



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Board Session Agenda Review Form

Meeting date: February 8, 2023

Department: Board of Commissioners Agenda Planning Date: 1/26/23023 Time required: 20

[X] Audio/Visual aids Presentation Powerpoint from CFM Advocates

Contact: Jessica Stanton, BOC PAS Phone: (503) 588-5582

Department Head Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

TITLE 2023 Federal Agenda Presentation

Issue, Description & Background The 2023 Federal Agenda includes policy and grant initiatives beneficial to the county and its community partners. Over the past several weeks the Marion County Board of Commissioners' office has collaborated with department heads and elected officials to develop a list of potential legislative priorities for the county's 2023 Federal Agenda. Within the 2023 Federal Agenda is a robust focus on restoration in the Santiam Canyon. Marion County continues to engage the services of CFM Advocates to assist with the development of the county's 2023 Federal Agenda and to promote the county's interest in Washington, DC.

Financial Impacts: N/A

Impacts to Department & External Agencies N/A

Options for Consideration: 1. Approve the 2023 Federal Agenda. 2. Do not approve the 2023 Federal Agenda.

Recommendation: Approve the 2023 Federal Agenda.

List of attachments: Draft 2023 Federal Agenda

Presenter: Jessica Stanton, BOC PAS Kirby Garrett, Senior Vice President, Federal Affairs Michael Skipper, Vice President, Federal Affairs

Copies of completed paperwork sent to the following: (Include names and e-mail addresses.)

Copies to: Jessica Stanton, BOC PAS



## Marion County 2023 Federal Agenda

### COUNTY INITIATIVES

#### ***North Santiam Canyon Economic Distress Relief Plan***

The Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 authorized \$15 million to support the Economic Development Plan for the Opal Creek Wilderness and Scenic Recreation Area. However, funds to implement the plan were never delivered until recently when the Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 Appropriations legislation included \$3 million in partial funding. Marion County strongly supports ongoing efforts by the State of Oregon to secure the remainder of this long-delayed funding. Once secured, these funds will support many specific investments for economic development projects in the region outlined in the 2014 North Santiam Canyon Economic Opportunity Study updated by the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments. Meanwhile, wildfires decimated residences and infrastructure throughout the canyon in 2020, exacerbating the need for federal support for the following four initiatives.

- ***Energy Security*** ***\$8,000,000***  
Homes and businesses in the Santiam Canyon are provided natural gas by a Northwest Natural pipeline that can only handle a limited amount of pressure. During winter temperatures, Northwest Natural is forced to halt supply to businesses to ensure residential customers have enough gas to heat their homes. Together with NW Natural and partners in the canyon, Marion County is seeking opportunities to help fund improvements to the pipeline, including inspection and replacement of valves to accommodate additional supply. In addition to supporting economic development and small businesses, improvements to the pipeline are critical to the construction of new housing units as part of the canyon community's wildfire recovery efforts.
  
- ***Wastewater Infrastructure*** ***\$70,000,000***  
The lack of wastewater (sewer) infrastructure in the NSC remains a barrier to economic development. The existing infrastructure is inadequate and cannot accommodate new users, preventing the growth of local businesses, homes, and facilities. Due to the region's unique geology and water source protection requirements, the cost of deploying wastewater infrastructure in the NSC is exponentially higher than in other locations. None of the local communities can finance individual, large-scale sewer projects without outside support. Marion County has worked with these communities for several years to develop a solution that meets the current and future needs of the region and to pursue federal funding for infrastructure deployment. The Beachie Creek and Lionshead Wildfires in September 2020 added significant urgency to the need for sewer infrastructure for the cities to build back sustainably while maintaining their small community's character. There are two systems needed to provide wastewater throughout the entire NSC. Below is an estimated cost of each wastewater system.
  - *Mill City / Gates Sewer System \$10,000,000*
  - *Detroit / Idanha Sewer System \$60,000,000*
  
