COLUMBIA COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION AND ROAD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, May 21, 2026, 10 am

MINUTES

- **Call to Order-**10:09 am **Chair- Rosemary Lohrke**

- **Approve Minutes from 02/19/2026 Meeting** **Chair – Rosemary Lohrke**
  - No quorum
  - Tabled until next meeting

- **Sign In / Introductions** – **Chair – Rosemary Lohrke**
  - Present: Tim Hancock (CCPW), Mike Russell (CCPW), Ryan Wallis, (CCPW), Mark Stevenson (CCPW), Grant DeJongh (CCPW), Rosemary Lohrke (citizen, chair), Paul Langner (City of Rainier city council)

  - Introduce Mark Stevenson
    - Road worker in Rainier shop
    - President of Local 697

- **Open Forum for Comments** – **Members and Guests**
  - Mark Stevenson would like to join one of the vacant TRAC positions

- **FY 2026-2027 Budget** **Mike Russell, PW Director**
  - Same presentation that was presented to the budget committee
  - Five-year forecast – looks at current fiscal year (FY26), coming fiscal year (FY27), and three additional fiscal years
    - Looking at beginning balance, which represents Road Fund reserves, drawing these down year-on-year
    - For the next three years, able to keep things status quo, but then looking at having to make changes
  - Revenue
    - Main source of revenue is State Vehicle Tax Apportionment
    - ODOT measure was soundly defeated – would have increased apportionment – but did not plan for any additional revenue in apportionment for FY27
      - Governor has a working group looking at funding options for the long session in 2027
    - Other revenue plus the apportionment represents our typical annual revenue – about $6M – supplemented with grants, other forms of revenue, though these are typically temporary and ear-marked – also supplemented with carryover, though this is subject to drawdown
    - System Development Charges (SDCs) are accrued from development within the county, and these can be used for increases to system capacity (wider pavement sections, sidewalks, *etc*.) – there is some money in the budget set as revenue for SDC project(s) – about $3M in various SDC accounts, but this cannot be used for general operation and maintenance

        - Pedestrian and Bicycle Path funds are available for the development of non-motorized infrastructure within the county – there is some money in the budget set as revenue for unidentified project(s)
        - Question about what the future would look like with the ODOT initiative passing
            - Road Fund would have seen about $600K in first year, moving up to $1.3M - $1.7M by full implementation
            - Question if that money would have been ear-marked for projects – no, it would be discretionary
        - Discussion of a local option gas tax, similar to what was tried in Rainier (Rainier initiative nearly passed) – beneficial to the county as fuel tax comes from Washington drivers driving through Columbia County on Highway 30 as well as residents
        - General agreement that the County should look at local options
            - County is looking at what a $10M - $20M bond over 10 years would look like, what projects could be completed with this funding
        - Concern about capital projects being zeroed out in the proposed budget
            - County is looking at providing some funding to these lines to address issues that arise, regular maintenance, *etc*.
    - Expenditures
        - Personnel costs are increasing – not funding two vacant positions – engineering technician II and lube services worker
        - Looking at moving to year-round temporary employees (4)
            - This will continue until the fifth year, at which point it will revert to splitting temporary employees throughout the year.
        - Contracted services include all routine inspections of roads and bridges
        - Department currently pays for part of a professional trapper – that will go away next fiscal year (FY27)
        - Expenditures generally trending towards increases across the board
        - Herbicide costs will likely increase, but the county does not plan to move away from this program – still the best value solution for vegetation management
        - Bridge supplies line represents maintenance and smaller fixes, large projects are in capital and are usually grant-funded; aim for bridge projects on alternating years, but there is some money for work in off-years
        - Capital is still shown as zeroed out, though that may change, per above
        - Contingency line becomes the next year's beginning balance
            - Drawdown is projected for every year – large drawdowns in FY27, FY28 representing bridge replacement costs on Scappoose-Vernonia Road (MP 2)
            - Question about where the contingency came from – past savings, used as match money for federal and state grants – aim to keep $1M in contingency at all times

