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**STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION
FOR THE MAY 2, 2016 PUBLIC HEARING**

**MULTNOMAH COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN**

CASE FILE: PC-2014-3436

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Comprehensive Plan is an adopted document that sets forth the County's official policy on matters relating to growth and development. All cities and counties over a certain size in Oregon are required to adopt a Comprehensive Plan and to periodically update it. The Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with state and regional land use planning goals, laws, administrative rules and other requirements. For the most part, policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan are implemented by the zoning code and related local ordinances governing land use, land divisions, and development standards.

The Multnomah County Comprehensive Framework Plan was adopted in 1977 and is now nearly 40 years old. Although parts of the Comprehensive Plan have been updated from time to time, a complete review of its original policies, strategies and overall structure has not occurred. The current Plan was written at a time when large portions of the unincorporated County were urbanized lands located within the Portland Metropolitan Area Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and much of the Plan addressed land use issues associated with these urban lands.

Much has changed in the 40 years since the Plan was adopted, most particularly the annexation of many urbanized areas into cities or the transfer of planning jurisdiction for these lands to the cities through intergovernmental agreements. The Comprehensive Plan needs to be updated to reflect current times, to address new and emerging issues and to better guide future land use and transportation decisions for the rural county. Transportation decisions will be based upon the Transportation System Plan (TSP), which is a component of the Comprehensive Plan, but it will be a separate, stand-alone document. Information specific to the TSP is given in Section 8.0 of this staff report.

In the mid-1990s the County undertook a rural planning program that resulted in adoption of a rural area plan for each of the four rural planning areas of the County – West Hills (1996), Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel (SIMC)(1997 and updated in 2015), East of Sandy River (1997), and West of Sandy River (2002). Except for the 2015 SIMC Rural Area Plan, the other three rural plans are also greatly outdated and need to be reevaluated. The process of updating

the County Comprehensive Plan provided the opportunity to concurrently examine the policies in the West Hills, East of Sandy River, and West of Sandy River Rural Area Plans, and to integrate them into the County Plan to produce a single planning document applicable to the entire rural County. Similarly, policies from the 2015 SIMC Rural Area Plan have been carried over to the County Comprehensive Plan while the adopted SIMC Plan will be retained in its entirety as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

Preparation of this new County Comprehensive Plan began in earnest in December 2014 with the formation of a sixteen-member Community Advisory Committee (CAC) that was responsible for developing policies and providing guidance on the project. Committee members were appointed by the Board of County Commissioners with balanced representation of the County's West and East sides. In addition to the appointed members, two Planning Commissioners also served as non-voting, ex-officio members of the CAC. The full CAC held 15 meetings from January 2015 through March 2016. All meetings were open to the public with opportunities for public comment provided at each meeting.

The CAC was divided into four subcommittees focused on the following topic areas:

- Farm, Forest and Rural Economy
- Land Use
- Air, Land, Water, Wildlife and Hazards
- Transportation and Public Facilities

Composition of the subcommittees was structured to give equal representation of the East and West County. Subcommittee meetings provided a forum to discuss policy issues in detail and to draft policy language for the entire CAC to review and approve. The four subcommittees met a total of 19 times, with the first three subcommittees each meeting four times to discuss issues related to their topic areas, while the Transportation and Public Facilities subcommittee met seven times, primarily due to the vast scope of the Transportation System Plan that was a principal part of their charge. All subcommittee meetings were open to the public with time provided for public comment at each meeting.

2.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH

Although the Community Advisory Committee was generally representative of the rural community affected by this Comprehensive Plan, several public engagement strategies were included in the program to introduce and publicize the Plan update project, to learn about land use issues of importance to the community and to solicit public input on the policies being proposed.

Dedicated Website

In an effort to keep the public apprised of the Comprehensive Plan update project and events surrounding it, a dedicated website was set up where all pertinent information was posted. The website provided information about all aspects of the project, including announcements of scheduled CAC/subcommittee meetings and all of the materials provided to the committee for

these meetings. An online comment form was provided on the website throughout the project so that anyone accessing the site could submit comments if they wished to.

