

**County Commissioners**  
Colm Willis, Chair  
Kevin Cameron  
Danielle Bethell



**Chief Administrative Officer**  
Jan Fritz

## MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION

### Low Height Bridge Structures Minutes

Tuesday, January 20, 2026, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Commissioners' Boardroom  
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5231  
Salem, Oregon 97301

#### Attendance:

**Commissioner's:** Colm Willis, and Kevin Cameron.

**Board's Office:** Alvin Klausen, Heather Inyama, Trevor Lane, Matt Lawyer, and Toni Whitler.

**Legal Counsel:** Steve Elzinga, and Andrew Mittendorf.

**Public Works:** Scott Wilson, Lani Radtke Brian Nicholas, and Carl Lund.

**Sheriff's Office:** Mark Ferron, and Nick Hunter.

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

#### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

-Commissioner Colm Willis

#### **2. Discussion**

-All

- Ongoing problem of trucks striking or getting stuck at multiple low height bridges:
  - Independence/Monmouth.
  - River Road South.
  - Riverside Road.
  - Riverdale Road.
  - Vitae Springs Road/Orville Road area.
- Many truck drivers rely primarily on GPS apps rather than truck specific routing.
  - Acknowledge seeing existing signs but proceed anyway.
  - Often citing GPS directions or employer instructions.
- Sign improvements placed in 2021 and reduced reported incidents by roughly half:
  - Incidents have begun to increase again in recent years.
- Law enforcement routinely responds to "traffic assist" calls and crash scenes:
  - Often requiring lengthy closures.
  - One incident lasted 7-8 hours.
- Areas receive trespass and damage as private driveways are used as turnarounds:
  - Blue Heron Farm.

#### **3. Background**

-Carl Lund

- Multiple low height bridges exist in short corridor:
  - Create "trap" conditions for over height vehicles.
- Current traffic controls include:

- Height warning signs in feet.
  - Length limited truck restrictions on some approaches.
  - Advisory speed signs before sharp curves and bridge approaches.
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) governs sign and symbol use.
- Center Street Bridge in Salem will undergo a major rehabilitation project:
  - Eastbound.
  - Work begins this summer.
  - Significant traffic impacts expected in subsequent construction seasons.
  - Night and weekend closures.
  - Expect truck traffic to push to Independence bridge and other county roads.

#### **4. Options**

-Carl Lund

- Signage & Communication
  - Increase pictogram based "No Trucks" signs and minimal text:
    - With large fine amounts up to \$2,000.
  - Consider additional over height warning signs depicting truck striking bridge.
  - Evaluate bilingual/metric information while avoiding driver confusion:
    - Feet vs. meters.
  - Deploy portable and overhead highway message boards:
    - Warning trucks not to route through the low bridge corridor.
    - On I5, OR 22, parkway.
- Physical / Technological Measures:
  - Install over-height detection systems with flashing beacons:
    - "STOP – OVERHEIGHT" warnings upstream of bridges.
  - Add hanging chains or similar devices at or before designated turnarounds:
    - Drivers get strong physical and auditory warning.
  - Identify, design, and potentially construct official truck turnarounds:
    - Possible railroad easement for turnaround near Vitae Springs/Orville.
  - Geometric speed features not vertical speed bumps at high-speed locations:
    - Chicanes.
- Regulatory & Enforcement:
  - Establish "No Through Trucks" or "Local Trucks Only" zones:
    - Clear pictograms and posted fines.
  - Citations and truck inspections to recoup some response and towing costs.
  - Increase fines and penalties via ordinance changes:
    - Especially during construction/detour periods.
  - Work with Polk County and local police for uniform signs and enforcement.
- Navigation / Apps:
  - Engage GPS and map providers:
    - Google, Waze, and truck routing services.
  - Remove or restrict routing of trucks through low bridge corridors.
  - Add warnings about low clearances and restrictions.

#### **5. Other**

-All

- Concerns about language barriers and sign readability for non-English speakers.
- Public perception is highly engaged:
  - Social media posts about crashes generate hundreds of comments.
  - Dedicated page tracks bridge incidents.
- Ferry may see more traffic as drivers seek alternatives during Center Street work:

- Potential consideration of extended hours.
- Federal and state advocacy opportunities identified with congressional offices and federal transportation/rail contacts.

## **6. Next Steps**

-All

- Draft letters to GPS providers demanding route corrections and low bridge warnings.
- Work with engineering and legal to draft an ordinance:
  - Creating truck restriction zones around the low height bridge areas.
  - Setting fine levels and enforcement framework:
    - Including use of posted dollar amount signs.
- Develop plan with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Oregon State Police, Polk County, and local law enforcement covering:
  - Detour strategies for Center Street Bridge closures.
  - Joint enforcement and public messaging.
- Prepare detailed cost estimates and options for:
  - Over height detection systems and hanging chain installations.
  - Recommended installation points:
    - Riverside.
    - Independence approaches
    - Vitae Springs/Orville approaches.
- Advance planning with railroad owner for:
  - Potential turnaround easement/design near rail line.
  - Allow safe reversal of trucks trapped between bridges.
- Prepare a memo with maps, photos, and incident visuals:
  - Upcoming meetings with federal representatives and transport/rail officials.
- ODOT meeting when contractor and schedule for Center Street project confirmed.

**Adjourned** – time: 2:16 p.m.

**Minutes by:** Mary Vityukova

**Reviewed by:** Gary L. White