

# Transit committee finalizes bus route recommendations

## Resident input still sought for a name for new service

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

Plans for Hermiston's new bus system are ready for primetime.

A proposal for the free public transportation system, including a route and budget, will go before the Hermiston City Council on Nov. 14 after the city's Transit Advisory Committee finalized its recommendations last week. The city will contract with Kayak Public Transit, run by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, to provide the service.

After placing maps of the proposed route around Hermiston to gather feedback, the committee spent two and a half hours taking a final look at each stop on the route and making adjustments. One of the first adjustments they made was to remove the stop at Southeast 10th Street and Highland Avenue, which adjacent property owners pointed out was on a narrow county road surrounded mostly by pasture.

"I don't see anybody really using it," neighbor Dennis Barnett said.

J.D. Tovey, CTUIR planning director, said that the stop was placed there to fill in a long gap between two other stops in an attempt to place most Hermiston residents within a quarter mile walk of a bus stop. But he agreed that the location was "probably the least-performing" of the proposed stops and the committee decided to remove it.

After some discussion, the committee next moved a stop from Southeast 10th Street and Main Street over to the intersection of Ridgeway Avenue and Main Street, and added a stop at Highland Park to better serve the Highland Summit area.

"It services a huge area there and adds value to our park," city councilor Doug Primmer said.

Many of the stops that were moved were shifted to an area that committee members felt was safer and less disruptive to traffic. The Kayak bus will have flashing lights that drivers are legally required to stop behind, just like a school bus. But Tovey said Kayak drivers have found on their intra-city route that people frequently ignore the lights.

Keeping that in mind, the committee moved a stop next to Hermiston High School at Highland Avenue and First Place into the parking lot at Hodge Park. Mark Morgan, assistant city manager, pointed out that the change also meant riders waiting at the stop could use the garbage cans and restrooms at the park. For similar reasons, a stop at the corner of Northwest Seventh Street and Elm Avenue was moved down Elm Avenue into the parking lot next to the Hermiston Butte.

The group also decided to combine two stops at Southeast Fourth Street and Highland and Southeast Seventh Street and Highland into one at Southeast Fifth Street and Highland because there was a better place for the bus to pull off. Other stops were

shifted just slightly from where the city placed fake "bus stops" earlier in the week so as to avoid placing a bus stop at someone's front yard.

Tovey said the tribes could make adjustments to the stops on a quarterly basis as riders gave feedback. The committee agreed that stops along Northwest 11th Street, for example, would probably be shifted once traffic signals and crosswalks were installed at the street's intersections with Orchard Avenue and Elm Avenue next summer (the committee did add a stop at 11th and Juanita). They could also examine ridership patterns, he said, and note which stops the driver rarely stopped at because no one was there waiting as they drove past.

After finalizing a route to send to the City Council, the committee also discussed a budget for the system, which starting Jan. 2 will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Morgan said it was hard to predict ridership for both the bus system and the city's current taxi ticket program for senior and disabled riders. But projections he shared for the 2017-2018 fiscal year predicted 12,000 riders per year for the bus and 12,000 riders per year on the taxi program. Under those circumstances the transportation program could expect to bring in \$189,000 in revenue from taxi tickets and state and county grants for the bus system.

The taxi program would cost \$79,200 and the bus system would cost \$250,000 for a total of \$329,200. That would mean the city would need to budget about \$140,000 per year from the general fund for transportation.

"We've been shooting for \$150,000 for a subsidy," Morgan said. "If these numbers hold out, we would have almost \$10,000 extra."

The advisory committee also discussed names for the bus system, noting that only 47 people had voted on the online survey so far. They agreed that the City Council could hold off on a name until its Nov. 28 meeting.

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

# Some Hermiston property tax bills lost in mail

## Tax deadline won't change, even if you don't get your statement

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
Staff Writer

Certain Hermiston property owners have yet to receive their Umatilla County tax bills.

Assessor Paul Chalmers

said his office in Pendleton mailed the statements Oct. 28, and since then at least 50 people called to complain they did not get a statement.

"Once we get them to the post office, they're out of our hands," he said.

The problem seems to be exclusive to Hermiston property owners receiving five or more statements at the same address, Chalmers said, and he told the postmasters in Pendleton,

Hermiston and Portland about the situation. He said he has yet to hear what the solution might be.

Chalmers said he printed a new batch of the statements with labels noting they are copies and is considering delivering those to the Stafford Hansell Government Center, Hermiston.

"I'm trying to figure out the best way to make this accessible to folks in Hermiston," he said. "I

don't want to mail them again because I don't need it to happen a second time."

Even if the statements are in some kind of mail limbo, Oregon law makes it clear the onus is on property owners to pay their taxes. People who pay their property taxes in full by Nov. 15 receive a 3 percent discount.

Chalmers said his office would work with people in this bind.