Community Meetings

Three rounds of community meetings were held which included meetings in both the East and West sides of the County. Notices of the meetings were mailed to all rural property owners of the County along with announcements through press releases, publicity flyers and targeted emails. The three meeting rounds were:

November 2015 – Kickoff open houses to introduce the Plan update project, to invite the public's participation and to solicit applicants for the Community Advisory Committee.

September 2015 – Mid-point town hall meetings to provide a progress report on the project and to the policies developed by the CAC up to that point.

April 2016 – Final community meetings to report on completion of the CAC's work, to highlight their major policies recommendations, and to inform the public of the draft Plan and the schedule for adoption hearings. Exhibit C to this staff report is a summary of the public comments made at the final community meetings.

Comment forms were available at each of these three community meetings and attendees were invited to complete the form there or to take it home to fill out and then mail it back. Another option was to go onto the project website where the form could also be accessed. Comments from the various community meetings were summarized in reports that were shared with the CAC for their consideration when discussing issues and developing policy language.

Neighborhood Meetings

Project staff periodically attended meetings of recognized neighborhood associations to apprise them of the Comprehensive Plan update. This included the following organizations: Northeast Multnomah County Community Organization (NEMCCA), Skyline Ridge Neighbors, Forest Park Neighborhood Association, and Sauvie Island Community Association. Through email notices, each organization was also provided information about project events and activities that was passed along in its newsletter or accustomed method of communication.

Mailing and Email Updates

An extensive mailing list was compiled over the course of the project from those persons who attended the various community meetings or who signed up for notices on the project website. The email list was used to directly notify interested persons about project progress and upcoming events. All CAC meetings, including subcommittee meetings, were announced through emails updates.

Agency Coordination and Technical Review

Because the Comprehensive Plan addresses a wide range of policy topics that interface with the roles and responsibilities of other agencies, coordination with those agencies was an important

aspect of the project. Staff compiled a list of technical resource contacts from various local, regional, state and federal agencies to apprise them of the Plan update project and to request their review of the document as it was being developed. Comments received from the agencies were factored into the document to ensure the accuracy of information contained within it and that the policies and strategies do not conflict with any laws, rules or practices administered by those agencies.

3.0 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan (Exhibit A) is organized to generally align with the Statewide Land Use Planning Goals. Chapter 1 lays the foundation upon which the Plan is based. It reaffirms the County's commitment to sound land use planning as established in value statements previously adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. In addition, this chapter incorporates the visions from the past Rural Area Plans to provide a clear understanding of what rural residents value and envision for the future of their communities. Because maintaining rural character is a repeated theme among Plan policies, several of the vision statements also include an explanation of what rural character means. The chapter speaks to the importance of community involvement in the planning process and includes policies on equity in County planning programs and decisions.

Chapters 2 through 11 are all organized in the same way using the following structure:

- Introduction and background information pertaining to conditions surrounding the chapter topic.
- An explanation of relevant planning documents and processes.
- Identification and discussion of key planning issues related to the chapter topic.
- The overall planning goal, policies and implementation strategies
 - Policies and strategies applicable county-wide
 - Policies and strategies specific to individual subareas

Chapter 12 of the Comprehensive Plan pertains to transportation and merely serves as a placeholder to refer the user to the Multnomah County Transportation System Plan (TSP) – a component of the Comprehensive Plan.

4.0 MAJOR POLICY THEMES AND KEY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

The Comprehensive Plan contains approximately 380 policies and strategies covering eleven major topic areas. The policies constitute the crux of the document and are what will guide future land use decisions. These policies are the culmination of the CAC's work over the course of plan update process. The policies and associated strategies are a combination of both new and old. Many have been taken from the current County Framework Plan and the various Rural Area Plans but have been updated and revised where necessary. Others are entirely new policies that the CAC created to address contemporary matters of importance to rural county residents and community members.

There are several major themes, or planning issues, that were very important to the Advisory Committee. These themes are expressed, in one form or another, in many of the Plan policies. The themes are:

- ❖ Protection of farm and forest lands in compliance with state law as the highest priority
- ❖ Maintain current zoning standards that exceed minimum state requirements
- ❖ Preserve the rural character through existing and potential new development restrictions
- ❖ Consider the impacts of all types of rural development on important wildlife habitat
- ❖ Set new standards where appropriate to minimize negative impacts to natural resources – stream corridors, wetlands, wildlife habitat areas

The plan policies reaffirm certain programs, procedures, and practices that are desirable to maintain in their present form. They also provide direction for future Planning Commission work program tasks where zoning code amendments are necessary to implement the policy. Some identify opportunities for improvements to county processes and operations or call for coordination with other agencies. Of the nearly 400 policies and strategies in the document, most are updated or modified versions of existing policy statements from the County Framework Plan and Rural Area Plans.

To help focus the Planning Commission's review of the Plan policies, the following is a listing of the key planning issues and the specific policies/strategies in the Plan that address those issues. Some of these policies recommend new ideas or concepts not currently the practice and directly or indirectly call for future zoning amendments that will affect rural properties.

Chapter 2 - Land Use

1. Maintain rural character
 - Addressed by many policies in Chapter 2 and throughout the Plan in general
2. Prohibit new uses or increased densities consistent with the existing urban and rural reserves rule.
 - Policy 2.4
3. Assess review uses, conditional uses and community service uses in the RR zone
 - Policy 2.8
4. Remove barriers to reuse of vacant commercial and industrial building in rural centers
 - Policy 2.16
5. Add architectural standards for commercial, industrial and civic uses in rural centers
 - Policy 2.38 and Strategy 2.39(2)
6. Lack of zoning code enforcement
 - Policy 2.41
7. Grading and topsoil fill standards in conjunction with agricultural management practices

Staff Contact: Rich Faith

- Policies 2.42 – 2.44

Chapter 3 – Farm Land

1. Outdoor mass gathering and other gatherings
 - Policy 3.5
2. Farm stand promotional activities and events
 - Policies 3.17 - 3.20
3. Promotional activities at wineries
 - Policy 3.21
4. Agri-tourism
 - Policies 3.22 – 3.28
5. Assess review uses, conditional uses and community service uses in the MUA-20 zone
 - Policy 3.16

Chapter 4 – Forest Land

1. Cluster dwellings and accessory structures in the CFU zone
 - Policies 4.16 and 4.17

Chapter 5 – Natural Resources

1. Update natural resource protection based on current information
 - Apply the Significant Environment Concern Overlay (SEC-s) to new significant streams
 - Policy 5.17
 - Apply the Significant Environment Concern Overlay (SEC-w) to new significant wildlife habitat areas
 - Policy 5.25
2. Establish a wildlife advisory committee to advise the County on wildlife protection issues
 - Policy 5.27
3. Tree protection when a site is developed
 - Policy 5.38
4. Consider expanding scenic view protection by applying the SEC-v overlay to the west slope of the West Hills
 - Policy 5.45

Chapter 6 – Historic and Cultural Resources

1. Play a more active role in historic preservation
 - Strategy 6.1-3
2. Allow for adaptive reuse of historic buildings and properties
 - Strategy 6.1-4

Chapter 7 – Natural Hazards

1. Update natural hazards protection areas based on current information
 - Use DOGAMI's recent landslide hazard mapping data in applying Hillside Development and Erosion Control Overlay zone
 - Policies 7.1 and 7.2
 - Identify areas most susceptible to earthquake related damage and determine appropriate development restrictions
 - Policies 7.3 and 7.4
 - Consider channel migration information for the Sandy River in managing flooding risks
 - Policy 7.6
 - Expand protection standards to additional areas shown to be at risk for wildfires
 - Policy 7.7

