

# CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

## Policy Session Worksheet

**Presentation Date:** April 20, 2021    **Approx. Start Time:** 3 pm    **Approx. Length:** 60 minutes

**Presentation Title:** Vehicle Registration Fee Outreach Discussion

**Departments:** Transportation & Development (DTD); Public & Government Affairs (PGA)

**Presenters:** Dan Johnson, Director, DTD; Sue Hildick, Director, PGA; Mike Bezner, Assistant Director-Transportation, DTD

**Other Invitees:** Dave Queener, Project Manager, DTD; Kimberly Dinwiddie-Webb, PGA; Trent Wilson, Government Affairs Specialist, PGA; Ellen Rogalin, Community Relations Specialist-Senior, PGA;

### WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

No action needed. This is a chance for commissioners to discuss outreach options related to the countywide vehicle registration fee (VRF).

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Background

In February 2019, the Board of County Commissioners approved a \$30/year countywide vehicle registration fee. The fee became effective on Jan. 1, 2020, and is expected to bring in approximately \$11 million/year in revenue, which is being used as follows:

- 50% for the county on roads for congestion relief, safety improvements and local road paving projects, tracked through a new **Community Road Fund (CRF) program**
- 40% for cities to use on their roads as they determine, distributed based on population
- 10% for a *Strategic Investment Fund*, set aside by the county, to be used jointly as agreed to by the county and cities on road transfers and transportation projects of mutual interest

**Before the VRF was approved**, staff conducted extensive outreach with residents throughout the county to discuss the need for the VRF and how the funds would be used, and to listen to comments and answer questions. For example, in addition to the steady stream of information on websites, in newsletters, on social media and in the news media, in 2018 and 2019 there were other outreach efforts, including those described below.

DTD leadership shared information with community and business groups throughout the county on the need for a countywide VRF to raise additional funds for local transportation projects. The meetings were publicized by the organizations that hosted the meetings, and publicized by the county through emails, social media, flyers and the county website.

- 11 presentations with a total of approximately 200 participants:
  - 7 to community groups (hosted by the Clackamas County Committee for Community Involvement and/or a Community Planning Organization)
  - 3 to business groups (hosted by a chamber or business alliance)
  - 1 to a city council (invited by the city)
- Meetings were held in locations throughout the county:
  - Unincorporated areas – Clackamas, Oak Grove, Redland, Welches
  - Incorporated areas – Estacada, Milwaukie, Molalla, Oregon City
- There were three general responses from participants:
  - Questions about the specific impact of the VRF on them, e.g., which vehicles would be included, and the hardship that might entail

- Wondering why the County hasn't pursued a gas tax
- Better understanding of the need, and a belief that most people would understand the need if they attended a similar County outreach and education session

Extensive and intensive discussions were also held with our city partners, primarily through C4 meetings where the VRF was a major topic of discussion at four meetings.

**Since February 2019**, there has been steady outreach about the VRF, the process for determining which projects to fund first with the revenue and the use of the VRF revenue. That outreach included:

- Six public meetings in the following locations to gather community input on what capital projects are of most importance
  - Clackamas
  - Oak Grove
  - Lake Oswego
  - Beavercreek
  - Welches
  - Molalla
- An online public survey to gather input on community priorities related to capital projects
- The creation and implementation of the Community Road Fund Advisory Committee as a new county ABC. The committee met six times in 2019 to develop initial recommendations and has met twice since then. The meetings are publicized and open to the public.
- Articles in county publications, including the quarterly (now twice-a-year) newsletter mailed to addresses across the county and the monthly email newsletter
- A website with information about the VRF and how the revenue would be used, as well as references to CRF funding on websites for projects funded with VRF revenue
- Social media
- Presentations to business organizations, CPOs and other groups about the VRF in general and specific projects funded by VRF revenue

**Since the VRF went into effect in January 2020**, outreach has been taking place to let people know how the revenue is being spent and is planned to be spent. To ensure accountability and transparency to the public, the county's VRF revenue goes in the new Community Road Fund, which we promote to help people easily see what projects are funded by the new fee. Ongoing outreach includes:

- a website (<https://www.clackamas.us/transportation/crf>),
- presentations to CPOs and other community groups,
- clear CRF branding on project notification postcards, social media, web pages, etc. for projects funded through the Community Road Fund,
- articles in county print and electronic publications, and
- informative project signage.

Discussion also takes place with cities, individually and at C4 meetings, and cities are beginning share information about VRF-funded projects with their own residents.

In addition, staff has been responding directly to resident inquiries, including those directed to us by the state Department of Motor Vehicles. Though there aren't many inquiries, less than a couple a month, there continues to be a common thread around the VRF associated with trailers. Staff is researching options and believe there may be an opportunity to reduce certain trailer fees, which is a discussion staff would like to have with the board in the near future.

## **Current BCC Discussions**

Beginning in January 2021, the BCC has had several discussions about the future of the VRF, including whether it should be revoked by the BCC and/or put on a ballot to be voted on by county citizens. Commissioners have also discussed the need for community outreach before any action is taken.

To further the discussion on outreach, staff suggests the BCC consider:

1. The purpose of the outreach
2. The audience
3. Timeframe of the outreach
4. Role of special stakeholders
  - a. Cities / Clackamas Coordinating Committee (C4)
  - b. Community Road Fund Advisory Committee
  - c. Traffic Safety Commission

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing)**

**Is this item in your current budget?** No, outreach beyond what is already taking place is not budgeted.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

- **How does this item align with your Department's Strategic Business Plan goals?**  
The VRF aligns with DTD's mission to provide services so that future generations can experience and invest in a healthy, safe and livable community.
- **How does this item align with the County's Performance Clackamas goals?**  
The VRF aligns with the Board goal to provide a strong infrastructure.

## **LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS**

County Counsel has been consulted about legal requirements to revoke the VRF and to refer a measure to the ballot. Details are in the [staff report](#) from the March 2, 2021 BCC Policy Session, *Vehicle Registration Fee Update*.

## **PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION**

See **Background**, above, for overview of past and current public/governmental outreach. Public & Government Affairs would work closely with DTD to plan and conduct any additional outreach and/or oversee any additional outreach that would be implemented by a consultant. Depending on the scope and breadth of the outreach required, PGA would need to hire a consultant. The cost for such a contract would likely range between \$60,000 and \$100,000.

## **OPTIONS**

No action needed; discussion only.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

No action needed; discussion only.

## **SUBMITTED BY:**

Division Director/Head Approval \_\_\_\_\_

Department Director/Head Approval \_\_\_\_\_

County Administrator Approval \_\_\_\_\_

*For information on this issue or copies of attachments, please contact Dan Johnson at 503-742-4325.*