

Mayor's Report
November, 2014

LET'S TALK ROADS ! This is our number one issue. It is the largest issue facing most communities. The League of Cities Transportation Policy Committee has concluded there is a \$300 million funding gap in Oregon per year. In addressing the problem, the Committee proposes looking at multi-model solutions which offer choices, improves safety, enhances economic development, protects the environment and promotes healthy living. Nice sounding words but first we just need to fix the darn roads.

A group identified as the Oregon Transportation Forum, stakeholders with different interests, have attempted to identify a legislative outcome for a transportation package. Unfortunately, these stakeholders have a variety of agendas. That means we cannot necessarily depend on our legislators to come up with a solution that best fits The Dalles.

Cities and counties get state revenue from fuel taxes, weight-mile taxes on trucks, vehicle registration and title fees and driver license fees plus federal funds for the Oregon Road System. State funds are distributed to cities in proportion to population and to counties based on the number of vehicles registered. Highway Trust funds are distributed to state, counties and cities at 50%-30%-20% respectfully and there is no effort to change that.

So what do we do in The Dalles? We can wait and see what the Oregon Legislature comes up with; maybe an increase in the state gas tax, an increase in license fees, etc. or we can start here by addressing our problem locally. To me, that means going through our budget with a fine tooth comb, identifying priorities with the intent to "fix it first." No new roads until we fix the roads we have. No massive repaving efforts until we have chip sealed and crack sealed to preserve longer the roads we have now.

We need to talk with Wasco County commissioners and decide what to do with roads that have been annexed and not taken over. I think we can work out a plan. Maybe we need to use Urban Renewal monies for roads within the Urban Renewal area and come up with a funding plan to provide a little extra.

I will be looking to newly elected council member, Russ Brown, to provide advice and assistance with this huge issue. He has experience in road construction, maintenance and related issues. I will be looking to Taner Elliott, the other newly elected council member to help guide us along the rocky path of revising our land use ordinances to enhance development.

Other issues to spend time on are: bringing businesses to downtown, ensuring that urban renewal projects are successful and planned for completion within a shorter amount of time, helping to make sports activities an opportunity

for businesses, finding that first micro-brewery, helping the school system to be more successful, locating some kind of food store east of Union Street, helping store owners renovate their upstairs for business or living space, revising how we finance sidewalks, curbs and storm water systems so as not to discourage development, find manufacturing jobs for the port, encouraging tourism by working with all the historical groups in town and making sure everyone in The Dalles feels listened to and encouraging citizens to get involved.

Roll up your sleeves for 2015. We will need all the help we can get.