- **Road Maintenance Operations Work Plan Mike Russell, PW Director**
    - Will go to the Board with an update soon, but this meeting provides a glimpse at what that will entail
    - No crew consolidation to the Saint Helens shop at this time
    - Will move forward with work plan developed by management – systematic approach to road maintenance
        - Question about consolidation and who was opposed to it – several different groups: public, fire and rescue agencies, staff, local governments – concerns

about loss of productive time (*i.e.*, due to mobilization time), though management feels that this could be managed through crew assignment and flexibility

- Mark Stevenson provided the staff position on the work plan
  - The activity-based work plan is a great idea, but needs some consideration.
    - We do not have the numbers necessary in each remote shop.
    - Could retain basic maintenance activity levels in remote shops.
    - Could perform larger projects, as determined necessary by the leads, with north county (Clatskanie and Rainier) and south county (Saint Helens and Vernonia) cooperation.
    - Technology should be sufficient to have brief/debrief meetings (through Zoom or Teams), pull people together for larger projects.
    - Communication with the crew is currently limited to Mike and Tim talking to the leads, who disseminate information down to crew.
- Rosemary and Paul both stated that they appreciate the amount of effort that road workers put into keeping roads safe and maintained, particularly in light of the limited funding available

❖ **Updates/Discussion** - **Mike Russell, PW Director**

- Holbrook Road
  - Storm event in mid-March required closure of Holbrook Road and Apiary Road (*Editor's note – Heath Road was also closed*) – Holbrook Road is the only road that remains closed currently
  - Culvert just to the south of the intersection of Holbrook Road and Beaver Homes Road is collapsed and plugged, resulting in washout, debris over roadway
  - Detour is Beaver Homes > Nicolai or Fairview > Nicolai
  - Due to weight restricted bridge on Beaver Homes Road, non-passenger vehicle traffic must go Walker > Beaver Springs > Brownlee > Neer City
    - Mark mentioned that the Walker – Beaver Springs intersection is difficult for trucks to make, so there is some resistance to this route
  - Beaver Homes Road and Fairview Road are in bad shape, need rehabilitation
  - Looking at addressing Beaver Homes Road bridge limitation

- 2026 chip seal
  - List of roads provided (20 miles):
    - Apiary Road – Old Rainier Road to Meissner Road
    - Canaan Road – Lawrence Road to Meissner Road
    - Church Road – Highway 30 to Hazen Road
    - Neer City Road – Highway 30 to Brownlee Road
    - Old Portland Road – Callahan Road to Bonneville Road
    - Pittsburg Road – horse arena at water shed to South Canaan Road
  - Will begin hauling chip rock next week (week of 05/25)
  - Aim to complete 20 miles of chip seal this year
  - Rock and oil prices are both slightly down this year compared to last
    - Question about whether Mollenhour Road is on the chip seal list – not for 2026, will look at for 2027

- Apiary Road MP 8.4 project
  - Project is the design of bridge replacing two culverts at the confluence of the Little Clatskanie and Clatskanie Rivers
  - Project is grant-funded through Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
  - Project is going from 30% preliminary design to biddable packet, as well as permitting
  - Solicited project last year and awarded at end of the year; grant runs out at end of June 2026 – tight timeline
  - Consultant doing well to meet time constraints – 60% plans and specs are completed, moving on to final package

- Hazard mitigation grant
  - Grant is funded through Office of Emergency Management
  - Will pay for a project to identify, inspect, assess, and prioritize wooden culverts on Apiary Road and Scappoose-Vernonia Road
  - Grant will also pay for preliminary design (30%) of between one and three projects
  - Solicitation should begin next month (June 2026)

- Scappoose-Vernonia Road bridge replacement project
  - Aim to replace bridge at MP 2
  - Bidding will be this fall

❖ **Round Table Discussion** **Chair & Members**

- A quick assessment of the cost of a $20M bond over 10 years was done – worked out to about $8.56/month (rough estimate for discussion purposes)
  - Discussion about the need to manage perceptions, reach out to and educate the public
  - Department is pretty lean – not a lot of room for cuts
- Paul noted that the roads that have been cut in Rainier have not looked better in 30 years

❖ **Next Meeting** – Tentatively August 20, 2026 **Chair**

❖ **Adjourn** – 11:15 AM **Chair**