# Third graders test earthquake-proofing methods

By **JADE McDOWELL**  
Staff Writer

For third-graders at Rocky Heights Elementary on Thursday, the time had come for an earthquake.

A row of "earthquake-proof" structures made of plastic straws and tape stood along one wall of Ipolito Maloy's classroom, crafted by teams of students after studying plate tectonics and engineering. They were ready for testing on a low-tech earthquake simulator made out of wood.

"We're going to add weight until the structure crushes, so everyone's structure is going down today," Maloy said.

Earlier in the week John Eckhardt, who works for a local general contractor, had volunteered his time to share tips with the students about constructing a structurally sound building. The first group predicted that their structure would hold six pounds because "we did really well and listened to Mr. Eckhardt."

Students clapped and squealed as each one-pound bag of pebbles was added and the earthquake machine was given another shake. Finally, after the seventh bag was added, the straws bent under the pressure and the entire structure collapsed.

As each team brought their contraption up to be tested, Glyn Lystrup and Colby Lerten said the earthquake unit had been a fun one.

"We learned a lot about earthquakes," Glyn said before launching into a detailed explanation about the difference between earthquakes on divergent boundaries, convergent boundaries and transform faults.

Colby said they "both had to give up something" in their designs after they couldn't agree on a lot of parts. Where they couldn't compromise they used rock, paper, scissors to decide.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Ipolito Maloy's third-grade class reacts as a structure made of straws and tape collapses during an earthquake experiment on Thursday at Rocky Heights Elementary School in Hermiston.

Glyn, who said he wants to be an electrical engineer when he grows up, said the most important thing was following the guest speaker's advice to add diagonal cross beams instead of just putting all of the straws in the same direction.

"My brother wants to be in construction, so I'm probably going to tell him about this so he builds it right," Glyn said.

Over at the earthquake simulators, some students were having more luck than others. One group looked disappointed after their structure fell down as soon as a second pound of weight was added.

"It's all right, we learned;

right, boys and girls?" Maloy said.

Lucy Teegarden and Fernanda Nava ended up with the sturdiest structure, which survived an earthquake with eight pounds on it before the plastic straws folded. They said the secret was lots of tape and lots of diagonal straws.

"On the top we put a cross, and on the side a V," Fernanda said.

Hands-on projects like the earthquake structures were why she "always wants to do science," she said.

Maloy said the project was part of the state's next-generation science standards. Previously the students tracked weather around the United States with an app on their

classroom set of iPads; next they will study tornadoes.

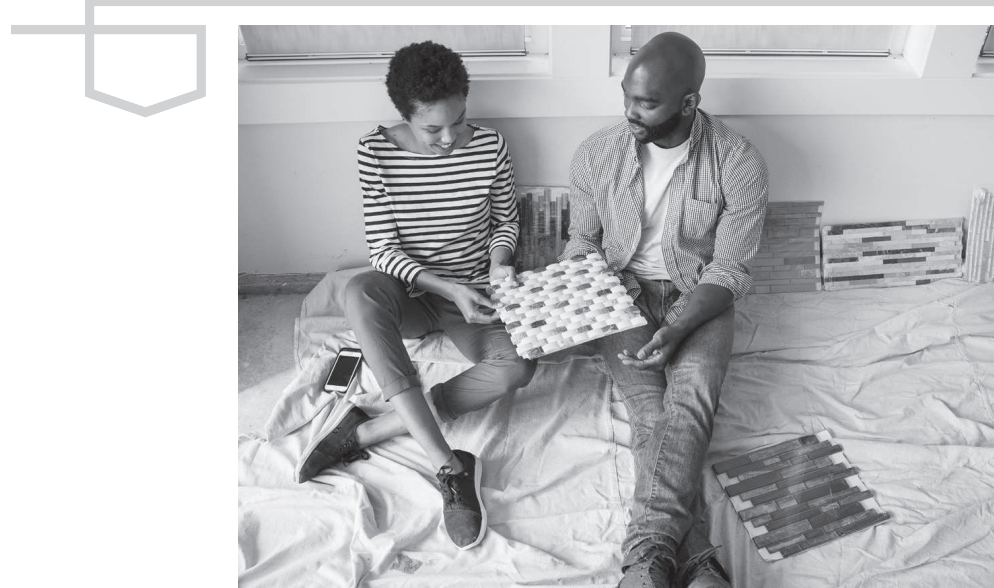
Students were encouraged to approach the earthquake project using the scientific method. They filled out worksheets predicting what would happen and why, documented their methods, filmed the test for further review and wrote about what went wrong that they could fix if they tried again.

"There has been a lot of support from the principal this year in pushing science," Maloy said. "It's been fun. I remember the science lessons as a kid. These are the ones that stick with you."

Contact Jade McDowell at 541-564-4536.

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