

Next thing you know it will be 2008 or 2009

By Tauf Charneski

On the plus side of the year 2007: Christmas and New Year's Day both fall on Tuesdays. Independence Day will be on Wednesday, July 4, which is all right, kind of breaking the week in half. Not much gets done in the work world on the day of Christmas Eve. Just as well make that day a day off. Same for New Year's Eve day. Until the British left Vancouver in 1848, Boxing Day, the day after Christmas, was celebrated on Dec. 26. We have revived that holiday at the *Insider*. Works good, too. January 2 is also a throwaway day. Just as well take that day off.

Even after World War II, a lot of us who packed lunch buckets worked four hours on Saturdays. Adding a few more holidays at the local and national level isn't a socialistic thing. It's good for everyone.

Let us, however, take a look at what else may happen in 2007 that will help prepare for 2008 and 2009, which is almost upon us. We predict that the Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update will be approved in 2007. There will be another 365 days to complete the plan that has already occupied 2,190 days of county updating. The plan was updated in 2005, but the 2006 Board of Clark County Commissioners quickly rescinded that version.

The 20-year comp plan, now in its 26th year, hasn't really worked poorly. We would say that Clark County is better off today in terms of growth and growth management than ever. We've had the Padden Parkway completed, SE 192nd Avenue extended and connected to Highway 14, the Mill Plain extension to the east completed. Extensive thoroughfare improvements are being made throughout the county and in Vancouver and Battle Ground.

What is developing is a transportation grid system in metropolitan Clark County. With the possible exception of the NE 134th Street corridor, it is easier and faster to go from point A to point B in the county than ever before.

Which brings us to the current state of affairs of the federal highway system in Clark County, a tribute to total indifference and lack of planning at every level of government, including neighborhood associations, car pools and coffee klatches.

Not many people, it seems, care. I-5 traffic from south of Salem to north of Kalama is at a standstill at times. So? Over 45 million Americans live in the three west coast states—more than the entire population of Canada. The international ports of Washington, Oregon and California are highway connected essentially by a single federal route that narrows to only two lanes in both directions in sections of all three states. While Washington has managed much better than Oregon and California to move traffic through its metropolitan areas, we still have stretches of I-5 that are two-lane each way in Clark County. In Portland, I-5 is two-lane each way as close to us as Delta Park, and right down through Portland through the Rose Quarter area.

So, replace the twin Interstate 5 bridge spans connecting small Vancouver and Portland with a humongous bridge? Maybe. Some think that the time to improve the Interstate 5 bridges is after a third or fourth bridge crossing the Columbia River has been completed. Imagine the traffic congestion during construction.

What are alternatives? A freeway extending south from Battle Ground to Camas and across the Columbia River to Gresham. A freeway on the west side of I-5, from Ridgefield, perhaps, and across the Columbia River at the western end of Hayden Island.

The Columbia River Crossing Project is focused solely on improving the I-5 corridor between Highway 500 in Vancouver and Delta Park in Portland. It is sponsored by the Washington and Oregon transportation depart-



Happy New Year!

ments, and the cities of Vancouver and Portland, and C-TRAN, the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, Tri-Met, C-TRAN and Metro are signed on. The more than \$50 million study was created to fill the vacuum of inactivity when no one was taking a lead on improving interstate transportation.

A Columbia River Crossing forum is at 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 4, in the New Columbia Community Education Room, 4625 N. Trenton Street, Portland. The Columbia River Crossing staff will present current proposals, followed by a response panel and open discussion.

Nevertheless, 2008 will soon be upon us. It is a leap year. Christmas will be on a Thursday, Boxing Day on a Friday. That adds up to five Christmas days off, if you count Christmas Eve. Happy New Year!

Calendar

The one-man musical *Herringbone*, starring **Taylor Askman** and directed by **Llewellyn Rhoe**, concludes the Arts Equity Onstage's 2006 schedule with performances at 7:30 p.m. this evening and Saturday, Dec. 30, in the Main Street Theatre, 606 Main Street. Tickets range from \$8 to \$24. For further information, call **695-3770**.

Friday Headlines

[Oregon State wins Sun Bowl with gutsy two-point conversion--KATU](#)
[Denny's I-5 site could be home to nine-story office building--Columbian, **Michael Andersen**](#)
[Mervyn's sale is clearing off shelves--Columbian, **Jonathan Nelson**](#)
[Music abounds on New Year's Eve--Columbian, **Matt Wastradowski**](#)
[Saddam Hussein will be executed by Saturday--USA TODAY, AP](#)
[Lawyers move to halt Saddam Hussein execution--Washington Post, **Sudarsan Raghavan and Henri Cauvin**](#)

Friday on the air

Clark County Youth Town Hall (11/16)—5 p.m. CVTV
76ers at Portland Blazers (live)—7 p.m. FSN, KXL
Legislative Session Outlook (12/15)—7:15 p.m. CVTV
County Commissioners Land Use Appeals (12/6)—9:15 p.m. CVTV
Columbia River Crossing Task Force (11/29)—10 p.m. CVTV

Town Tabloids and the Weather

Kathie Helgason presiding. ☞ **Tim Welch** watching global trends. ☞ **John Andrews** making the scene. ☞ **Mark Andrews** not far behind. ☞ **Dave Seabrook** saying hello. ☞ **Friday** partly cloudy, sun-breaks, 43. **Saturday**, partly cloudy, 43. **Sunday**, partly cloudy, 44.