

## A solar system

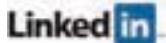
### ODOT uses stimulus dollars to cut energy bills



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and 

I cannot tell my third child how to choose his friends, not when he has copper gutters for arms.

My historic house is probably the most frustrating dependent in my impressive but modest clan. It constantly requires financial attention and is always sneaking in that winter companion of his. The quiet betrayal happens pretty much every day the temperature dips below 40°, and I catch the two together in the same two spots—at the base of the stairs and in the kitchen. Once in they have no problem playing

right at my feet—and the rest of my body for that matter.

I've tried talking to it, but the looks I get from my wife while I am bickering in a corner can be a bit concerning. Another tug at the coat zipper has not worked, either. Last fall we had our basement and attic sprayed with foam insulation. About the only thing pleasing that came out of the job was the chocolate-cake smell that has permanently settled in the top room of the castle. My wife swears our heating bills have lost most of their teeth, but sometimes in the dead of January I wonder.

I have often thought about setting up more abrasive interventions. The whole concept of digging up my yard and installing coils that would be warmed by Mother Earth triggered my senses, until the price dropped me unconscious.

If it were not for the rock 'em sock 'em dollar signs, I would be all over the environmentally savvy alternatives.

Currently, there is not a department of transportation that can hold a green torch to Oregon's highway agency, which installed the first sun-soaking highway in the U.S. earlier this summer. ODOT pieced together solar panels along a stretch of road in Tualatin and is hoping

the assist from the sun will generate 128,000 kWh a year.

If ODOT wants to plug its entire operation into the largest star of our solar system it will require about 120 miles of roadside free space. There is no flinch coming out of Salem, as the agency is firing up for a second solar launch in the town of West Linn. This display will upload 3 MW of power, which is 25 times larger than the Tualatin site.


To pull off energy supernova, Oregon is using \$2 million marked by the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act.

The beauty part of it all is that ODOT is not going to be spraining any wrist flipping stimulus money over to the project. It all will come from the Department of Energy.

Of course, with every alternative execution come those who want to take a pen to it and draw horns and a pitchfork. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who flashed his impos-

ing maverick badge in front of about every American face last year, has proudly put the solar project on his Top 10 Porkiest Projects list, while local homeowners in West Linn fear that the panels will suck the nutrients out of property values.

I think ODOT belongs on the sunny side here. Not only does the move open up the possibility of shifting operating dollars over to construction bills, but it takes one more variable out of the natural resource doomsday equation. Solar is not for every agency, because cities like Chicago and New York could use every inch of right of way they can spare to help increase capacity, but it could and should be the norm for most in the next 10-20 years. Don't make me hold

a caulk gun to your head, because I have plenty of those to choose from. 

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