



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION

River Road Truck Turnarounds
Minutes

Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Commissioners' Boardroom
Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Suite 5231
Salem, Oregon 97301

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Danielle Bethell, Kevin Cameron and Colm Willis.

Board's Office: Jonathan Sanford, Trevor Lane, Alvin Klausen and Matt Lawyer.

Legal Counsel: Andrew Mittendorf.

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

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

Commissioner Colm Willis called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

-Commissioner Colm Willis

2. Background

a) Existing Turnarounds – Homestead Rd, Independence Bridge, Sidney Rd

b) Extensive Signing

c) Map App Research – Carl Lund, Public Works

-Carl Lund

Summary of Discussion:

Three existing truck turnaround locations in Marion County that serve low-clearance structures along River Road:

Sidney Road.

Homestead Drive/Browns Island.

Riverside/Independence Bridge area.

The challenge is none of the turnarounds are directly adjacent to the bridges. Over height trucks often reach the bridge before realizing they cannot pass and then must travel miles to turn around. Building new, dedicated turnarounds close to the bridges would be costly and constrained by limited right-of-way. Staff are focusing on improving how trucks use existing turnarounds. Referenced work with digital map and navigation providers, some success in updating Google's information about low-clearance structures. Truck-specific routing remains incomplete and continues to contribute to misrouting.

Direction & Follow-Up

No Board direction or follow-up was identified.

3. Scope/Options

a) Clankers

b) Truck Restrictions

c) Over Height Detection System with Static Signs & Beacons

d) Over Height Detection System with Variable Message Signs

e) Physical Turn-Arounds – Orville, Blue Heron

- Carl Lund

Summary of Discussion:

Three-phase concept to reduce bridge strikes and improve driver compliance.

Phase one:

Consists of installing hanging “chains” or “clankers” at approach points to provide tactile and audible feedback when an over height truck contacts them.

Estimated combined cost for chains at all three sites are just under \$765,000.

Full multi-phase programs across four related sites are at approximately \$1.8 million.

Phase two:

Add over height detection systems with flashing beacons that activate when an over height vehicle is detected.

Phase three:

Install variable message signs capable of displaying text warnings.

Existing static signs and continuously flashing amber beacons are ignored by drivers. Commissioner Bethell advocated stronger warnings. Use of red lights rather than amber and imposing substantial fines on drivers who ignore the devices. Public Works and Legal Counsel concerned that red signals are regulatory in nature. They may conflict with standards if placed at locations that are not mandatory stop points. Particularly given that some trucks legitimately serve destinations beyond warning locations. Discussed using variable message signs for multilingual messaging, including English and Spanish. Potential to align sign language with predominant languages involved in past incidents, subject to data and legal considerations.

Staff and Commissioners discussed enforcement and data collection. Possibility of using laser-based pedestrian-style counters at chain locations to record over height contacts for evaluation purposes. Nick Hunter proposed adding Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras to powered poles at warning points. To capture license plates and images of vehicles passing under chains, allowing identification of repeat offenders and providing detailed traffic data. Typical cost of about \$10,000 per camera, not including power and installation. Public Works staff stated that phase-one cost estimates do not include electrical work or cameras. Commissioners are interested in using data to contact companies whose vehicles repeatedly strike warning devices and support enforcement.

Commissioners discussed funding sources, including road funds and Sheriff’s traffic safety funds. While road fund is larger, traffic safety fund supports traffic safety technologies and personnel. Commissioner Cameron questioned the project cost and favored phase one first to evaluate effectiveness before investing in phases two or three. Commissioners expressed agreement to proceed with phase one at all identified locations. Further review of funding sources and potential enhancements such as ALPR cameras and data collection to follow.

Direction & Follow-Up:

Task: Proceed with implementation of phase one at all identified River Road-related locations. Using the approximate estimate, &765,000 as the working cost figure. |

Assigned To: Carl Lund. | **Deadline/Timeline:** Not specified.

