

Surveying crews prepping for eventual road improvements

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Surveying crews were busy in the Grand Ronde area during the last week of October, laying the foundation for eventual improvements to highways 18 and 22 by the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Improvements on Highway 18 between Fort Hill and AR Ford roads are currently in the design phase, according to the project details posted on the Transportation Department's website.

The planning and design process seeks to improve safety and mobility on highways 18 and 22 (Hebo Road), support community and economic development, and enhance emergency routes.

"This area has seen increasing traffic and a relatively high rate of crashes," ODOT states.

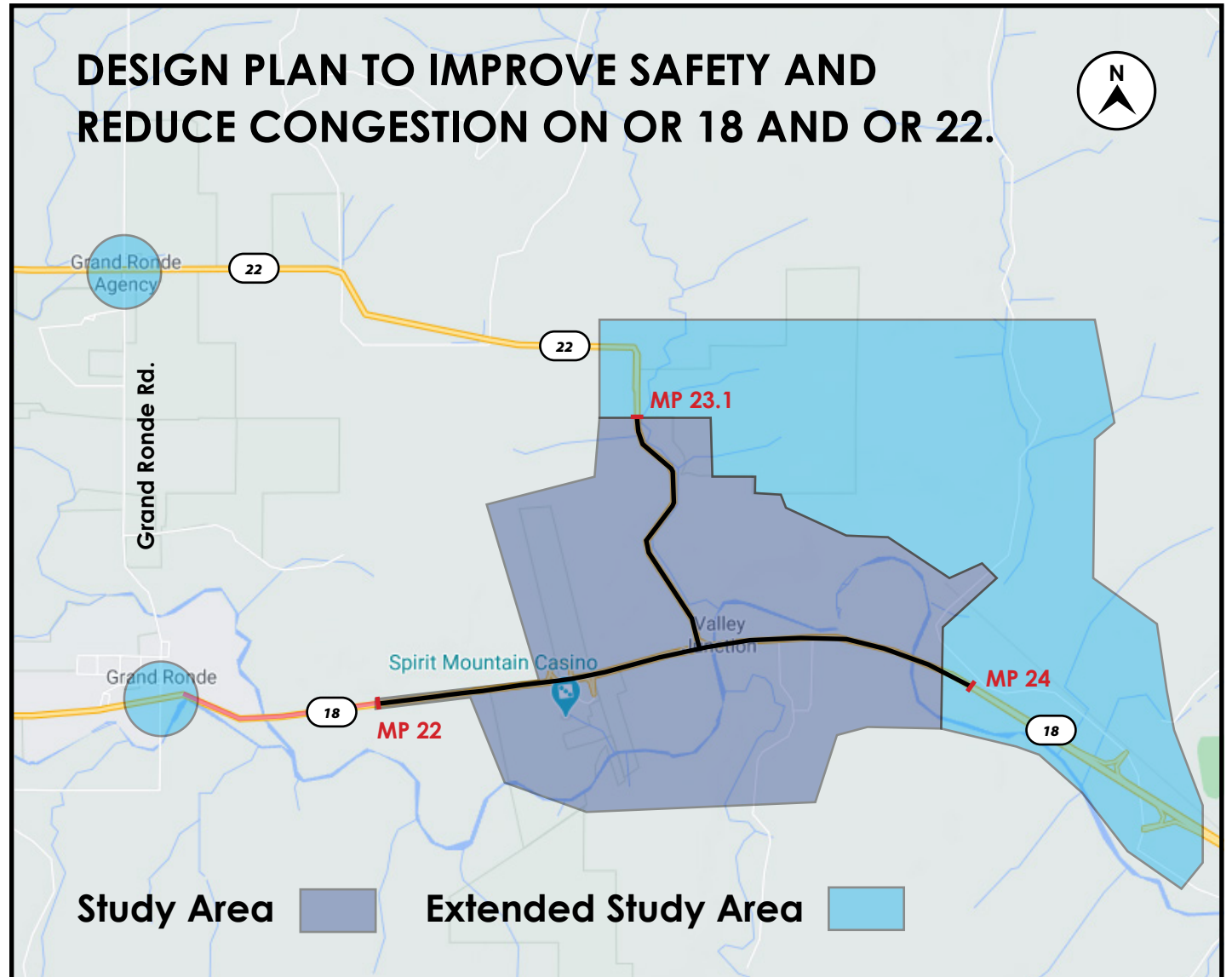
Currently, ODOT is developing a facility plan, updating its environmental assessment, conducting right-of-way surveys and preparing engineering plans and estimates.

