

Input sought on transit, transportation

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

Anyone who walks, bikes or runs along Grand Ronde Road has seen their share of semi and log truck traffic.

“It’s only a matter of time until there is a tragedy because of it,” Tribal Public Works Coordinator John Mercier said.

He said that most large semitrucks cannot navigate a narrow curve on Highway 22 (Hebo Road) near Kissing Rock because it doesn’t have a shoulder, so most choose to use Grand Ronde Road and connect to Highway 18 from there.

That’s why realigning Highway 22 at Kissing Rock is one of the mid-range proposed projects for the upcoming Tribal Transportation Plan, with completion projected in seven to 12 years.

Mercier spoke to 24 Tribal, community and staff members, as well as transit planners at the Tribe’s transportation program public involvement meeting held at the Tribal gym on Wednesday, Nov. 28, to gauge public input on the Tribe’s future transportation priorities. Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier also was in attendance.

Employees from various transit agencies and Tribal departments were available to answer questions. Copies of the proposed local roads safety plan and long-range transportation plan were available for review and comment.

The Tribe receives federal transportation funding of which a percentage must be used for transportation planning. Two of the biggest projects completed with these funds have included adding a sidewalk to Grand Ronde Road and



Map created by George Valdez

the reconstruction of eight miles of Agency Creek and Yoncalla Creek roads.

Transportation program funds have increased from \$589,755 in 2012 to \$1.12 million in 2018.

“We have to plan out how to use these funds by having a Transportation Improvement Plan,” Mercier said. “We update this on an annual basis.”

The final plan will be complete by January. Once adopted by Tribal Council, the Tribe will prepare a Transportation Improvement Pro-

gram for implementing high-priority projects.

The Tribe is working with the Native American-owned professional services firm Akana, which is based in Portland. It has been developing Tribal transportation plans since the mid-1990s.

“Access to Tribal facilities, services and housing is always a big part of any plan,” Vice President Dennis Petrequin said. “Transit, traffic safety and road maintenance are other issues. We also wanted to update the 190 miles of roads and trails that make up the Tribal system.”

Based on discussions with the Tribe, short-term proposed projects over the next six years include phase three of Elder Housing roadways and various traffic safety improvements, such as lighted crosswalks and speed feedback signs on Grand Ronde Road, and school bus warning signs on Highway 22.

Other short-term projects include creating a wetlands trail, forest trails and Eade Subdivision Loop Road, upgrading the Railroad

Station access road, upgrading Murphy Road and continuing transportation planning and maintenance.

Mid-range projects include a Grand Ronde Road overlay, Highway 22 realignment at Kissing Rock, extending Tyee Road east, upgrading Hubert Road, and creating new Spirit Mountain Casino access roads and an RV park road.

Long-range projects include extending Andy Riggs Road and McPherson Road West, upgrading North and South streets, and widening Coast Creek Road.

Mercier said that he continues reaching out to different Tribal programs and Tribal Council to see what projects are in the works so that adequate transportation can be provided.

“We are coming up with an agreement and recommendations for the best way to make improvements,” he said. “We want to support a safe community and provide equitable access. ... We try to establish those relationships.”

The Tribal Transit Plan also is up for review. Transit goals include providing increased access through adding local routes and stops, as well as growing partnerships with area transit agencies to provide increased services.

A transit rider survey indicated that a majority use public transit for employment purposes, followed by recreation and leisure trips, shopping and medical appointments.

Survey respondents indicated that they desire improved bus frequency and longer service spans, as well as service into Dallas.

Proposed short-term recommendations for future transit services include adding Dallas as a stop on existing service from Grand Ronde to Salem, adding a local circulator through Grand Ronde, introducing Dial-A-Ride within the community for seniors and people with disabilities, and working with Spirit Mountain Casino to allow employee access to its shuttle, as well as revise transit arrival and departure times from the casino to correlate with employee shifts.

To give final input on the transportation or transit plans, contact Mercier at 503-879-2117 or john.mercier@grandronde.org. ■

Cherry appointed to casino board of directors

MEETING continued
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in 2012 through the Bonneville Power Administration’s Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program.

- Granted signing authority on Tribal bank and investment accounts to Assistant Controller Amy Gallant, who is replacing Jody Jerger. Jerger will be retiring at the end of December.
- Approved the appointment of Spirit Mountain Community Fund Executive Director Mychal Cherry to the Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. Board of Directors with a term ending in 2021.
- And approved the enrollment of an infant and one minor into the Tribe because they meet the enrollment requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.

Also included in the Dec. 12 Tribal Council packet were approved authorizations to proceed that:

- Approved new sponsorship guidelines that will take effect

on Jan. 1;

- Approved spending \$2,763 per year for three years to put up Christmas lighting at the Governance Center and one tree in Tribal Housing. The amount will be added to the Facilities Department budget in 2019 and 2020;
- Approved Uyxat Powwow Grounds arbor grass replacement and the IT/Procurement/Mailroom building design as two projects to proceed with in the 2019 capital improvement projects budget;
- Approved a letter of support for changing the name of Squaw Creek to Nestucca Bobb Creek in Tillamook County;
- And approved appointing Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier to the Marion-Polk Food Share Board of Directors to serve as the Tribe’s representative, replacing former Tribal Council member Brenda Tuomi.

The entire meeting can be viewed by visiting the Tribal website at www.grandronde.org and clicking on the News tab and then Video. ■

GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP ORDINANCE OPEN FOR COMMENT

Tribal Council adopted, on an emergency basis, amendments to the Guardianship and Conservatorship Ordinance at the Nov. 28, 2018, Tribal Council meeting.

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to protect the assets of disabled Tribal children who are wards of state court by allowing the Children and Family Services Program to file for conservatorship in Tribal Court for children in state court dependency care and to provide that in such cases, the appropriate state department is included in the definition of “Interested Persons.”

Tribal Council invites comment on the amendments to the Guardianship and Conservatorship Ordinance. For a copy of the amendments, please contact the Tribal Attorney’s Office at 503-879-4664. Please send your comments to the Tribal Attorney’s Office, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347, or by e-mail to legal@grandronde.org. Comments must be received by Jan. 15, 2019. ■