Chapter 8 – Parks and Recreation

1. Balance recreational needs with protection of natural resources
 - Policies 8.2, 8.8 and 8.10

Chapter 9 – Rural Economy

1. Recognize the importance of the region's river, rail and road systems to the economy
 - Policy 9.7

Chapter 10 – Housing

1. Floating home and live-aboard boat policies from the Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan
 - Policies 10.11 – 10.15

Chapter 11 – Public Utilities

1. Undergrounding personal utility lines to minimize service interruptions
 - Strategy 11.15-2
2. Rest stop facilities along the most popular recreational travel routes
 - Policy 11.19

5.0 REVISIONS TO THE PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT

Since the Planning Commission work session held on April 11, the Multnomah County Attorney's Office has recommended a number of revisions to the draft Comprehensive Plan that was used for that work session and that is now the subject of this public hearing. Some of those recommended changes pertain to the Plan narrative, while others pertain to the policy language. The recommended changes are shown in Addendum 1 to Exhibit A of this staff report. The addendum uses strikeouts and underlining to denote changes to the text.

Staff finds that none of the policy revisions recommended by the County Attorney's Office alters the meaning of the policy. Therefore, staff concurs with those recommended changes.

6.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS

Written public comments on the proposed Comprehensive Plan and Transportation System Plan submitted since notice of this public hearing was advertised are included as Exhibit D to this staff report. The four written comments received through April 23 are included in the Planning Commission's public hearing packet. Any written comments submitted after that date will be provided to the Planning Commission at the public hearing as a supplemental packet.

7.0 NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation System Plan is a land use action subject to the notification requirements of ORS 215.503, commonly referred to as the Measure 56 notice. In accordance with the Measure 56 notification requirements, written individual notice of a land use change was mailed on April 11 to the owner of record of each lot or parcel in the County potentially affected by these Plans. The notice was mailed to approximately 6,200 Multnomah County property owners.

In addition to the mailed Measure 56 notice, the public hearing was also publicized in accordance with requirements of the Multnomah County Code. Notice of the hearing was published in the Oregonian on April 13, 2016.

Notice of the public hearing was also posted on the project website along with an online comment form that could be used to submit testimony concerning the proposed Plans.

8.0 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN (TSP)

The Multnomah County Transportation System Plan (TSP) forms the transportation element of the Multnomah County Comprehensive Plan. Prior to this update to the TSP, the Comprehensive Plan was supported by separate Transportation System Plans (TSPs) for the Rural Westside and West of Sandy River areas (covering the West Hills, Sauvie Island, and West of Sandy River Rural Planning Areas) and by the transportation components of the East of Sandy River Area Plan and the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area Management Plans. The updated Multnomah County TSP incorporates relevant elements from all of these plans into this one document.

This TSP provides Multnomah County with guidance for operating and improving the multimodal transportation system. The TSP includes transportation policies and priorities for projects and programs to implement over the next 20 years. It also provides a vision for longer-term projects that could be implemented if additional funding becomes available. The TSP is intended to be flexible in order to respond to changing community needs and revenue sources over the next 20 years. The Plan's primary focus is on enhancing the safety of the transportation system and balancing the needs of agricultural, visitor, residential, bicycle, pedestrian, and freight travel to and from the rural areas. The TSP supports economically vital and healthy communities.

The central needs identified and addressed as part of the update are as follows, with the policies, strategies and projects in the TSP responding to these.