- ***Public Safety Radio System*** ***\$3,650,000***  
The Beachie Creek Wildfire caused significant damage to two Marion County radio sites, one of which was completely destroyed. Together, the sites provided 100% of the public safety radio coverage for the upper North Santiam Canyon. Restoring this public safety radio system is critical to supporting emergency response. The damage incurred requires system-wide improvements as the aging technology has fallen out of compliance with

new standards, and replacement equipment is no longer manufactured. Marion County has dedicated sufficient funds to construct a new county-wide public safety radio communications system for all first responder agencies within the county. The project is currently in development. Rural fire districts and small city police departments do not have the funds to purchase the radio systems and parts to operate on the new radio system, creating a critical funding gap. Funding will purchase the subscriber radios, ensuring all first responder agencies have access to the new radio system and add a public address system to the radio project serving high-fire risk areas of Marion County.

- ***Parks Wildfire Recovery*** ***\$7,300,000***

The Beachie Creek Wildfire caused significant damage to six Marion County parks, many of which remain closed to the public. Marion County Parks has developed a comprehensive master plan for the six parks in the NSC. The redevelopment plan includes campgrounds, improved amenities, and site-specific educational activities. Pre-fire visitor data shows these parks served tens of thousands of users annually, and Marion County supports redeveloping these parks to generate more regional local tourism. All the NSC park projects are "shovel-ready." However, construction for redeveloping the parks requires additional funding.

***Interstate 5 Aurora-Donald Interchange Reconstruction*** ***\$36,100,000***

The Aurora-Donald Interchange provides access between much of northern Marion County and Interstate 5, the most crucial north-south highway on the west coast. Unfortunately, the interchange has been obsolete since its original construction in the 1960s. Its antiquated design consistently causes dangerous backups from the offramp terminals onto the Interstate, especially on the southbound ramp where Ehlen road has an adjacent intersection. With I-5 traffic between Salem and Portland having grown substantially over the past ten years and truck traffic projected to grow by 40% along this corridor in the near future, reconstructing this interchange is a top regional priority. Together with the Oregon Department of Transportation, Mid-Willamette Valley Area Transportation Commission, and other partners, Marion County is pursuing federal funding to complete this critical public safety and freight mobility project fully.

***Marion County Bridge Replacement Project*** ***\$45,184,986***

Marion County requests funding from the Bridge Investment Program (BIP) to replace seven county bridges that provide critical connectivity within the county road network. Some of the bridges are load limited and are in poor condition or in danger of falling into poor condition due to ongoing timber degradation. Load limitations placed on these and other county bridges have already land-locked major agricultural producers within the county, making it difficult or impossible for producers to ship cost-effectively produce to market. Marion County has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to strengthen bridges to reduce load restrictions but lacks the funds necessary to replace these seven key bridges. The project will improve the movement of goods and materials by replacing bridges in rural areas that rely on this infrastructure to transport agricultural products to market. Replacing these bridges will also enhance safety, improve access for non-vehicular traffic, and reduce fuel use and emissions by avoiding inefficient detours of load-limited bridges.

***McKay/Yergen/Ehlen Safety Corridor*** ***\$11,000,00***

Located on the National Highway System, the McKay/Yergen/Ehlen Road Corridor has been a high priority for Marion County for several years due to high rates of fatal crashes that exceed any other local road in Marion County. In 2021, the corridor was designated the first county-level safety corridor in Oregon. Under Oregon statute, this is a limited duration designation, not to exceed five years. During this time, Marion County has been investing in constructing local and systemic safety enhancements targeting the types of crash activity observed on the corridor. The cost of remaining corridor improvements greatly exceeds county resources.

- ***McKay/Yergen/Ehlen Safety Median Extension Project*** ***\$6,000,000***

The most numerous crashes throughout the entire corridor are lane departure crashes; the most severe of those involve head-on collisions when vehicles cross the centerline. Marion County is already constructing more than a mile of safety median, and this funding will extend the county's initial safety median by nearly three additional miles. This safety enhancement is projected to eliminate more than two serious injuries and fatalities annually.

