

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