a safe, clean, and healthy planet to future generations.

— Joe Craig, Bend

Teach my grandchildren a fuller history

I fully agree with the sentiment that we have been woefully and sadly mis-educated about many things in our history.

And I agree that it is likely that every person of color in this country has been victimized in some form or fashion and not just once.

Regarding the teaching of CRT (critical race theory), I accept that fear might be the driver of many that are resisting the teaching of this theory.

What might also be the driver is the fact that almost every issue that is on the front pages of our papers and is the first story on all of our news outlets, seems to desire to create some type of fear, as opposed to informing us in a neutral manner so we can absorb and come to our own conclusion(s).

I have two grandchildren that I hope will be taught our history in a far more complete and comprehensive way than previous generations were taught.

My major concerns are: Who will be their teacher(s) and what will be their textbooks and other teaching aids? We have all had experiences with teachers that shaped who we are today.

On such a critical topic, how will these special teachers be selected and trained to introduce and teach what may be the most important classes in a child’s school-life?

I don’t have the answers but offer that demonizing people that love their children isn’t a productive way to drive the process to a fruitful and meaningful fulfillment.

— Bill Gregoricus, Bend

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer’s phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and must include the writer’s phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel’s Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel’s Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
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Fax: 541-385-5804

Afghanistan is in need of assistance; it also must educate girls

BY SHABANA BASIJ-RASIKH

Special to The Washington Post

Furniture being sold on the streets of Kabul by desperate, cash-strapped families. Farmers in Afghan provinces walking a T.S. Eliot-esque waste land of withered crops and soil turned to dust. Afghanistan, my homeland, is staring into the eyes of its worst humanitarian crisis in well more than a generation — a monster with multiple heads.

Our people are enduring an economic meltdown spurred by the Taliban’s takeover in August, coupled with an ongoing drought some experts classify as our worst in 35 years, one that has already put third of our population into a state of food insecurity. One that is prompting some parents, out of work and out of options, to sell their daughters to pay off debt.

Imagine writing that last sentence about your own country. Imagine what that feels like.

Last week, I watched the members of the Group of 20 pledge humanitar-

ian assistance for Afghanistan to the tune of more than \$1 billion. Although the pledge-makers will not recognize the Taliban’s government, they acknowledged that there is no realistic way to get this full assistance to the Afghan people without involving the Taliban in some way.

This is the same Taliban whose return brought about this financial ruin. The same Taliban that opened schools for boys in grades 7 and up, but not for girls.

I listened to powerful language from leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who said “to stand by and watch 40 million people plunge into chaos because electricity can’t be supplied and no financial system exists, that cannot and should not be the goal of the international community.”

No, it cannot. The goal must be to give a nation’s people the necessary assistance to allow them to build equitable and self-sustaining structures of resilience that can then be strengthened by the alloy of international will.

In this geopolitical “Sophie’s choice,” it is difficult to see the G-20’s decision as anything other than an abhorrent but necessary one. But I also see it as one that must encourage global policymakers to seek out new solutions to head off economic and environmental crises before they can metastasize.

My suggestion to them is two words: Educate girls.

Extremists know the economic power an educated girl can wield; policymakers know — or should know — it too. A girl who completes secondary school and enters the job market can earn almost twice as much as a girl who never receives an education. This girl becomes a woman with a true level of financial independence: a woman with agency in any male-dominated society.

Educated girls are far less likely to be married at early ages and are far more likely, when they do marry, to raise smaller and healthier families with a smaller environmental footprint. Their ability to weather and with-

stand the shocks of climate change increases, and they pass these skills on to their children. Climate scientists have known these facts for years, and activists, including me, have written about them regularly.

Educated girls can heal economies and heal the planet. They can spin the world in new directions, becoming teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs. Sometimes they can become the chancellor of Germany.

In Afghanistan, families with nothing to fall back on are ripping themselves open, selling their daughters because these girls are the last valuable asset they have. It’s not due to the employment they may someday hold or the societal change they may someday make. It’s due to the children they may someday bear.

Tell me: What is the value of a girl? What is her education worth?

U.N. Secretary General António Guterres recently warned that if the international community did not “help Afghans weather this storm, and do it

soon, not only they but all the world will pay a heavy price,” adding that he was “particularly alarmed to see promises made to Afghan women and girls by the Taliban not being honored.”

I share that sense of alarm. This storm may be weathered with humanitarian assistance, but future storms will be diverted by ensuring those promises are kept.

When we educate a girl, we create economic and environmental benefits that go beyond the boundaries of her family. They go beyond the boundaries of her nation. They are benefits that all of us, every woman and man, every citizen of Earth, can share.

Millions of girls are out of school in Afghanistan. At least 130 million girls are out of school worldwide. This cannot continue.

Educate girls. Two words that must become a central pillar of global policymaking. Two words to change the world.

■ Shabana Basij-Rasikh is co-founder and president of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan.