



**MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION**

**School Zones Overview
Minutes**

Thursday, April 23, 2026, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Commissioners' Boardroom
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5231
Salem, Oregon 97301

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Colm Willis, Danielle Bethell and Kevin Cameron.

Board's Office: Jonathan Sanford, Trevor Lane, Toni Whitler, and Matt Lawyer.

Legal Counsel: Steve Elzinga, and Andrew Mittendorf.

Public Works: Don Alexander, Carl Lund, Lani Radtke, Brian Nicholas.

Guests: Jacob Elzinga, William Elzinga, Preston Radtke, Eleanor Roberts

Citizen: Kathy Rodgers, Lacy Roberts

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Public Comment

-All

- Community member from North Marion school area described confusion and frustration with current 20 mph school speed zone on Boones Ferry Road:
 - Zone covers rural segments with fields and little daytime pedestrian activity.
 - Other school adjacent areas feel less protected.
- Received speeding ticket - 27 mph in a 20-mph zone:
 - Decelerating toward four-way stop by school complex.
 - Pulled over in narrow, unsafe shoulder area.
- Layout of North Marion schools:
 - All schools fronting Grim Road:
 - Boones Ferry as a 55-mph rural approach.
 - Where school zone signs currently start and end.
- Configuration feels "trap like" and not aligned with how drivers slow for stop:
 - May not match actual student use of roadside areas.
- Requested county review, relocation, or shorten Boone's Ferry school zone:
 - To better reflect actual school frontage, access, and student activity.
- Asked to be able to report any county action back to judge handling related citation.

3. Ordinance #1340

-Carl Lund

- Adopted June 25, 2014.

- Establish school zones and school speed zones in front of all schools in unincorporated areas of county.
- Requires changes to school zones to be approved by Board of Commissioners (BOC).
- BOC may approve flashing school speed limit beacon installation at school request.
- Allows schools to participate in costs of beacon installation and maintenance.
- Provides an opt-out mechanism for schools that do not want school speed zones.
- Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) focuses on school and school speed zones to protect pedestrians and bicyclists as vulnerable road users.
- Past removal of school speed zone near Cascade High School and restoration of 55-mph speed limit preceded fatal crash involving high school student:
 - Drove conservative, safety focused policy and adoption of Ordinance 1340

4. Existing School Zones & Flashing Beacons

-Carl Lund

- Categories:
 - Schools with flashing beacons or reduced speeds on roads directly adjacent to school grounds.
 - Schools with flashing beacons on non-adjacent roadways that are heavily used by students and pedestrians.
 - Schools with 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. school zones on adjacent roads:
 - Separation between roads posted under 55 mph and higher speed approaches.
 - Schools that historically declined school speed zones via written correspondence.
- Example locations:
 - Some schools have beacons both on main frontage and nearby non-adjacent roads due to intense student and pedestrian activity:
 - Auburn and Four Corners.
 - In Howell area city streets are adjacent to schools while county flashers are on nearby county roads used by students.
 - Sublimity and Scott elementaries have beacons on busier main roads:
 - Very low volume adjacent roads do not have beacons.
 - Turner area described well-controlled school zone with clear signage:
 - Elementary off main road.
 - High school on the main road.
- Several schools originally elected not to have school speed zones:
 - Decisions still influence current configurations.
- Current beacon inventory:
 - 27 pairs of flashing school speed beacons in service across the county.

5. Future Flashing Beacon Installations

-Carl Lund

- Transportation System Plan (TSP) calls for installing flashing school speed limit beacons at all schools in certain categories:
 - Primarily 7 a.m.–5 p.m. school zones.
- Estimated capital cost is about \$38,000 to install one pair of flashing beacons.
- Build out plan:
 - 37 pairs are needed to equip all targeted schools, in addition to 27 existing pairs.
 - Current budget funds roughly one new pair per year.

