

What do you want to see?

It may be difficult to say what the future will bring to Grant County, but community members have an easy opportunity to let local leaders know what their priorities are through a new survey.

Grant County, the city of John Day, Blue Mountain Hospital District and Grant School District are working with Oregon Solutions to develop consensus around a project to benefit the community. The agencies have commissioned a survey from Oregon's Kitchen Table, seeking input from as many county residents as possible to determine priorities for the future.

The survey is simple and quick. It allows community members the chance to get involved and offer ideas. People can rank a variety of possible projects that could transform the community.

What do you think is most important for Grant County? New and renovated homes? An innovation center? Additional

recreational opportunities? Improved access to high-speed internet? A new educational campus? Increased business variety? Access to higher education? Destination tourism? Or something else?

If more people respond, the results will better reflect the will of the community. And that's the point. A community project needs buy-in from the community.

The survey is available online at <https://consultations.oregonskitchentable.org>. Paper copies are also available at the John Day City Hall during business hours. Surveys will be accepted until June 23.

This consensus-building process is a great step toward the future the community can create, and this survey is a great chance for the entire community to get involved.

We hope everyone will get on board and take the survey.

So what is it you want to see? Now is the time to voice your opinions.

Online

The survey is available online at <https://consultations.oregonskitchentable.org>.

WHERE TO WRITE

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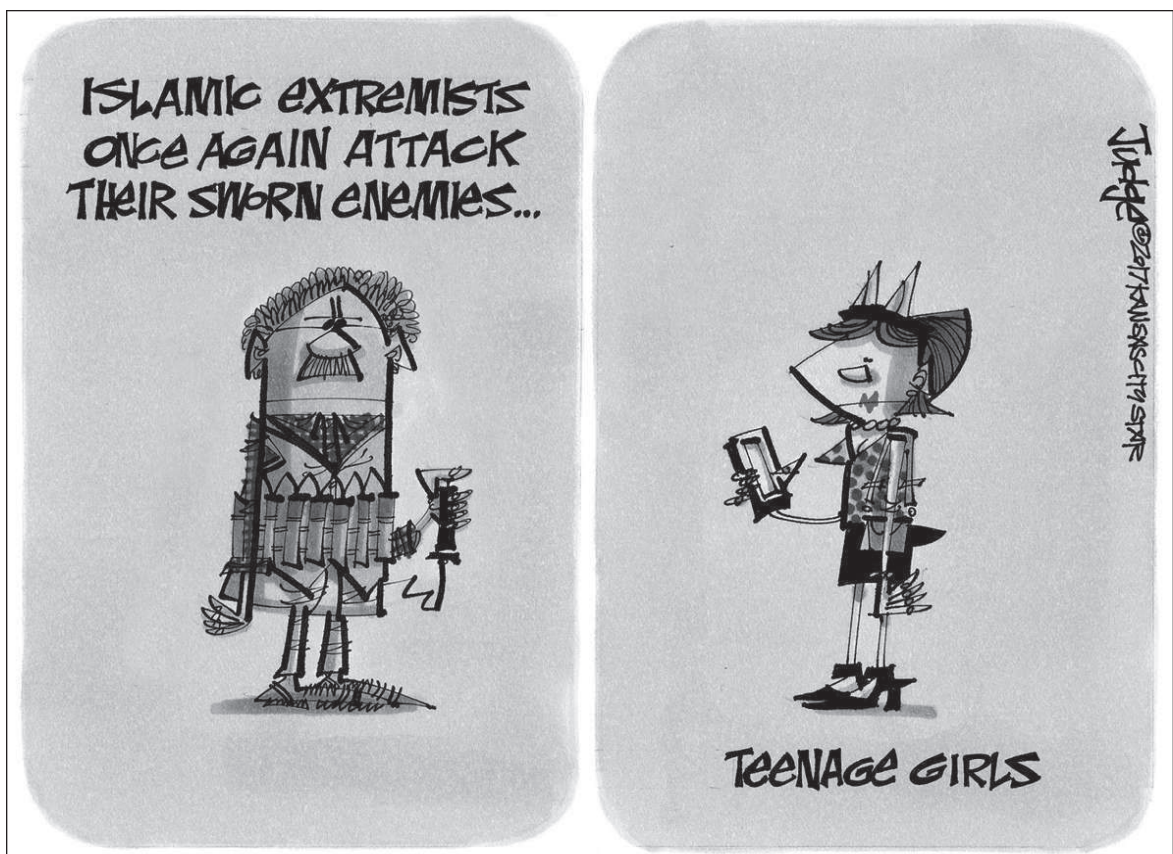
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• **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

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OTHER VIEWS

Bill may build bridges across partisan divide

There's no reason a large-scale transportation plan cannot be bipartisan. We can all benefit from an improved transportation system — if it's equitable to all who pay for it.

For years, agreement on transportation and infrastructure has lacked at the state level, and for much longer at the federal level. It's an example of partisan bickering that's come to dominate our political atmosphere.

But state legislators are trying to change that with an expansive 10-year transportation plan that has previously eluded them. A similar but far less expensive bill was rounding third and headed for home in 2015 when the road was pulled out from under it. The now much-derided Columbia River Crossing had plenty to do with that collapse.

This time it may be different. Lawmakers last week rolled out a 298-page draft of an \$8.2 billion plan, and many of its proposed projects and funding mechanisms have already passed through a more stringent and public process than its predecessors — which is the way it should be — especially given its price tag compared to the \$343 million proposed in 2015. Those on both sides of the aisle, and nonpartisans who have been involved, say lessons were learned in the last go-round and those hurdles have been hopped. They say it would be paid for with a combi-

nation of hikes in the gas tax and registration and license fees, tolls, new taxes on payroll, vehicle dealers and adult bicycle purchases.

