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## ODOT plan could fund Highway 101 improvements

By R.J. MARX  
Seaside Signal

• Nearly \$8 million for construction of a new center turn lane and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Avenue A to Avenue K along U.S. Highway 101 in Seaside.

• Repaving on U.S. Highway 26 from Necanicum Junction to Jewell Junction, at \$1.2 million.

• Designs to rehabilitate and replace five small culverts and one large culvert along Highway 101 at a cost of \$360,000.

These are among local projects in design through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program from 2021-24, also known as the STIP, the Oregon Department of Transportation's capital improvement program for state and federally funded projects.



R.J. Marx

**U.S. Highway 101 northbound in Seaside. The state plans work to improve the roadway, with bids starting in 2021.**

ment of Transportation's capital improvement program for state and federally funded projects.

The Oregon Transportation Commission and ODOT developed the program in coordination with a wide range of stakeholders and the public, including the city of Seaside and its Transportation Advisory Committee.

Goals are to increase safety, reduce congestion, provide accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, among other priorities. A list of projects both completed and in the design phase was delivered on Jan. 23.

"We're already starting to take public input," said Don Hamilton of ODOT. "We hear from local governments, counties, cities and different highway departments, the public and private sector: 'We need this improvement.' We're listening to all of that."

Hamilton said the program list will be first narrowed down to "150 percent of what we think we can afford," before narrowing that

list to 100% of sustainable, funded projects.

Under an enhanced funding scenario, ODOT will see highway funding increase from \$124 million in the 2018-2021 STIP to over \$700 million in the 2021-2024 state transportation program — a nearly six-fold increase in highway funding.

A portion of that money, \$51 million, could be headed to non-highway discretionary funding in five areas, including bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, preservation projects, off road trails and Americans with Disabilities Act accessible curb ramps.

The projects included in the draft transportation plan focus on maintenance, and congestion relief, Seaside Public Works Director Dale McDowell said.

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## Seaside students get a free ride

Fare system gives county kids access to transit

By KATHERINE LACAZE  
For Seaside Signal

Any student in the county with a school ID card can now ride the buses free. A new program from the Sunset Empire Transportation District provides transportation for students to jobs, after-school programs or other activities.

During a presentation to the Seaside School Board on Jan. 21, the district's executive director Jeff Hazen described the program, which kicked off at the start of the year, as a "win-win."

"A lot of our funding is based on ridership and miles," he said.

Because the district's fleet is filled with buses large enough to meet demand during peak seasons, there is often plenty of seating

available on them.

"If we can fill those empty seats up with kids, we're going to get some more money down the road," Hazen said, adding it takes about two years for that cycle to occur. "More importantly, it takes away the transportation barrier for the kids."

In 2017, the Oregon Legislature passed a robust transportation bill that guaranteed public agencies a stable funding source. During the short legislative session in 2018, they added a component about student transportation, asking agencies to commit up to 1% of funding to young riders, with a focus on grades nine through 12. Since then, the Sunset Empire Transportation District has been exploring ideas for better serving students in the county.

"It's a great time in Oregon to be a part of transportation," Hazen said. "It's the first time we've had a solid source of money and it's a huge game-changer."

Last summer, the district planned to provide bus transportation to students in Knappa and Jewell doing paid internships with the Clatsop WORKS Program. No students in those outlying areas were in need of the service, but Hazen said the agency will revisit the idea this summer.

During the Oregon Transit Association Conference in October 2019, Hazen and his colleagues had the opportunity to learn

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## A LOVE OF THE ARTS



Katherine Lacaze

**Members of the Seaside High School jazz band at the Tillamook Head Gathering.**

## Students display their artistic side at annual event

By KATHERINE LACAZE  
For Seaside Signal

On Sunday, more than 100 community members and educators gathered for an evening of live music, celebrating arts and culture, and, most importantly, supporting arts enrichment for Seaside High School students.

At the sixth annual Tillamook Head Gathering, held at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, Lindsey Mizell-Wallace, one of the group's board members and event organizers, described the fundraiser as "a wonderful way to reinvest in the community and reinvest in the kids."

The evening kicked off with a lively performance of jazz and blues standards by the high school's jazz ensemble, led by band director Terry Dahlgren. The jazz band — performing at the fundraiser for the first year — features students who are not only part of the high school's symphonic band but also dedicate extra time to study and perform jazz compositions of various styles.



Katherine Lacaze

**Luca Carney, 4, dances to the live music at the Tillamook Head Gathering on Sunday. The gathering, in its sixth year, is a fundraiser to support arts enrichment activities for Seaside High School students.**

### GROWING THE ARTS

"Every member is absolutely essential to making this grow!"

— Terry Dahlgren

"Every member is absolutely essential to making this grow," Dahlgren said.

As the Tillamook Head Gathering raises funds for the high school, organizers try to involve teachers, students and programs, such as the band or choir, in the live performances each year, according to Mizell-Wallace. This year, the Seaside Acapella Choir was scheduled to perform but unable to do so.

Headlining the event was The Orbitronz band, a small group of Oregon Coast musicians whose collaboration grew organically from friendships and community ties. When asked to perform at the gathering, lead singer Alex Gloria said they were eager to oblige.

"We couldn't think of a better cause," he said. "This really represents who we are."

The Tillamook Head Gathering was conceived by longtime Seaside educator Mark Mizell, who articulated a plan to fund cultural opportunities for high school students and enrich their lives through the arts, Chambers said, adding, "It was the beginning of something really special."

The event has been sustained, however, even with Mizell's retirement in 2018, with the help of several individuals,

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## Downtown association aims to keep starfish lights bright

Fundraiser set for Wednesday

By R.J. MARX  
Seaside Signal

Starfish need your help.

No, not just the ones in the ocean. We're talking about the sea star lighting along Broadway in downtown Seaside.

The iconic lights, which have proved a distinctive seasonal hallmark of the Seaside visitor experience, came to town in the late 1990s.

Members of the Seaside Downtown Development Association are seeking funds to maintain the bulbs and keep them shining bright.

Stephanie Stevenson of the Cotton Club and Rascals announced the fundraiser at the Jan. 23 downtown development association's breakfast meeting.

On Wednesday, Feb. 5, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., 50% of the proceeds from any of the handcrafted drinks — coffee, tea, shakes — at Cafe Latte in the Seaside Carousel Mall, owned by Julie Jesse, will go to starfish bulb replacement.

The lighting is in place along Broadway and Holladay between the third week in September to the third week in May.

Along with the flower basket program, the starfish lighting is one of two beau-

tification projects sponsored by the downtown development association.

"We've always done fundraisers for the flower baskets, but never the starfish," Stevenson said.

Aquarium owner and downtown development association chairman Keith Chandler said the starfish idea first came to the city in 1998. The lights now need replacing. "They just burn out," he said. "When one



Seaside Downtown Development Association

**A fundraiser for starfish lighting takes place Wednesday, Feb. 5, at Cafe Latte in the Carousel Mall.**

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