- **Reduce Modal Conflicts**– Most of Multnomah County's rural areas are served by two-lane narrow rural roadways. A variety of users with diverse needs and varying speeds (e.g., farm equipment, an active cycling community, pedestrians, and motorists) use the roadway, which can result in conflicts between modes.
- **Enhance Safety for All System Users** – Recent crash history reflects a tendency toward single vehicle crashes with fixed objects after leaving the roadway.
- **Manage Travel Demand**– Peak traffic conditions, resulting from commuter traffic, seasonal events (such as access to public beaches, recreational areas and pumpkin patches) and limited duration events (such as concerts and farm-to-table dinners), result in traffic congestion and long vehicle queues. In addition to causing delays, highly congested roadways can have a potential impact on emergency response times.
- **Address Increasing Traffic and Safety Issues While Maintaining Rural Character** – Although there are an increasing number of vehicles on the roads, residents are concerned transportation improvements and roadway widening will affect the rural character of the area. The County will have to address the issues caused by this increase through planning of safety and other improvements that do not change the character of the area. Improvements and solutions should include context sensitive design.
- **Reduce Traffic Pressure on County Roads**– County rural roads are increasingly used as an alternative route to State highways, creating heavy traffic flows and congestion during commute hours and increasing safety concerns. Examples include the use of West Hills Roads to connect US-30 and US-26. Solutions for these roads are needed that increase safety and traffic flow without encouraging more traffic, building more roadways, or widening roadways and impacting wildlife and their habitat.
- **Bicycle Infrastructure** – Traveling and commuting by bicycle has become increasingly popular in Multnomah County, but most bicycle network improvements have been focused in the urban areas. As the number of bicyclists continues to grow, investment

also needs to be made in the rural areas of the County. Some types of bicycle infrastructure can also serve pedestrians in rural areas, such as providing for shoulders.

- **Better Road Maintenance** – The County’s rural roads are experiencing increased traveler use, creating a need for better road maintenance. State and local gas tax have been the primary funding in the past but are not keeping pace with needs.
- **Health and Equity** – Recent research has shown that transportation has a significant impact on the health and well-being of members of the community. Transportation can also cause or support health inequities between different sub-groups within the community. The benefits and burdens of the transportation system should be equitably distributed throughout the County.
- **Water Transport** – Due to the Willamette River and the freight transportation it supports, water transport is important to the County’s economy and transportation system.
- **Wildlife Crossings** – Transportation improvements often negatively impact wildlife and their habitats, especially roadway widening. Further partnerships and research can be examined to create design treatments that minimize these negative impacts.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed Comprehensive Plan and proposed Transportation System Plan are the culmination of approximately eighteen months of work by County planning staff, the consultant team and the appointed Community Advisory Committee to address issues of greatest importance to the County’s rural residents, business owners, and landowners and to set the course for future land use and transportation decisions. Participants in the planning process who attended and spoke at the community meetings or used the online comment form to voice their opinions, have expressed varying points of view about these issues. These points of view are based upon both geographical and philosophical disparities. The Advisory Committee considered all of these comments and opinions in crafting policies they believe to be in the best interests of the community as a whole. The two plans outline policy direction and strategies for maintaining the County’s rural qualities that are so highly valued.

The Planning Commission may recommend one of the following options to the Board of County Commissioners who will take final action on the proposed Plans.

1. Adopt the Plans as proposed, without modifications
2. Adopt the proposed Plans with modifications
3. Do not adopt the proposed Plans

10.0 EXHIBITS

Exhibit A: Multnomah County Comprehensive Plan (March 2016 Draft)

Addendum 1: Recommended Changes to the March 2016 Draft

Exhibit B: Plan Appendices

Appendix A: Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Appendix C: Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (August 27, 2015)

Appendix D: Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Rural Area Plan Policy Document (June 2005)

Appendix E: Multnomah County Transportation System Plan (March 2016)

Exhibit C: Summary of comments made at the April 5 and 7, 2016 Community Meetings

Exhibit D: Written Testimony

D.1: Testimony received through April 23, 2016 included in the Planning Commission packet for the May 2, 2016 public hearing:

D.1.1: Stephanie Millar, ODOT (April 6, 2016)

D.1.2: Terry Cook (April 18, 2016)

D.1.3: Sarah Hanson (April 21, 2016)

D.1.4: Lex Loeb (April 23, 2016)

D.2: Testimony Received after April 23, 2016: To be supplied in a supplemental packet at the May 2, 2016 public hearing.