

Logging Railroad Will Close; Traffic Problem May Develop

By GREG NOKES
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

The historic Medford corporation logging railroad will soon be no more. Plans are in the making to replace the railroad with a private truck road, and at least one agency—the city of Medford—is not too happy about it.

The railroad has a colorful history dating back 50 years. It was constructed in 1910 to transport timber from forests near Butte Falls to Medford lumber mills—a distance in excess of 30 miles.

While the road has changed hands several times through the years it is still used for its original purpose of hauling logs. It is one of the last of many such logging railroads that once were common in Pacific Northwest forests.

Freeway Construction
Construction of the new freeway will necessitate removal of the road. According to freeway plans, the railroad crosses the location of the Crater Lake highway interchange.

Since it is incompatible with the interchange structure it would have to be relocated. The state highway commission, which would pay for the relocation, has said that it would be cheaper to construct a private truck road for Medco than it would be to relocate the railroad.

It is not the truck road itself that has aroused the opposition of Medford's city administration, but it is the manner in which the road will cross Highway 99.

Overpasses Planned
The state plans to build overpasses for the truck road at Biddle rd. and the new freeway. It plans to provide grade (level) crossings at Bullock rd. and Highway 99.

The truck road will cross Highway 99 approximately 320 feet north of the Crater Lake highway intersection.

The road will be 30 feet wide and surfaced with crushed rock or gravel. It will be owned by Medco and restricted for exclusive use by Medco logging trucks. These trucks will be oversized vehicles that are prohibited from using public highways. The maximum gross weight of the vehicles and loads will be 120,000 pounds.

By Medco's own estimates, there will be approximately 100 of these trucks using the road per day—50 coming and 50 going. Trips will be made only between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., which means there will be at least one crossing of Highway 99 every 7½ minutes.

Trucks Have Right of Way
The city probably would not object if public traffic would have right of way over the private trucks at the crossing. But, the contrary is true—the trucks will have the right of way over public traffic.

Eye Level 'Poles' Aid Landing Pilot

London—(Science Service)—A new flight indicator enables the pilot of an aircraft to "watch" his flight instruments without looking at them. It eliminates the potentially dangerous period that occurs during landing when the pilot has to transfer his attention back and forth from instruments to visual flight.

The indicator was developed to meet requirements of the British European Airways for instrument flight control equipment on their three-jet short-haul airliner, the Aircro D.H. 121.

The new system was described to the International Air Transport association meeting at Lucerne, Switzerland, by A.M.A. Majendie and K. Fearnside, research engineers of Smiths Aircraft Instruments, England, who worked on its development.

They reported that although aircraft instruments usually have to be viewed before information can be extracted from them, the required information can be seen "out of the corner of the eye" with the new indicators. In the system three small "barber's poles" painted black and white are used to provide information on the airplane's attitude.

On the truck road, near the Highway 99 crossing, there will be an automatic signaling device. When a truck nears the intersection it will trip this device causing a red light to flash on Highway 99, thereby stopping 99 traffic. It would, in effect, be the same as any other stop light.

A maximum speed limit of 10 miles per hour has been set for the trucks while crossing any public road or highway. Highway 99, at this point, will be reinforced so as to support the weight of the trucks.

There are two chief reasons why the city frowns on this set up. One, it doesn't like the idea of giving private traffic the right of way over public traffic. And two, it fears the frequent stops by public traffic at the truck crossing will congest the Crater Lake highway intersection to the south which is already a bottleneck at times.

Approval of the truck road is not yet a certainty. The applications, one by the state and one by Medco, have been submitted to the Public Utilities commission and a decision by that body may yet be weeks off.

However, the state highway commission is the agency that

is carrying the ball on this proposal and at least one city official feels the PUC will merely "rubber-stamp" whatever the highway commission wants.

Hearing Held
The PUC held a hearing on the matter in Medford on Oct. 21, at which time the city or anyone else was expected to voice its opposition.

City Attorney Joel Reeder said, however, that the notice of the hearings was sent to the city only three days prior to the hearing itself. It was the first time the city had heard of the Highway 99 grade crossing, he said.

At the hearing, Reeder requested additional time to file objections with the PUC. The hearing examiner granted the necessary time and a list of city objections were filed with the PUC on Oct. 26.

'Undesirable Situation'
In the list of objections the city terms the right of way priority of private trucks over public traffic "an undesirable situation." The city suggests that the situation be remedied by constructing an underpass or overpass for the private road at Highway 99.

In a rebuttal to the city's objections the state highway commission said the underpass is not feasible due to the size of the trucks and the overpass would cost a minimum of \$50,000—which is too much. It also contends that an overpass would restrict the movements of Medco trucks on the south side of the intersection and the overpass itself would restrict the view of southbound traffic entering Highway 99 from Table Rock rd.

The state summed up its objections to an under or over crossing with the statement that "any requirement for a separation of grade would involve costs and objectionable features which are not justified."

Several lesser suggestions have been made by the city which it feels would help prevent potential traffic congestion problems. One of these is a suggestion to synchronize the truck crossing and intersection signals. In its rebuttal the state highway commission

also estimates that northbound traffic entering Highway 99 from Crater Lake highway "will not exceed 300 vehicles per day."

Medco was not the originator of the private road idea, and should not be blamed for any problems that might result, according to the city administration.

Both City Manager Duff and City Attorney Joel Reeder feel the state has promoted and backed the whole idea, and Medco is going along with it for the simple reason that it needs some way to get its logs across the highway to the mill.