The surveys will "help support the planning and initial design of the project," said ODOT spokesperson Louis Torres.

Design costs for the project are estimated at approximately \$4.5 million. The funds are a combination of federal, state, Polk County and Grand Ronde Tribal monies.

"We have been working very closely with the Tribe on improving this intersection and stretch of OR 18," Torres said. "The Tribe has been an important partner in this project."

According to ODOT, Highway 18



Map created by Samuel Briggs III

(Salmon River Highway) experiences heavy traffic, especially on summer weekends, that creates considerable delays.

During heavy traffic periods, drivers turning left from Hebo and Grand Ronde roads on to Highway 18 face a difficult task. In addition,

freight traffic has been using alternatives to Highway 18, posing safety issues on local roadways.

"More crashes are happening with drivers crossing over the middle line into oncoming traffic or rear-ending cars ahead of them along this stretch of Oregon 18 and on local roadways," ODOT says.

The road improvements were identified by ODOT in 2004 as part of H.B. Van Duzer Forest Corridor to Steel Bridge Road environmental assessment and corridor refinement plan, which seeks to address safety and congestion concerns from the eastern edge of the Van

Duzer Corridor and Steel Bridge Road east of Wallace Bridge.

"This segment is a vital link between the Willamette Valley and the central Oregon coast that serves local, commuter, commercial and recreational traffic," ODOT states.

Tribal Public Works Coordinator John Mercier said the engineering phase of the project may be included in ODOT's next three-year state transportation improvement program that runs from 2021-24 and hopefully actual construction can be included in the 2024-27 program. ■

First time since 1984 that Tribe will not be hosting an in-person event

RESTORATION continued from front page

The virtual event will begin at 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 22, and include two different sites: The Tribe's website will feature a short, pre-recorded segment from Tribal Council. Facebook Live will have a raffle that automatically includes all Tribal members with no need to pre-register.

"However, it is important to remember that these plans may need to change," Communications Director Sara Thompson says. "Tribal members should follow the Tribe's Restoration Celebration Facebook event for the latest information."

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy says moving the Restoration Celebration online allows the Tribe to honor the day while keeping Tribal and community members safe, especially since COVID-19 case numbers are currently spiking in Oregon.

"We're saddened that we won't be able to gather in person for this year's Restoration Celebration," Kennedy says. "But even in this time of uncertainty, we still want to recognize this important day and honor those that made Restoration a reality for the Grand Ronde Tribe."

It will be the first time since 1984 that the Tribe will not be hosting an in-person event due to the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic and state restrictions that limit the number of people at indoor gatherings.

The Tribe initially announced its decision in a Facebook post on Friday, Oct. 23.

"Grand Ronde's federal recognition as a Tribal government was restored when the Grand Ronde Restoration Act was signed into law. Every year since then, we have gathered as a Tribe, a community and a family to celebrate our Restoration. Unfortunately, 2020 has left us in unprecedented times and we can't gather in person this year. Restoration will still be celebrated, but the celebration will look a little different because we're moving it online."

On Nov. 22, 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed House Resolution 3885 restoring the Grand Ronde Tribe, which had been terminated 29 years earlier, to federal recognition. His signature on the bill officially ended the dark time of Termination.

Every year since, the Tribe has held a celebration. It usually includes a meal, giveaways, speeches, dancing, drumming, singing, and a Restoration Powwow. Approximately 200 Tribal members, family, friends and elected officials traveled to Grand Ronde in 2019 for the event, which was held in the Tribal gym. ■

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11/16, 11/17, 11/18, 11/19, 11/20 11/30,
12/1, 12/2, 12/3, 12/4

Land Lab/Equipment Operation - Albany
12/7, 12/8, 12/9, 12/10, 12/11
 (Lab time dependent on weather & operating conditions)

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If interested contact CTGR Tero at 503-879-2139 or tero@grandronde.org