

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In early November 2011, Clark County wrapped up major construction on its portion of the Salmon Creek Interchange Project, a \$133 million joint project with the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Although the Salmon Creek project will remain part of Clark County's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as the state finishes its work, completion of the county's portion represents a milestone in building a much-needed project.

It also marks a turning point in the county's transportation program. Traditional funding sources are not keeping pace with transportation needs, especially as stringent environmental regulations make projects more expensive. In the future, most county projects will be smaller, both in scope and cost.

When the county adopted the 2005-10 TIP, the county expected to spend \$12.8 million in traffic impact fees over the six-year period. Today, as the economic downturn enters its fourth year, the county expects to spend only \$6.8 million from traffic impact fees in the next six years, a 47 percent reduction from the 2005-10 TIP.

The drop in state and federal grants and other outside revenues is less pronounced, a 16 percent reduction from the 2005-10 TIP to what the county expects to spend from these sources in the 2012-17 TIP.

With the decline of grants and impact fees, the county will rely more on the County Road Fund, which is primarily generated by local property taxes, to design and build capital infrastructure. The county also will adjust its priorities to emphasize preservation of its transportation infrastructure, namely almost 2,700 lane miles of roads and 78 bridges.

The 2012-17 TIP envisions spending \$52 million on overlays, surface seals and other preservative measures during the next six years. That's more than twice the \$23 million allocated for preservation in the 2005-10 TIP.

This emphasis is grounded in fiscal reality. Preservation adds seven to 10 years to the life of a road. For every \$1 Clark County spends to preserve a road, it avoids paying up to 15 times that amount to rebuild a road.

Fortunately, the county's pavement condition index, which uses a numerical score between 0 and 100 to indicate the condition of the county's road network, remains high at 80. But even with more money being allocated to preservation, the pavement condition index is projected to slowly drop to 69 over the next 20 years.

The county is not focused on preservation to the exclusion of all else. The 2012-17 TIP includes \$121 million for construction of transportation infrastructure.

Next year, the county will break ground on a long-awaited major project: widening and improving NE 88th Street, from Highway 99 east to NE St. Johns Road. The county also will replace Cougar Creek Bridge on NE Washougal River Road, one of the last remaining wood bridges owned and maintained by the county.

Further out on the construction horizon is completing the NE 10th Avenue corridor on the west side of I-5 between NE 139th and 179th streets. In October 2011, the county had an initial meeting with a group of property owners and investors who want to see that area opened up to urban development.

Clark County also will continue to get better performance from its existing infrastructure. The Traffic Signal Optimization Program allows the county to use new technology to improve traffic flow, increase roadway capacity and make rapid signal adjustments in response to accidents, construction or everyday congestion.

In 2012, the county expects to complete traffic signal upgrades on NE Padden Parkway and NE Andresen Road, as well as along NE 99th Street on both sides of Interstate 5. Most of the money to pay for these projects will come from federal grants and partnerships.

As Clark County moves ahead, it also will use new techniques to collect and treat polluted storm runoff. When rain hits roads and other hard surfaces, it picks up dirt, oil and other pollutants that can harm aquatic life if allowed to enter our rivers, streams and wetlands.

In 2009, the county secured \$1.8 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds for improving a section of NE 99th Street in north Orchards. This project was the first in a series of "Green Streets" that incorporate low-impact development techniques, such as rain gardens, to collect and treat polluted runoff from the roadway.

In 2010, the county used pervious pavement for most of the Salmon Creek Park & Ride lot built as part of the Salmon Creek Interchange Project. Pervious pavement allows runoff to soak through the surface and infiltrate into the ground, eliminating the need to build large detention ponds and other stormwater infrastructure.

The county will look to use these techniques, where feasible, on upcoming projects. Rain gardens are being incorporated into the design for the improvement at NE 119th Street and NE 50th Avenue, which is scheduled to be built in early 2013.

These techniques are part of adjusting to new realities. Traditional funding sources might be declining, but Clark County remains committed to improving safety, easing congestion, supporting job creation, reversing environmental degradation and getting better performance out of our existing infrastructure.

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