

# Oregon Trail center project faces new delay

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OREGON CITY — The search for money to build an Oregon Trail center, which already has no chance of opening in time for next year's anniversary celebration, is facing another possible delay.

Supporters of an End of the Oregon Trail interpretive center in Oregon City would like to see Metro place a bond measure on the November ballot.



But Metro officials say voters do not know enough about the proposal and word needs to get out before the request for money goes on the ballot. Metro is suggesting that the bond measure proposal wait until the spring of 1993. The statewide celebration of the trail's sesquicentennial will culminate that summer.

Eric Epperson, the newly hired executive director of the non-profit Oregon Trail Foundation, said he is not discouraged by the suggestion, contained in a letter from Metro to Clackamas County officials.

Even if Metro decides to hold off the election until the spring, Clackamas County is going ahead with its preparations for a vote, Epperson said.

"It shows they're committed to (the project). We just don't know when it goes to the voters," said Epperson, whose organization is overseeing the project.

Metro will pay for a poll in late May to get a better idea if the measure would be within "striking distance" of passing, said Rena Cusma, Metro executive officer. Any decision on when or whether Metro should place a measure on the ballot, and what amount it should be, will be made after that poll.

A poll last fall showed that 55 percent of those responding had not heard of the Oregon Trail Project, but 63 percent supported the plans when they heard about them. However, only 33 percent of those polled said they would be willing to pass a bond measure to support the trail project.

The Oregon Trail Foundation hopes to build a \$46.5 million history showcase at the federally designated End of the Oregon Trail on Abernethy Green in Oregon City, where Interstate 205 and Oregon 213 meet.

The project is one of four being planned throughout the state to tell the story of the 2,000-mile pioneer route used by thousands of settlers looking for a new life in the West.

But the foundation has had problems gaining financial support for the Oregon City history showcase because of the ambitious scope of the project, Epperson said. The Oregon Trail Coordinating Council, a statewide group planning the 1993 celebration marking the first major crossing on the trail, has the job of coordinating the interpretive centers.

The other interpretive centers in the works include one in Baker City that opens over Memorial Day weekend and two that are still in the planning stages — the Umatilla Indian Reservation and along the Columbia River Gorge near The Dalles.

Competition for money for a project in the metropolitan area has made it difficult to secure financing for the Oregon City project, Epperson said.

He said the Oregon Trail Foundation decided to "re-package" the proposal and emphasize the plans for the interpretive center in an effort to get state and federal support for that phase of the project. The other aspects of the project will remain and none of the plans will be scaled down, Epperson said.

"Our plan is to carve out the interpretive center... so that we will be comparing apples with apples and oranges with oranges" when talking about the other interpretive centers, Epperson said.

In addition to an interpretive center, the Oregon City complex would include a meadow and territorial farm, a festive marketplace and a public square. There also would be an outdoor amphitheater, which would be used in the summer for the Oregon Trail Pageant.

While the foundation continues to look for money, word is getting out about the plans, Epperson said.

"Our outreach is geared to all avenues — federal, state and local government, individuals, corporations and trusts," Epperson said. "We're just going to tell the story."

lection and administration of the Washington Park Zoo. The organization received its authority from the Legislature but now is attempting to form a home-rule charter, which would allow local voters to pick the agency's tasks.

The first draft should be finished April 9 and public hearings will be held the week of May 11. The charter will go to voters in November, according to Janet Whitfield, Metro Charter Committee administrator.

In response to the charter-writing effort, the Regional Governance Committee was formed by officials of the cities and counties to help direct Metro's new charter. Now the committee officers are touring the region, asking for support. The Gresham City Council passed the committee's resolution March 3.

Stolze said about two-thirds of the member governments — which includes 23 cities, two counties and 13 special districts — have passed the resolution so far.

# Chamber lobbied to support regional group

By J. DANA HAYNES  
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City and county representatives from throughout the region are hoping to help shape the Metropolitan Service District — or Metro — in years to come. And they've enlisted the aid of the Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce.

Most of the cities, counties and special districts in the region belong to the Regional Governance Committee. The group's three officers addressed the chamber during Monday's Noon Forum and asked business and community leaders to get involved in the charter-writing process for Metro.

Metro leaders now are gathering information that will lead to a new charter, to spell out the organization's structure for the future.

Speakers for the Regional Governance Committee were Gresham Mayor Guiseppe McRobert, Tualatin Mayor Steve Stolze and Judie Hammerstad, chairwoman of the Clackamas County Board of Commis-

sioners.

Their message was one of cooperation. "We're not anti-Metro. We're not out to crush their services," Stolze said. "(But) some of these services are better served and better developed by local government."

McRobert agreed. "We feel there is a valid role for Metro to play and we want that to be in a form that's effective and will pass in the polls," she said.

The committee isn't just looking at Metro's services but also at those of the member cities and counties, McRobert said, adding, "We believe that every single service we deliver ought to be up for consideration."

Hammerstad told the small crowd of about 10 chamber members that the new Metro charter should include better budgetary oversight. "Metro is the only government I know that, since Ballot Measure 5, is growing," Hammerstad said. She added that the charter as now proposed by Metro officials would give the agency

the ability to create few taxes without going to the voters. "I think the finance mechanism is just a killer," she said.

The speakers presented a proposed resolution to the chamber members, which would help define Metro's structure. But they may have been preaching to the choir — Joan Pasco, executive director of the chamber, said the chamber's Public Affairs Council already endorsed a similar proposal in February.

The chamber's version would reduce the number of Metro counselors from 12 to seven or eight; make them paid positions; and make the chief administrator appointed, not elected. The current executive officer, Rena Cusma, was elected in 1991 and will serve through 1994.

All these ideas also are found in the Regional Governance Committee's proposed resolution.

Metro was formed by the state Legislature in 1977 and charged with performing regional duties, such as garbage col-