Obviously, deeper vetting of the bill is needed and is now underway. It's critical because an unusual caveat of the plan is that it could be repealed in its entirety if voters successfully challenge even one of its provisions.

"The logic is that this is a package," said state Sen. Lee Beyer, D-Springfield, the co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Maintenance. "If you pull one string, the whole thing comes apart."

The plan's key cogs are upgrades in Portland. But to convince a majority of legislators — who don't represent Portland — supporters of transportation improvements are touting the city's huge impact on the statewide economy.

Bob Russell, vice president of the Oregon Trucking Association, told The Daily Astorian transit time through Portland isn't reliable and negatively impacts every business in the state — including our region — that needs to move goods through Oregon's largest city. It also impacts visitors who try to get here using the choke points along U.S. Highway 101 and the two highways connecting to Portland.

The initial bill lists a number of earmarked projects outside of Portland, although it's troubling that none are on the North Coast.

But state Sen. Betsy Johnson, co-chairwoman of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development, said the package, although concerning in its lack of coastal projects, shouldn't be taken as a done deal. "Don't let yourself get trapped into thinking this is 'x,'" she said. "There are going to be tons of amendments."

Johnson said she has subscribed to the idea that helping ease congestion in the Portland metro area will help businesses from the Oregon Coast to Eastern Oregon move products easier.

And under the state's method of dividing revenue, portions of some of the tax money generated will go to the state's counties and cities. That could translate into increased dollars for our cities' and county's road budgets, the airport and the Port. The bill tasks the Oregon Transportation Commission with prioritizing proposed projects not already earmarked.

Public hearings began Monday, and a vote on the House floor could come by mid-month.

If the bill is properly vetted — and it must be — it is one issue that does not just benefit one political party, or one demographic, nor pushes one group forward while another falls behind. A solid transportation plan can move us all forward, and this could be the one if it proves equitable to all.

— *The Daily Astorian*



FARMER'S FATE

Weed it and reap!

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

There are two seasonal diversions that ease the bite of winter: spring thaw and seed catalogs. It's always exciting to flip through the pages and pick out your old standbys: tomatoes and cucumbers, as well as a few unusual and bizarre varieties like romanesco or samphire.

Everywhere you look you can see people getting ready for garden season: raised beds, fresh mulch, new tomato cages. Even the newspapers get into the season with garden tips: how often to water and how to distinguish between weeds and plants. Personally, I find the best way to differentiate is to give the plant a tug. If it came out easily, it must have been a good plant. If the roots have grown to China, and pulling on it only results in breaking the top off before toppling onto your backside, it's a weed.

"Grow Great Potatoes Easily" read the headline of a magazine article promoting old, wet straw bales for home vegetable gardens. After loading several decomposing bales one evening, I started thinking about trying it myself. After asking my husband his thoughts, he reached over and took my hand.

"You have always been able to grow potatoes so well. I don't think you need straw bales to make them any better."

I gave him a proud smile. He took my hand.

"Let's take a little walk," he said. Hand in hand we walked toward the garage. I was still smiling proudly when he reached for a box under a bench. It was full of last year's for-

gotten potatoes with 10-inch sprouts on them.

"If you can grow potatoes without dirt, why would you need straw?"

The Bible was right. My pride went before destruction.

I don't necessarily love gardening, but I enjoy having the ability to run out and grab a fresh tomato or cucumber for supper. Having fresh produce and herbs on hand is great, but garden maintenance is always a struggle. Mother Nature and I seem to have a bit of a misunderstanding in regards to my garden patch. I think of it as a place to raise food for my family to eat. She thinks of it as a CRP ground that is lacking in lambs quarter and kochia weed — and she tries hard to correct the error.

You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt. Perhaps that's why so many people finding gardening so relaxing. I've even seen cute signs that say "gardening is cheaper than therapy—and you get tomatoes!" But to me, gardening requires a lot of weeding and water — both that seem to come in the form of perspiration.

Anyone who wants to rule the world should try ruling a garden first. Once you can conquer squash bugs and slugs; successfully create country lines that are strict on the entry of terrorists like gophers, deer and rabbits; combat seasonal distresses such as flooding and drought; and still find yourself with enough, energy, manpower and money to successfully harvest enough of your crop to gener-

ate an income — whether in the form of home canning or a lower grocery bill — then I think you can turn your attention to world power.

Some people really love their garden plants, even to the point of speaking to them — pointing to para-science studies that show that plants thrive when spoken to. But either my plants never read those journals or my tone of voice is too harsh. When I'm in the garden, breaking the tops off weeds, I'm rarely in my "happy vocabulary." I think it really is because my plants are shy, and too much attention would inhibit their growth and cause them embarrassment. At least that's the theory I'm going with.

Some people get even more personal than just talk. I recently read that the month of May hosted a world naked gardening day. It claims it was an opportunity to pull weeds, plant flowers and harvest vegetables while getting some sun (where it doesn't usually shine). If you want to join them, feel free (literally), but my plants are wall-flowers. I am certain that kind of display would cause them to tuck in their blossoms and die of embarrassment.

Regardless of your gardening style, the season is upon us. My gardening motto has been: "Early to bed and early to rise. Work like a horse and fertilize!" Unfortunately, the only things that I can count on growing to maturity are puncture weeds and zucchini.

Although I guess now I can add forgotten potatoes to that list.

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

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