COLUMBIA COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION AND ROAD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, August 20, 2026, 10 am

MINUTES

- **Call to Order-**10:03 am **Chair- Rosemary Lohrke**

- **Approve Minutes from 05/21/2026 Meeting** **Chair – Rosemary Lohrke**
  - No quorum
  - Tabled until next meeting
    - Minutes from 02/19/2026
    - Minutes from 05/21/2026

- **Sign In / Introductions** – **Chair – Rosemary Lohrke**
  - Present: Tim Hancock (CCPW), Mike Russell (CCPW), Grant DeJongh (CCPW), Rosemary Lohrke (citizen, chair), Pat LaPointe (retired utility representative), Nita Greene (citizen), Robert Stevens (Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments)

- **Open Forum for Comments** – **Members and Guests**
  - None

- **Road Fund 5-yr Budget Forecast -** **Mike Russell, PW Director**
  - Commissioner Magruder, as County budget chair, has requested that all departments provide a five-year forecast of their budgets
  - Public Works is building on the previous five-year forecast, updated with FY2031 (2030-2031)
  - Bottom line: try to keep $1M in contingency line (beginning balance and contingency) – this takes into consideration catastrophes (*e.g.*, Apiary Road MP 11.8 washout, which was approximately $1M)
  - Draw down occurring each year
    - FY2028 – large expense from Scappoose-Vernonia Road MP 2 bridge replacement
    - General year-on-year deficit spending of $300K - $500K
    - Not sustainable trend
    - Without change, looking at service cuts, personnel cuts
      - Layoffs, pavement preservation reductions, paint reductions – save some money, but there is less treatment on the road, and we are already at minimum service level
  - Forecast always subject to change based on work activities, project costs, operational changes – this is a moment in time
  - Forecast shows dipping below $1M in FY2031
  - Fairly confident that transportation funding will be brought up in the legislative session for 2027 – these projections do not anticipate any increase in revenue from the state
  - Current issue is systemic – costs are increasing while revenue stays flat; personnel costs alone increasing by about $900K in projection timeline
    - New source of revenue – either state or local (gas tax, registration fee

surcharge, bonding, *etc*.)
- Good news, looking okay for next three years – status quo
- Always subject to unforeseen circumstances (*e.g.*, major storms causing washouts)
- Forecasts are due by the end of the month – will continue to tweak prior to submittal
- Rosemary: These appear to be the same problems that everyone has. There are solutions to these issues, but taxpayers will want concessions elsewhere to make them happen.

❖ **Road Maintenance Operations Work Plan - Mike Russell, PW Director**
- Not combining shops at this time
  - District model will remain with Tim Hancock overseeing as superintendent
- Moving forward with operations work plan
  - Runs October > September
  - Next meeting, will have results from this year's operations work plan and the proposed operations work plan for next year
  - Outline specific work activities we aim to achieve and where those are located
  - We have received compliments from how the operations work plan is going
- Rosemary: Appreciate the patching job that was done on Mollenhour Road. Would like to see chip seal on there, but appreciate the efforts with chip seal in general.

❖ **Updates - Mike Russell, PW Director**
- 2026 chip seal
  - Finished on 08/19/2026
  - 20 miles of chip seal over two weeks with assistance from Clatsop County
  - Fog seal will occur soon
  - Looking at purchasing a chip spreader, makes us less reliant on others
  - Did 10 miles in 2025
  - If we can keep up with 20 miles per year, we can hit every paved road in the county in a 15-year cycle – not sufficient, but helps with overall maintenance and preservation – 360 miles of paved roads, 550 miles of roads total

- Apiary Road MP 8.4 bridge
  - Applied for federal funding for replacing two culverts with a bridge
  - Project is estimated in the $2M range – if the grant is unsuccessful, we will need to look for other funding sources
  - This is a priority fish barrier for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife – they helped pay for the design and permitting
  - Design was completed this year through grant funding

- Hazard mitigation grant – Scappoose-Vernonia Road and Apiary Road wooden culverts
  - Received a grant to evaluate wooden culverts on Scappoose-Vernonia Road and Apiary Road
    - These are similar in style and vintage to the wooden culvert that washed out on Apiary Road in 2024 at MP 11.8.
  - There is also funding for some preliminary design work on a select number of high-priority crossings
  - Put out an RFP, going through the review process – using the alternative solicitation process that allows for price consideration
    - Slower process, but it helps with cost and reduces negotiation time
  - Should have a preferred consultant selected next month

- Scappoose-Vernonia Road MP 2 bridge
  - Going out for bid this fall/winter
  - Most of construction will be in next fiscal year (FY2028) – 2027 construction season
  - Will close road for 3-4 months
  - Did not pursue this year due to other regional closures

- Transient lodging tax
  - Draft ballot title provided
    - 4% for impacted facilities in cities that already have a transient lodging tax
    - 13% for unincorporated county
    - Anticipated revenue: $150,000 - $300,000 annually
      - 50% for tourism, *etc*., 50% for general County business
    - Draft, could change
    - Potential exemption for county residents
  - This is for General Fund – no money to Road Fund
  - Question about how much impact this even has – what does that buy?
    - At $300,000 ($150,000 for unobligated general fund), it would pay for about 5.5 furlough days

- System development charges (SDCs)
  - Public Works will be going to the Board of County Commissioners to request an increase to the SDCs for transportation
    - SDCs are charges assessed at the time of development for the capacity increases for the corresponding system
      - For instance, building sidewalk where there is none is eligible for SDC funding, as is lane/road widening
      - These help with larger projects
  - Current rate is about $2,400/residential unit (a bit more for commercial)
    - Rate has remained unchanged since adoption (about 2009)
  - Public Works gets about $60K - $80K per year from this
  - Will probably ask for an increase to about $3,000
  - Parks has its own SDCs, and if Public Works increases its own fees, this could lead to too high of an increase

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

- Question about Beaver Homes Road bridge in the Goble area
  - Bridge is weight restricted based on scour from recent inspection
  - Holbrook Road culvert washed out this spring
  - Looking at options to address the structure on Beaver Homes Road; looking at option to temporarily repair and reopen Holbrook Road (emergency and bus access, mainly)
- Consideration of safety/project approach to road funding
  - Need to have safety or project-related nexus for increase in road funding (bond, levy, fee, tax, *etc*.)
  - Public needs to understand what they are getting for the cost
  - There is a sense that it is not an issue of taxation – it is an issue of agency spending
- Roundabouts – general discussion
  - General discussion of roundabouts, where they make sense, what their benefit is

- Safe Streets for All (SS4A) funding for regional safety planning
  - Have agreement with federal government, but signing was delayed with new administration – now ready for signatures, but dates are wrong; working on updating those and getting the agreement to the Board
  - Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments completed regional safety planning document with similar grant; includes Rainier; plan is available on website; interactive GIS map on website with crash data, recommended safety improvements
  - Columbia County Public Works will send an email including that link to share with TRAC
- I-5 tolling and impacts
  - Alternative route funding – discussed at NWACT
  - Highway 30, Longview bridge impacts
  - Discussion about tolling vs taxes
  - Public concerns about poor planning, millions of dollars wasted on options that are not viable

❖ **Next Meeting** – Tentatively October 29, 2026 **Chair**

❖ **Adjourn** – 10:52 AM **Chair**