- **McKay Road / French Prairie Road Intersection Project** **\$5,000,000**

This intersection is the location of the highest concentration of severe crashes on the corridor, involving multiple severe injuries and fatal crashes each year. The project would construct a safety-enhanced center turn pocket intersection with auxiliary acceleration refuge lanes in both directions. This safety enhancement is projected to eliminate about one severe injury or fatality every two years.

**Body-Worn Camera Program** **\$9,000,000**

Marion County is pursuing federal funds to implement a new Body-Worn Camera (BWC) program. This program seeks to equip each officer within the Marion County Sheriff's Department with BWCs, helping enhance the effectiveness and safety of our officers, promoting transparency and accountability, and supporting the efficiency and precision of adjudication proceedings.

**POLICY PRIORITIES**

**Maximize Federal Housing Support** – On January 10, 2023, Governor Kotek declared homelessness a state of emergency and signed an executive order to increase housing construction. Both actions by the Governor acknowledge that Oregon is in a housing crisis and that flexible rules for federal programs are imperative for the county's goals. To maximize federal investment in local housing programs, Marion County supports increased flexibility for local governments and organizations when administering funding. Specifically, Marion County supports the following changes:

- **HOME Investment CHDO Requirements** – HUD's HOME Investment Partnerships Program provides essential federal assistance to Marion County and other agencies for projects that build or operate affordable housing or provide tenant-based rental assistance. HUD requires that 15% of each recipient's allocation be set aside for projects led by a Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO). In 2013, HUD implemented changes that made it harder for nonprofits to be designated as CHDOs, severely diminishing the number of CHDOs nationwide. As a result, there are no qualified CHDOs in Marion County, and the County must return approximately \$500,000 of each allocation to the U.S. Treasury. We support legislative reform to waive the 15% set aside requirement for agencies with no CHDOs allowing entities like Marion County to best utilize this severely needed housing assistance on projects in our communities.
- **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program** – HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program has funding allocation requirements that serve as roadblocks preventing the most effective use of this funding.

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Flexibility** – Under ARPA's State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, Marion County received a direct allocation of \$67.6 million and additional funding re-allocated from the State of Oregon. Marion County is using this funding to complete significant projects supporting our communities and bolstering local economies. Seventeen of the thirty-seven projects within Marion County are for water, sewer, or broadband totaling \$26,298,000. Many projects will not meet the December 31, 2024, obligation deadline and December 31, 2026, liquidation deadline set forth by the law due to challenges from cost escalations and supply chain disruptions. Additionally, the large size of the ARPA program places a significant financial demand on local governments that can best be addressed by extending the end of non-contract labor reimbursement eligibility from December 31, 2023, to the end of the ARPA program. To continue working on these needed projects, Marion County requests an extension of the ARPA deadlines to allow for more flexibility in the timeline for those 17 infrastructure projects.

**Waste-to-Energy: Recognition as Clean Energy** – Waste-to-Energy power plants like the facility in Brooks, Oregon, provide clean, renewable energy and a sustainable alternative for waste disposal. If the EPA chooses to revise emission standards for existing power plants under the New Source Performance Standards/Emission Guidelines. In that case, it is critical that EPA recognizes the long-standing international treatment of Waste-to-Energy (WTE) as a greenhouse gas mitigation technology and that WTE is included in the compliance "toolbox." Furthermore, WTE is classified as a source of renewable electricity under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 due to its myriad of environmental benefits. The county opposes any effort by special interests to restrict its well-founded renewable classification.

***Repeal Inmate and Juvenile Corrections Exception for Federal Health Benefits*** – Under current law, governments are prohibited from billing federal programs like Medicaid for the health services provided to jail inmates prior to adjudication. Marion County supports legislation that would address the inmate exception for both juvenile corrections and adults in custody pending disposition of charges and ensure their continuity of care.

