

Columbia County update of transit plan includes Vernonia meeting

Columbia County is currently undertaking an update of the Community-Wide Transit Plan that was previously completed in 2002, and is also completing an additional planning effort to improve public transit access along U.S. Highway 30. These efforts began in August and, as a result of the work completed by Kittelson & Associates, Inc., three Community Open Houses will be held to share information and ask for public input regarding these projects. The meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Thursday, December 4, at Columbia County Courthouse, 230 Strand Street, St. Helens, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.
- Monday, December 8, at Vernonia City Hall, 1001 Bridge Street, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, December 9, at Clatskanie River Inn, 600 East Columbia River Highway, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

County Transit Division staff and consultants working on this project want to hear people's opinions about a wide range of public transit-related issues and services, including transit fares; improvements to fixed-route, demand-response bus and intercity bus service; the design and location of potential facilities improvements, including vanpool, carpool, park and ride facilities and other transit

stops; and coordination between the County, state and local communities and other transportation providers.

The planning projects will take a comprehensive look at how to provide better access to public transportation within the county. Columbia County Rider, a service of Columbia County Transit Division, provides general public transportation within Columbia County, with services to surrounding counties. Two related projects – the Columbia County Community-wide Transit Plan Update and the U.S. 30 Transit Access Plan – are currently underway and will assess the effectiveness of current transit services and facilities. The two projects will result in recommendations for improvements to the public transit system that serves Columbia County and the cities of Clatskanie, Columbia City, Prescott, Rainier, St. Helens, Scappoose and Vernonia and improve coordination with other service providers, i.e., TriMet, CUBS in Longview, and Sunset Empire Transportation in Clatsop County.

The Transit Plan Update builds on the Columbia County Community-wide Transit Plan, adopted in 2002, and the Coordinated Transit Services Plan, completed in 2007. The updat-

ed Transit Plan will provide further direction for the planning and implementation of transit services, operations, facilities, funding, and promotion/information efforts for the next 10 years.

In concert with the Transit Plan update, Columbia County is developing a Transit Access Management Plan for U.S. 30.

This related project will identify improvements for pedestrian and bicycle access to transit on the U.S. 30 corridor, develop designs for urban and rural bus stops/pullouts, and create a program for park-and-ride or park-and-pool lots. Recommended improvements within the corridor will build on, and be consistent with, the existing

and recommended future transit system that is identified in Transit Plan.

Results of these projects, to date, will be presented at the meetings along with a variety of opportunities to comment on potential changes in transit fares and service and the location and design of new or improved facilities.

County will seek judicial ruling on implementation of Measure 5-190

Ballot Measure 5-190 was put on the November 4, 2008, Columbia County ballot via the initiative process and requires the County to prohibit employment of unauthorized aliens. The measure makes it illegal for any employer in the county to knowingly or intentionally hire unauthorized aliens and sets a system of penalties and procedures for enforcement. The measure was approved by 57 percent of those voting.

Due to the complexity of the issues that this Measure raises, the County obtained a legal opinion, which is posted on the County's website at www.co.columbia.or.us. The opinion states that it may not be legal to implement one or more of the provisions of the Employment of Unauthorized Aliens Ordinance.

However, the County will comply with voter intent to the extent possible and intends to submit an implementing ordinance to the Circuit Court at the earliest possible date and ask the court for a determination of whether the ordinance is legally valid under ORS 33.710 to ORS 33.720.

The notice of the legal proceedings will be published for three weeks, and within 10 days after the date of the final publication. Any interested person may appear before the court and participate in the proceedings.

The Board of County Commissioners appreciates your patience as the County sorts through the legal issues arising from this measure.

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