

## GRAVEL ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

In 1993, the Thurston County Board of Commissioners approved a program to improve county gravel roads, the program was updated in 2009. These improvements may include:

- ♦Upgrading to a paved road surface,
- ♦Correcting safety hazards such as dangerous curves, dips, and sight distance problems,
- ♦Widening driving surface and shoulders to current county road standards,
- ♦Improving drainage, and
- ♦Establishing right-of-way for public facilities.

*When the county pursues a gravel road upgrade:*

Public Works will inspect the road for location, width, safety, drainage and environmental concerns. The road improvements will be designed to meet the AASHTO Guidelines for Geometric Design of Very Low-Volume Local Roads (ADT  $\leq$  400), 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 2001 or current addition if applicable. If over 400 ADT other AASHTO or WSDOT guidance will be used. Formal right-of way or easement documents will be prepared and presented to property owners donating property or easements, if necessary. If additional right-of-way is necessary and a property owner is not willing to donate property then the road will not be upgraded. Actual construction schedule will depend upon the complexity of the project, annual budget and the time of year. Property owners will be kept up to date on the progress of their gravel road improvement project.

*When residents would like to pursue a gravel road upgrade the following program shall be followed:*

Subject to majority approval by residents of gravel roads, these improvements will be made at no additional cost to those residents. For cases in which there is no established right-of-way consistent with county road standards, right-of-way dedication may be required.

## Criteria for Improvements

For an existing county-maintained gravel road to be improved, the following two conditions must be met:

- ♦ A majority of property owners along the road must support the improvements.
- ♦ The county must have legal title to at least 40 feet of right-of-way with approximately 20 feet of right-of-way on each side of the center of the road.

## Making the Improvement Request

An individual property owner or an organized group of county-maintained gravel road residents may petition the county for gravel road improvements.

**Step 1:** Survey and collect signatures from all **property owners** along the gravel road, using **the petition form**. The county can provide an address list of all property owners along each gravel road upon request. A **majority** of property owners must support the improvements. If the road needs additional right-of-way, **all** property owners along that road must agree to donate necessary property to the county. County staff will help you determine if additional right-of-way must be established for a particular road.

**Step 2:** Submit the petition to Thurston County Public Works.

**Step 3:** Information provided on the petition will be verified and tabulated. If the majority of residents support the gravel road improvements and no additional right-of-way appears to be needed, the request will proceed to Step 4. If residents support improvements and additional right-of-way must be donated, county staff will work with property owners to obtain right-of-way.

**Step 4:** When the necessary information is determined by the county to be complete and accurate, the road will be placed on the priority list and planning for improvements will begin.

## **Preparatory Work**

Public Works will inspect the road for location, width, safety, drainage and environmental concerns. The road improvements will be designed to meet county road standards. Formal right-of way documents will be prepared and presented to property owners donating property, if necessary. Actual construction schedule will depend upon the complexity of the project, annual budget and the time of year. Property owners will be kept up to date on the progress of their gravel road improvement project.

## **When Will My Road be Improved?**

Gravel road improvements will be prioritized by the date the county receives the completed and accurate property owner approval and right-of-way commitments. Each road will be scheduled for improvements depending upon available funding. Most are expected to be completed during the next construction season.

## **Why Improve Gravel Roads?**

Upgrading and paving county -maintained gravel roads will reduce maintenance costs, reduce the need for dust control, bring county gravel roads up to current standards and provide more safe and pleasant roads. A yearly average of 7 miles of gravel roads has been upgraded since 1993. As of September, 2009 Thurston County has less than 25 miles of public, county-maintained gravel roads. Most are dead-end roads. A few provide connections between other public roads. Many are narrow and have no dedicated public right-of-way or storm drainage facilities. Many residents of county gravel roads are concerned about the safety of driving on these roads, or are tired of battling gravel, road mud, dust and vehicle wear and tear.