- Plan to propose increasing to 2–4 new pairs per year in future budgets to accelerate deployment.
- Operating and maintenance costs per pair:
 - Annual cellular connection service for remote programming and monitoring.
 - Five-year maintenance and battery replacement cycle.
 - Yearly physical maintenance.
- Maintenance model:
 - County currently performs most maintenance:
 - Less expensive than contracting out.
 - Beacons occasionally malfunction:
 - Incorrect flashing schedules, continuous flashing.
 - Many issues can be resolved remotely, but some require on site hard resets.
 - Knock downs from crashes or storms require substantial replacement of poles, solar panels, and beacon heads:
 - Some components can be salvaged.
- Funding:
 - Costs currently paid from County Road Fund.
 - Potential future use of Safe Routes to School or similar grants if available.

6. Future Approach – BOC Preferences

-Carl Lund

- Support installing flashing school speed limit beacons at all schools.
- Contact schools that previously declined to see if position has changed:
 - Given growth and traffic changes.
- Obtain written confirmations from schools that choose to opt-out.
- Prioritization guidance:
 - Emphasize larger school complexes and locations with higher traffic volumes.
 - Use crash history and safety risk as key factors when schools appear similar.
 - Pay attention to high-speed road approaches where differences are large.
- Operational expectations:
 - For routine or clearly beneficial changes, work sessions are not always required:
 - Notification by email may be sufficient.
 - Complex/controversial adjustments may be brought to board for discussion

7. Discussion

-All

- North Marion for example:
 - School speed zone on Boones Ferry Road covers segment with ball fields and limited daytime use:
 - Key access and higher student activity occur elsewhere.
 - 20-mph zone starts and ends at locations that feel unintuitive relative to all-way stop:
 - Confusion for drivers who are decelerating or accelerating from stop.
 - Concern of perceived fairness and enforcement feeling like speed trap.
- Potential changes:
 - Move or shorten school speed zone:
 - Focus on direct school driveways and higher pedestrian activity.
 - Extend zone closer to, or slightly beyond, all way stop:
 - Drivers have clearer, more intuitive transitions in and out of zone.

- Align signage so drivers approaching from all legs of intersection understand when they are entering and exiting school zone.
- Broader design principles:
 - All-way stops reduce speeds:
 - Not substitute for school speed zones where students are present.
 - School zones should clearly protect areas where students walk, bike, or cross:
 - Minimize low activity segments that create public frustration.
- Beacon operations:
 - Plan for new schools and long-term replacement of existing devices.

8. Other

-All

- Update on Detroit RV Park and city coordination:
 - County is the building official for RV park but not enforcer of Detroit's land use code.
 - City is responsible for its land use enforcement:
 - County's role is limited to building code compliance and permits.
 - Plan meeting with city representatives, consultants, owners, and county to coordinate with land use decisions and building code requirements.
- Septage collection system:
 - County obtained Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) permits for new septage collection system at RV park.
 - Design finalized and construction planned for end of recreational season.

9. Next Steps

-All

- North Marion school speed zone:
 - Reevaluate extent of 20 mph school speed zone on Boones Ferry Road in relation to all-way stop, school access points, and actual student activity.
 - Develop adjustments improving safety and matching driver expectations.
 - Give feedback to community members and information can be shared with court regarding citation.
- Flashing beacon implementation:
 - Install flashing beacons at all applicable schools.
 - Prepare budget proposals to increase number of beacon pairs installed annually to about two to four.
 - Integrate new and existing beacons into maintenance and replacement schedule.
- School engagement:
 - Contact schools that currently do not have school speed zones or beacons to confirm their current position.
 - Collect updated written responses from schools that still opt out and file them for planning and liability purposes.
- Cost tracking and reporting:
 - Total annual costs for operating school zones and flashing beacons:
 - Cellular service, routine maintenance, battery replacement, troubleshooting, and major repairs.
 - Provide updates on costs, progress, and major school zone adjustments.

Adjourned – time: 2:34 p.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova
Reviewed by: Gary L. White