

Lewis Street Overpass: Connecting Pasco



The Lewis Street undercrossing, which connects the entire east side neighborhood of nearly 10,000 residents to an array of essential services and downtown, was constructed in 1937 when Pasco was only 3,500 people and Lewis Street was part of State Highway 3 connecting Pasco and Walla Walla and other points east and west. As the underpass ages (it is now approaching 80 years), it shows signs of growing deterioration (concrete falling from the structure and internal rebar exposed to the elements). It needs to be replaced before a tragic failure occurs.

Working with the downtown business community, the city sponsored a study in 2000 which identified alternative solutions. The downtown business community preferred, and the City Council approved, the option of a new four-lane overpass, as it would address the issues most important to the city and regional transportation needs as well as the downtown business community.

Since then, the City Council has considered the Lewis Street overpass as one of its priority city-wide goals and the city has diligently worked to make the project a reality. As of 2013, the city has completed the overpass design and obtained all of the environmental approvals and railroad authorization required for the overpass. All of the right-of-way necessary to accommodate the new

alignment has been acquired (and will be cleared in 2014). As a result, the overpass project is now “shovel ready.” Unfortunately, the estimated \$29 million construction cost is simply too much for Pasco to bear alone, so the city has been diligently working with state and federal offices over the past five years to obtain the majority of funding necessary for construction.

While the past few years have seen both state and federal funding sources very tight, the project is clearly one that cannot be completed only with city resources. As an example, if the city were to bond for 20 years at a 4% interest rate to pay the \$29 million cost of the project, an increase in the property tax of 31% would be needed. This represents an annual increase of \$121 for a \$200,000 home. Clearly, this would be a significant (and unacceptable) cost to Pasco taxpayers.

There has been growing recognition around the state and in Olympia that a number of “big ticket” transportation projects are necessary to keep the transportation system (and the associated economic foundation) in good health. The state senate recently conducted “listening sessions” around the state to hear directly from Washington citizens about the transportation system and perceived needs. It is apparent that some effort will be made by the state legislature in the near future to address those transportation needs so Pasco has been very

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Comments about the Pasco Pulse?
Email to communications@pasco-wa.gov

The Pasco City Council meets every Monday at 7pm (except for 5th Mondays) at City Hall, 525 N. 3rd Ave. Watch the Council meetings LIVE on PSC-TV Channel 12 on Charter Cable, or on the web at www.pasco-wa.gov/video.

the **Pulse** BI-MONTHLY (APRIL - DEC)



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PROGRESS | PRIDE | PROSPERITY



Historic Preservation Plan Seeks to Keep Pasco History Alive

One of City Council's 2012-2013 Goals was to assist the City's Historic Preservation Commission with the development of a Historic Preservation Plan for Pasco. In November, the City Council adopted the Historic Preservation Plan after several months of study and public participation. The plan identifies some of the important history and historic structures in the City, including the Franklin County Courthouse, the Carnegie Library (Franklin County Historical Museum) and the downtown Pasco Post Office. Some of the recommendations of the Plan include:

- Strengthen partnerships with the state and federal governments to promote historic preservation at the grass roots level and encourage preservation efforts.
- Develop a preservation/museum consortium to consolidate efforts and improve coordination between historic properties.

- Create and promote a "Pasco Walk" (a walking tour/brochure of Pasco Historic Places).
- Recognize good rehabilitation efforts through awards and recognitions, similar to Pasco's "Yard of the Month" program.
- Encourage public agencies to have historic information and historic photographs in their buildings and on their websites, and recognize those that do so with a letter from the Pasco Historic Preservation Commission.

Adoption of the Historic Preservation Plan and its inclusion within the City's Comprehensive Plan will ensure that it is used to guide administrative and legislative actions for historic preservation efforts. For more information on the Historic Preservation Plan, call the Community Development Office at (509) 545-3441 or visit www.pasco-wa.gov/historicplan.

Airport Exercise Highlights Regional Cooperation

In September, the Pasco Fire Department participated with several agencies in the area and the Port of Pasco in conducting a mock plane crash at the Tri-Cities Airport. This type of large emergency drill is required



by the FAA every three years. The drill simulated the crash of an MD-80 aircraft with 84 passengers. Over 300 people participated in the exercise, with over 20 area fire units "responding" in the drill. The mock crash also gave area hospitals an opportunity to test and evaluate their response to a mass-casualty event. In addition to Tri-Cities area fire departments and Franklin County law enforcement agencies, the drill included all area hospitals, emergency management agencies for Franklin, Benton and Walla Walla counties and the state. There were many other participants, including the Pasco School District, American Red Cross, and the airlines serving the airport.

This drill is just one of the many areas in which local government agencies cooperate to help each other and make the most efficient use of tax dollars for the health and safety of the Tri-Cities.

City License Reminders

As a reminder, the start of 2014 means it's time to renew your City business and/or dog license. These licenses are a requirement if you operate a business within the City of Pasco or own a dog in the City. License fees help defer the costs of such things as the local shelter and code enforcement. Having a dog license can also help you reunite quickly with your pet if your dog is found.

Reminders will be going out, but don't delay in your renewal with the risk of late fees. Call 545-3402 for business license questions, 545-3488 for dog licensing information, or visit City Hall, 525 North 3rd Avenue.

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vocal about the need for Lewis Street funding assistance. Waiting another decade (or more) to obtain assistance from the state could prove tragic from a safety standpoint and certainly become more costly, as construction costs will only escalate and make the project that much more difficult to finance in the future.

It is likely that any state transportation package will require a gas tax increase. The city has reminded the legislature that the 2003/2005 gas tax increase resulted in a number of projects around the state, but Franklin County (and Pasco) received only 59 cents of benefit from each \$1 of gas tax collected by the state from Pasco residents – the lowest benefit ratio in the entire state. City Council recently approved a resolution urging the legislature to consider a state-wide transportation package, but that any such package should include the Lewis Street overpass project.

Whether an individual supports or opposes a gas tax increase is for individual determination. But it is clear that the Lewis Street overpass project will not be a reality without significant funding assistance from the state – so if the balance of the state is to have transportation projects funded and Pasco residents are to pay increased transportation related fees and taxes, then it would be in the best interest of Pasco residents (and taxpayers) to urge that the Lewis Street overpass project be funded by the state. The city is working hard to accomplish that goal.

HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE City Offices will be closed:

Wednesday, December 25
for Christmas Day

Wednesday, January 1, 2014
for New Years' Day

Monday, January 20, 2014 for
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

*For more information about the City,
visit our website at www.pasco-wa.gov*