***Local Flexibility through Direct Federal Investment*** – Distribution of federal funding through programs like the Secure Rural Schools (SRS), Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), and the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund authorized under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) have each demonstrated the benefits of providing federal funding directly to local governments. This method streamlines funding distribution and provides flexibility for local governments to use the funding to address the highest needs in their communities. Marion County supports incorporating this approach through other federal funding streams to maximize federal investment in our county and others across the nation.

#### ***Santiam Canyon Wildfire Recovery***

The Beechie Creek/Lionshead fires of 2020 burned nearly 200,000 acres of land in the Santiam Canyon, destroying thousands of structures and homes in the towns of Detroit, Gates, and Mill City. Marion County stepped up to lead the government's response to the wildfires and is closely coordinating with FEMA, the State of Oregon, various agencies, local jurisdictions, and CBOs, to help residents and businesses rebuild. The county continues to prioritize infrastructure repair and replacement for future affordable owner-occupied housing in the Santiam Canyon. In addition, the county is pursuing various projects and programs to assist in rebuilding the canyon, such as downtown zone code revisions, a small business loan program, and a broadband gap analysis. Marion County strongly advocates and eagerly awaits for agencies to prioritize coordination with local governments and community partners to best address the canyon's needs.

***Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization*** – Marion County supports a long-term reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. Of the approximately 750,000 acres of land in Marion County, 206,000 (27%) is owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). In FY 2021, Marion County received a total of \$1,174,045 in SRS funding. Stabilizing and regulating funds from these national forest lands is a priority for Marion County as it grapples with unemployment and economic limitations, especially in rural areas.

***Support Responsible, Sustainable Solutions for the O&C Lands and USFS Forests*** – Marion County supports reform of federal forest management policies, including the management of O&C forest lands, to help provide long-term financial certainty. The 2.4 million acres of O&C forest lands are of critical importance to the health of communities across 18 Western Oregon counties. Marion County supports a timely, responsible, and sustainable plan for the O&C lands that provides legal certainty and will revive timber production generating economic growth, jobs, and financial stability to these counties. Additionally, the responsible management of the 206,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service land in Marion County would provide additional jobs and stable revenue streams to fund schools, law enforcement, and other county operations.

***Opioid and Methamphetamine Funding*** – Opioids, prescription, and illicit drugs, have become the main driver of drug overdose deaths in the United States, and methamphetamine use has recently resurged in Oregon and across the country. Between 2020 to 2022, nearly 33% of all confirmed overdose deaths in Marion County were due to fentanyl. Although Marion County is taking steps locally to provide prevention and treatment services, more assistance is needed. The county supports additional federal funding and coordination, like equipping police officers with naloxone (Narcan) to help Marion County and other communities combat the challenges of both opioids and meth.

***US Forest Service Wildfire Management Reform*** – Catastrophic wildfires continue to destroy federal forestlands each summer due to a lack of proper land management and restrictive federal response to these events. As a result, local communities are put at severe fire risk while surrounding areas suffer significant air quality hazards caused by wildfire smoke. Marion County supports reforming federal policies to enable the use of more effective forest management and wildfire response tools, including precommercial thinning, prescribed burning, and timber harvesting. Leveraging these

proven methods will help improve the health of our federal forests, mitigate wildfires, and provide long-term public health and economic benefits for our communities.

### ***Rural Broadband Deployment***

Broadband internet is essential for rural areas to overcome geographic and economic challenges. Currently, households and businesses in the North Santiam Canyon (NSC) are paying the same rates for internet access as their counterparts in urban areas but are getting much less. Connections are inadequate for reliable credit card transactions and data-rich video services. Marion County is leading a coalition of cities and residents to make deploying high-speed, reliable internet access a reality for the NSC and other rural areas in the county. The county is currently working towards identifying a strategy and gap analysis for broadband development in the NSC, specifically within the NSC's North Fork, Elk Horn, and Breitenbush areas.

#### ***Contacts:***

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