

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does the County's Road Maintenance Team do?

There are over 500 lane miles of roads in Multnomah County, and the Road Maintenance Team is responsible for keeping them safe and functional. Our maintenance programs include:

- Road surfaces (chip sealing, overlays, sweeping)
- Drainage (catch basins, culverts, ditches)
- Vegetation (trimming, mowing, improving sight lines)
- Emergency response (snow and ice, downed trees, traffic accidents, landslides, washouts)
- Right-of-way (guardrails, shoulders, litter, graffiti)



### How do we prioritize road maintenance projects?

We look at many factors when determining which road maintenance projects to focus on. These factors include safety issues, severity and/or risk of failure, average daily traffic numbers, number of requests from the public, impacts to nearby properties, cost, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Once we determine how a potential project measures up against all these factors we make an informed decision as to which ones are given priority over others.

### What are the County's funding sources for road projects?

For road maintenance, capital projects, and overall transportation division costs, Multnomah County receives its revenue from three primary sources: Federal revenues (Surface Transportation Program), the State Highway Fund (state gas tax, vehicle registration fees, and truck weight/mile tax), and a 3-cent Multnomah County gas tax.

Since the mid-'90s, inflation has risen between 1-4% year over year. As a result of this inflation, costs have increased significantly. Unfortunately, the rate of growth of our funding hasn't kept pace and is lower than the rate of growth of our cost of providing services. Increased gas mileage and electric vehicles have reduced the amount of fuel consumed per vehicle miles traveled. Also, the gas tax is a per-gallon tax, so it doesn't go up as fuel prices increase. In effect, we're trying to maintain today's roads with 1990s dollars.

For capital projects, in particular, common outside sources of funding are grants from regional, state and federal levels. Multnomah County can seek funding from the following:

- Metro - Regional Flexible Funds Allocation (RFFA) grant
- State - All Roads to Safety (ARTS) grant and STIP Enhance grants
- Federal - The Federal Lands Access Program, which is available for roads that access Federal lands such as Larch Mountain Road

These are all competitive discretionary grant programs, which means the County can apply for funding but is not guaranteed to receive it.

## **What is a pothole?**

When asphalt becomes stressed (through a sub-base failure, poor drainage, over loading, etc.) it will show signs of “alligator” cracking. Those cracks become more and more agitated by continuous vehicular traffic, which causes pieces of the asphalt to come loose. The resulting hole left by ejected chunks of asphalt are called potholes.

If you see a pothole on our County roads and would like it repaired, you can make requests online at [yourgov.cartegraph.com](http://yourgov.cartegraph.com) or downloading the free YourGOV app for iPhones or Android devices. You can also call us at 503-988-5050 during business hours.

## **Can we have transit service in our rural area?**

TriMet provides transit service within the urban areas of Multnomah County. Part of the funding for TriMet comes from a tax that employers pay if they're located within TriMet's district boundary. Transit service is usually provided in places where there are enough people to keep ridership high, which is one of the reasons why we don't currently have transit service in our rural areas.

Recently, with the passage of new State legislation, Multnomah County will be receiving a small amount of annual funding to provide a rural transit service. The funding we will receive is small and the service may not look like a regular fixed-route bus. Over the next year we'll be looking into other transit tools that we can provide in rural areas. This work will include outreach to the community.

## **What can we do to reduce the amount of traffic on our roads and address concerns around increased commuter and visitor traffic?**

County roads are right-of-ways available for all public to use. There are tools that jurisdictions, employers, and tourist destinations can do to reduce the number of cars driving to a destination. This is called Transportation Demand Management (TDM).

The County's Transportation System Plan (TSP) includes policies to implement TDM. Such strategies include shuttle buses, ride sharing, work-from-home, flex time, improved transit and access to transit, user fees or congestion pricing. The TSP also calls out Sauvie Island as an area looking at additional strategies, such as real-time parking information, parking enforcement, off-site park and ride lots, shuttles, and capping event attendance.

The County TSP lists TDM studies for areas in the County such as the West Hills and Sauvie Island, and we continue to seek grant funding for these studies. However, they are not included in the Capital Improvement Plan because they are not capital construction projects. For more information, please visit [multco.us/transportation-planning](http://multco.us/transportation-planning).

## **How does the County decide when and where to build bike lanes and sidewalks?**

We strive to provide roads that accommodate all users. This includes bicyclists, pedestrians, people in cars, and freight vehicles. We know that bicyclists and pedestrians feel safer on roads with sidewalks and bike lanes, and several factors influence when and where we can build these facilities.

Available funding and cost is a factor that the County uses. We hear a lot of input that we need to maintain what we have instead of building new infrastructure. In many cases, this means we don't have the resources to add a bike lane, a sidewalk or a wider shoulder when we maintain the road with a chip-seal or an overlay. Additionally, several of the funding sources we can use for bike lanes and sidewalks are only available within the urban growth boundary, which is why it's more common to see these facilities in the urban areas.

In our rural areas maintaining a rural character is an important factor we hear from the public. TSP policies have been included to recognize this community value. For this reason, in our rural areas, we consider the shoulder to be the bike and pedestrian facility. Barring topographical and right-of-way constraints, we look for places where we can provide a shoulder for this use. Additionally, criteria on safety, equity, sustainability, mobility, resiliency, and asset management in the County's Capital Improvement Plan are factors that prioritize projects and where the County should be making pedestrian and bike investments.