Comments by B. L. (Bud) Nutting, general manager of Medco, tend to bear this out. Nutting said it doesn't really make much difference which Medco has—the railroad or the truck road. He said the company probably would rather have the railroad because it is now one-quarter mile shorter than the truck road will be.

Declines to Comment
Nutting declined to comment on the city's objections to the road and said that such comments should be left up to the state. He did say, however, that it probably will be much cheaper for the state to build the private road than relocate the railroad.

The state will pay for the relocated portion of the private road from east of Bullock rd. to west of Highway 99. Medco will pay the cost of construction of the rest of the road to Butte Falls, which will follow, for the most part, the route now taken by the railroad.

In turn for its payment for construction of a portion of the private road, the state will acquire right of way from Medco needed for the freeway.

The private road also will cross Crater Lake highway near Eagle Point, at approximately the same place as the railroad now crosses. This also will be a grade crossing and probably will have the same signal setup as the one on Highway 99.

Not City Matter
Actually the Highway 99 crossing is not a city matter and the city can only voice its objections to it. The highway is a state highway and the state has complete control and authority over what goes on there.

But, if the consequences of the truck crossing are bad, and several city officials think they will be, the city does not want to be blamed for them. And, for this reason, the city administration has gone on record against it.

The city's opposition is unofficial, having been voiced by members of the city administration and not the city council. To be official opposition the council would have to take action. Duff said the council has discussed the matter, but to his knowledge is not contemplating taking any action.

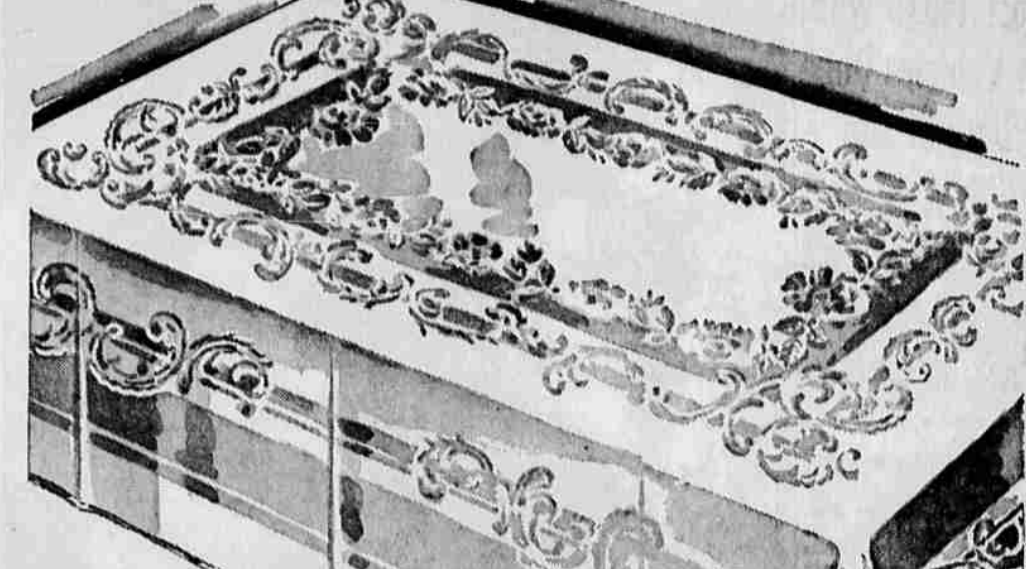
Ex-Civil Workers Review Proposals

An "up-to-date view" of proposed changes in the constitution and by-laws for the National Association of Retired Civil Employees, Southern Oregon chapter, was presented at a meeting Friday.

Clarence G. Davis, Portland, president of the Oregon Federation and one of the seven-man committee presently re-vamping the working methods of the organization, presented the proposed changes, some of which are to be voted upon by the chapters.

Friday evening, Davis conferred with former state federation president Clarence L. Williams, Ashland. Davis returned to Portland Saturday.

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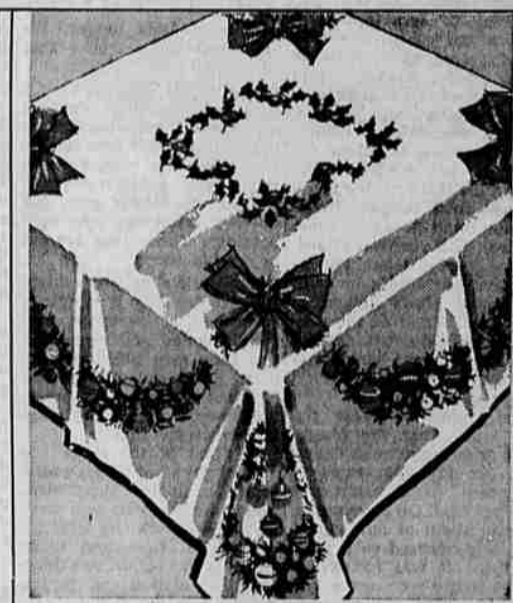
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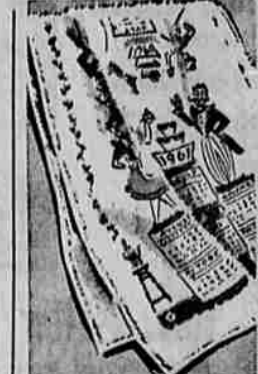
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