Task: Research into legal and engineering standards of using red versus amber warning lights at over height detection locations. Including any limitations on using red signals where vehicles are not required to stop. | **Assigned To:** Lani Radtke with Legal Counsel. | **Deadline/Timeline:** Not specified

Task: Evaluate options for incorporating ALPR cameras and related additional costs. | **Assigned To:** Nick Hunter in coordination with Public Works. | **Deadline/Timeline:** Not specified.

Task: Consider and implement data-collection methods to track over height contacts with chains for evaluation and enforcement purposes. | **Assigned To:** Carl Lund | **Deadline/Timeline:** Not specified

4. Other

-All

Summary of Discussion:

Upcoming Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) hearing in Astoria regarding regional scenario plan prepared under state Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) rules. Marion County, Salem, and Keizer each submitted scenario plan materials. State Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) staff report will recommend adoption of Salem-Keizer regional scenario plan for entire region. Marion County, cities, and an outside commenter will have 10-minute opportunities to provide testimony at the hearing. There is an option to appear in person or via Zoom. Commissioner Bethell concerned implications of applying Salem-Keizer plan to East Salem. Potential adverse impacts on community and disagreements with a densified scenario for area. Completion of scenario plan is prerequisite for Salem and Keizer to complete their urban Transportation System Plan (TSP). Marion County does not have its own urban TSP but typically participates in the city TSP processes. They include county roads within Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Discussed relationship between the city TSP, county authority over county roads, and proposed projects such as road diets. County retains jurisdiction over its roads and any proposed city projects affecting county roads would be brought to Board if concerns were raised.

Legal Counsel suggested details of legal options and risks regarding scenario plan and LCDC hearing be discussed in executive session. Commissioners agreed to discuss with Legal Counsel on how to respond if Salem-Keizer's plan is adopted and how to structure county's testimony at the hearing.

Direction & Follow-Up:

Task: Meet with Legal Counsel to review the DLCD staff recommendation, Marion County's submitted scenario plan, and legal options prior to the LCDC hearing. |

Assigned To: Carl Lund/Legal Counsel | **Deadline/Timeline:** Following week.

Task: Return in executive session if appropriate, to brief on legal considerations and get direction regarding testimony and Marion County's response at the LCDC hearing. |

Assigned To: Legal Counsel and Public Works | **Deadline/Timeline:** Before October LCDC hearing.

5. Next Steps

-All

Summary of Discussion:

Commissioners and staff revisited funding discussion for phase one of the River Road truck turnaround project. Phase one is estimated at approximately \$764,000 and considered splitting costs between road and Sheriff's traffic safety funds. No final decision was made pending additional financial information. Commissioner Willis is interested in understanding how much money is in the traffic safety fund and how it is currently being used.

Commissioner Bethell stated there is over \$3 million identified in the adopted budget for the traffic safety fund including networking capital. Request more detailed information on year-to-year revenues, expenditures, and carryforward balances. Provide "the last three years of the traffic safety fund and roll up year to year" including what is earned, spent, and carried forward. Staff stated information would be obtained, with reference to coordinating with Sheriff's Office and finance staff.

Lani Radtke clarified some elements of the project may require outside professional services. Asked if Public Works could proceed with a procurement process, such as a Request for Procurement (RFP), for consultants. Commissioners Bethell and Cameron verbally agreed. A second Commissioner concurrence was noted, indicating that Public Works may move forward with potential RFP for consultant support related to the project.

Direction & Follow-Up:

Task: Provide last three years of financial information for traffic safety funds, including annual revenues, expenditures, and carryforward/networking capital balances. |

Assigned To: Matt Lawyer, in coordination with Sheriff's Office/Finance. |

Deadline/Timeline: Not specified

Task: Schedule a discussion to review traffic safety fund data and determine how to fund phase one of the project, including any split between road and traffic safety funds. |

Assigned To: Board of Commissioners Office. | **Deadline/Timeline:** Not specified.

Task: Proceed with preparing RFP or similar procurement to obtain outside consultant services for River Road turnarounds and associated warning systems. | **Assigned To:** Lani Radtke. | **Deadline/Timeline:** Not specified.

Adjourned – time: 3:40 p.m.

Minutes by: Mary Vityukova

Reviewed by: Gary L. White