

3/28 Editorials

****Row, row your boat -- or take a better route across the Willamette
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*Ethics shouldn't be too hard to understand and live with
*Community awards merit an award of their own***

Row, row your boat -- or take a better route across the Willamette

The Polk County Commission has joined the chorus seeking a new span connecting Polk County to Salem and ultimately to I-5.

We applaud the idea of a third major traffic corridor leading people to and from the interstate freeway and Polk County.

However, we would endorse a more ambitious approach than a single new bridge. We believe there really should be two.

With the growth of Polk County's population centers in West Salem, Independence, Monmouth and Dallas, there really is a need for a new bridge south of the existing crossings to downtown Salem and north of those crossings as well.

Many folks can remember the days of a single bridge connecting Salem to its quasi-independent sibling, West Salem. Then a second bridge was built along side it. Since the 1960s the current structures have seen only modest changes.

It's well past time for more avenues across the Willamette.

We'd like to see a river crossing that connects Highway 22 directly to Mission Street -- the Salem street that is, in fact, Highway 22 from the east side. That would serve this community better in terms of moving from one side of Salem to another and provide a very direct access to a north-south I-5 interchange.

We'd also like to see a bridge that would connect the West Salem-Spring Valley community to the Salem Expressway and to I-5 northbound.

Both such routes likely would require miles of elevated roadway as well as river-spanning bridges.

The price tag staggers the imagination. However it's the kind of approach that is vital in keeping Polk County on the map, so to speak.

Meanwhile the people who are really working on this project and trying to make things happen -- the Polk County Commissioners --

have a web site that's well worth checking out: www.bridgewatch.net.

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