

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS | February 2009

Robert Liberty
represents
District 6, which
includes portions of
Northeast, Southeast
and Southwest
Portland.



Earning the big bucks

A personal message from Councilor Liberty

Last month there was a prominent article in “The Oregonian” about salaries paid to elected officials and senior government staff.

Some of you may have wanted to ask me how much your Metro Councilor is paid.

According to my W-2 form, my (pre-tax) Metro salary for 2008 was \$37,553.63.

I also received some valuable benefits: a Kaiser health and dental plan, an annual transit pass and participation in the state public employees’ retirement plan. If I retired at age 65—which is very unlikely!—and served two full terms on the Metro Council, my monthly retirement payment would be \$381.00.

I am grateful to have such an interesting job. Many citizens of our region do not receive either this salary or such good benefits. I wish I could work full-time on my Metro responsibilities. Unfortunately, expenses at our home require me to supplement my Metro salary with work as an attorney and consultant. I work between twenty-eight and fifty hours per week on Metro business, and I fit in my consulting work around my Metro schedule. My consulting has been for non-profit organizations and agencies outside of Oregon. I am hired for my expertise in the design, implementation and evaluation of planning efforts to replace sprawl with more compact growth. As you know, choices in housing and transportation can lead to conservation of farm and forestlands and natural resources. I have found that this consulting work exposes me to new information, ideas and people that help with my work at Metro.

Anyway, I’m glad you asked.

– Robert Liberty

Metro Council takes up Columbia River Crossing again

On January 26, 2009, the Metro Council met jointly with the Portland City Council to discuss the proposed \$3.6 billion Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project. The two topics of discussion were the number of lanes for the new bridge and adjoining parts of I-5, and what is called “demand management.”

One approach to congestion is to widen highways and roads, increasing the “supply” of highway lanes. Another approach to congestion is to manage demand for travel, by charging tolls, putting signals on ramps and creating High Occupancy Vehicle lanes. Today tolling is more sophisticated than the old system of toll booths; tolls can be collected electronically without slowing down traffic, and the tolls can be charged minute by minute to assure minimum travel speeds.

In the case of the CRC project, all the governments involved understand that tolls must be charged in order to generate about \$1.2 billion of the project cost. Research has shown that these tolls cut down on the projected amount of future traffic on the bridge. And the volume of traffic is a critical



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continued

factor in deciding how many lanes to build as well as how many tons of greenhouse gases will be produced. Citizens interested in any of these subjects may wish to attend Metro's next public hearing on the CRC project on February 5th at 2 p.m. in the Metro Council Chamber.

Visitors flock to zoo in record numbers despite rain, snow, recession

A yearlong recession? One of the coldest, wettest springs in recent memory? The biggest batch of snow in 50 years? It all sounds like bad news for a mostly outdoor, fee-based attraction, right? Maybe not, if you're the Oregon Zoo.

For the third year in a row, and the fourth time in the past five years, the zoo broke its all-time calendar-year attendance record, with 1,593,907 visitors in 2008. This marks the second time zoo attendance has topped 1.5 million in a calendar year. The previous record, set in 2007, was 1,503,565 visitors.

Holidays in general were huge for the zoo in 2008, with record turnouts during the long weekends around Presidents Day (more than 27,000 visitors), Labor Day (more than 30,000) and Thanksgiving (more than 40,000). Attendance on Thanksgiving Day was the second-highest of any single day in the zoo's history: More than 15,000 visitors braved the rain, taking advantage of a free "open house" held in appreciation of the public's support for a \$125 million bond measure to improve outdated exhibits and make the zoo more sustainable.

Summer, characteristically, was also a busy time for the zoo. "Dinosaurs!" -- featuring a fearsome life-size animatronic T. rex and more than 20 other prehistoric creatures -- proved the most popular temporary exhibit in the zoo's 121-year history, attracting 221,226 visitors from May 17 through Labor Day. The summer concert series was a big draw too, with capacity crowds taking in shows by the Indigo Girls, Los Lobos, Matisyahu and more. July, with 238,984 visitors, and August, with 231,195 visitors, were the zoo's two busiest months ever.

Toward summer's end, the baby elephant Samudra inspired the public, drawing big crowds after he joined his mother on exhibit Aug. 30. During September, 159,351 visitors passed through the gates, a record for the month.

After such a successful 2008, the zoo's director anticipates an even better 2009. The Oregon Zoo continues to have the highest attendance of any fee-based tourist attraction in Oregon.

The zoo is a service of Metro and is dedicated to its mission to inspire the community to create a better future for wildlife. Committed to conservation, the zoo is currently working to save endangered California condors, Washington's pygmy rabbits, Oregon silverspot butterflies, western pond turtles, and Oregon spotted frogs. Other projects include studies on black rhinos, Asian elephants, polar bears and bats.

For additional information on the Oregon Zoo, visit www.oregonzoo.org or by call 503-226-1561.

Final chance to weigh in on the 2010-13 regional flexible funding recommendation

On January 30 the Transportation Policy Alternatives Committee (TPAC) released a draft final recommendation for Metro's 2010-13 regional flexible funding allocation. Release of the draft recommendation kicked off an informal public comment opportunity that ends with a formal joint JPACT/Metro Council public hearing at 4 p.m. on February 12, 2009.

The public is urged to review the proposed programs, projects and recommendations by visiting the project web site at www.oregonmetro.gov/regionalflexiblefund and submit comments and testimony.

About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

Your Metro representatives

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Carl Hosticka, District 3
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