

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS | June 2009

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



The \$1 billion barbecue in Salem

A personal message from Councilor Liberty

The smell of roasting pork wafted up from Salem late last month but it wasn't very appetizing.

The pork took the form of earmarks in an omnibus transportation bill (HB 2001) for \$1 billion worth of various highway projects (new highways, wider highways, new highway interchanges), projects that were used to buy support from a few key legislators.

The pork will be paid for by a 6 cent (25%) increase in your gas taxes as well as increases in vehicle registration, title, and license plate fees and other taxes and fees.

The biggest earmark, \$192 million, is to help pay for a project that smelled more like turkey than pork: the \$370 to \$500 million Newberg-Dundee Bypass in Yamhill County. This project has been unable to secure funding in the past, despite repeated efforts, because prior analyses suggest the costs outweighed the benefits.

One of the smaller slices of pork was \$33 million to pay for part of a new interchange on Highway 43 where it connects with the Sellwood Bridge. But there was no money to repair the structurally deficient bridge itself. The legislature contented itself with making it easier for Multnomah County to raise vehicle registration fees to help pay for the rest of the \$300 million+ project.

Also on the menu were a few more appetizing side dishes: \$1 million for trails, and perhaps an additional \$3 million per year for bicycle facilities. More disappointing was the failure to change funding priorities to allow significantly more federal funds to be spent on transit. Thus our state's transportation menu is overwhelming devoted to cars and trucks.

The barbecue had a surprising omission, what I thought would be the roast boar centerpiece: the \$4 billion Columbia River Crossing. Like the Washington legislature, the Oregon legislature declined to provide specific funding for the project. But that doesn't mean the project won't get funding, especially if federal and local money cannot be found to pay for the remaining cost for the earmarked highway projects.

Yes, the proposed increase in the gas tax and other taxes will provide money to repair existing roads and bridges. Yes, the bill directs Metro to analyze greenhouse gas impacts from transportation investments (something the Metro Council was planning to do anyway.) And yes, the bill calls for a pilot project on pricing the use of roads.

But given the opportunity for substantive reform after the 2008 elections, the great highway barbecue is vastly disappointing.

I am proud of those members of the Oregon House delegation from my Metro Council district, Representatives Mary Nolan, Ben Cannon and Jefferson Smith, who voted against the bill despite what must have been strong pressures from other members of their party to agree. They deserve your thanks.



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continued

Meanwhile, Metro and its partner governments are following a dramatically different approach to planning for operating, maintaining and improving the transportation system in our region. It is an approach that recognizes the need for fiscal restraint and for responsible stewardship of existing facilities. It focuses on finding cost-effective investments in projects that have been selected after a thoughtful evaluation of their costs and benefits, not just for moving people or freight, but within the broader context of improving our communities and reducing our impacts on our air, water and land.

I am glad to sit down to those tables rather than wiping the grease off my chin at the barbecue in Salem.

– Robert Liberty

Oregon Zoo Concerts a-go!

What do baby Samudra, summer weather and the B-52s have in common? They're all part of the Oregon Zoo's 31st annual summer concert series presented by NW Natural.

This year's zoo concert series promises to be an exhilarating experience with 18 shows from June through August. It is the longest-running outdoor concert series in the Pacific Northwest and one of the most anticipated events of the summer.

New this year is a showcase of local bands to take place Wednesday, July 8. Concert fans are asked to weigh in on which local bands they'd like to see perform that night. Voting for the showcase takes place through May 31 on the zoo's Web site.

The zoo concert series is presented by NW Natural with support from KINK.fm and KOIN Local 6. Tickets may be purchased at www.ticketmaster.com and at the zoo.

Funds raised during the concert series support several conservation projects, including the protection of threatened and endangered Northwest species.

General admission is \$9.75 (12-64), seniors \$8.25 (65+), children \$6.75 (3-11), and infants 2 and under are free; 25 cents of the admission price helps fund regional conservation projects through the zoo's Future for Wildlife program. A parking fee of \$2 per car is also required. Additional information is available at www.oregonzoo.org or by calling 503-226-1561

Oregon Zoo summer concerts lineup

June 17	Femi Kuti & the Positive Force	\$10.50
June 19	B-52s	\$27
June 24	Sly & Robbie and the Taxi Gang	\$10.50
July 1	234th Army Band	FREE with zoo admission
July 8	Local band showcase	\$10.50
July 11	Tears for Fears with Wainwright	\$22
July 15	Vieux Farka Touré	\$10.50
July 17	Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Los Lobos	\$22
July 2	Riders in the Sky	\$10.50
July 24	Indigo Girls	\$19
July 29	Orchestra Baobab	\$10.50
July 31	Jewel	\$22.50
Aug. 5	The Wailers	\$10.50
Aug. 12	Jonatha Brooke	\$10.50
Aug. 14	Joan Baez	\$22
Aug. 19	Ricardo Lemvo & Makina Loca	\$10.50
Aug. 21	Susan Tedeschi with JJ Grey & Mofro	\$22
Aug. 28	Amos Lee	\$19

Cooper Mountain Nature Park opens to visitors June 27th!

Overlooking the Tualatin River Valley, the new Cooper Mountain Nature Park sits on the edge of Beaverton. The 230-acre park offers visitors 3 1/2 miles of gravel trails (with varying levels of difficulty) traversing the park's rare habitats and natural features. Cooper Mountain Nature Park is operated through a partnership between Metro and the Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District.

To register for events or programs call: 503-629-6350 or visit <http://www.thprd.org/parks/coopermountain.cfm>.

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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