

# **KITTTITAS COUNTY**

## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

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Kirk Holmes, Director

### White Paper: Kittitas County Road Standards Update Proposal

#### **Why is Kittitas County proposing a road standards update?**

Kittitas County Road Standards are requirements for developers and other private parties constructing or modifying roads that need county permits or are required by a land use activity. The County also uses the standards for its own construction of new County roads or reconstruction of existing roads.

The last formal update to the Kittitas County Roads Standards was in September 2005. Since the last update, requirements, practices, and industry standards have changed. Additionally, the county has heard from the development community and land purchasers that several standards are poorly defined and need clarification.

Therefore, the Kittitas County Public Works Department is seeking approval from the Board of County Commissioners to update the road standards to reflect new road design and construction requirements / practices. The proposed updates will also ensure road standards comply with current stormwater management requirements, fire codes, environmental policies, state and federal requirements, and the County's Comprehensive Plan and transportation plan. Additionally, proposed updates will clarify the standards, where necessary, so they are easy to understand and enforce.

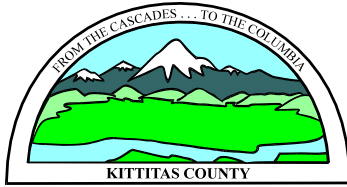
#### **Why is it important to update the road standards now?**

For the past three years, the Kittitas County Public Works Department has considered developer and land purchaser comments, permit application inconsistencies, and other recurring issues associated with the current road standards. Internal review of this data has revealed several flaws in the road standards, resulting in some developers failing to fully comply with the standards and the County struggling to enforce certain codes. The County must correct these flaws to improve its operations and foster proper and complete implementation of the standards by developers.

#### **What are the benefits to updating the road standards?**

The proposed road standard updates will require all parties to employ industry best practices when building roads, ensuring the safety of our transportation system, conservation of the environment, and protection of tax payers' investments.

The proposed road standard updates present several other benefits to the County, land purchasers, and developers. For the County, well-defined road standards will: improve the application review and approval process, freeing up time and money to invest in other projects; enable better enforcement of codes; and foster improved communication and relationships with developers and land purchasers.



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For land purchasers, the proposed road standard updates will protect their investment and eliminate potential costly liabilities. For example, one proposed road standard update specifies that developers must complete roadway developments and/or improvements according to County standards and engineer certification before they can sell the property. This clarification prohibits developers from passing the task (and cost) of completing road improvements onto purchasers, and prevents common disputes between the parties.

For developers, the proposed road standard updates will clearly state what is required for land use development and construction projects. This will improve the application preparation and submission process and streamline communication with County officials. Certain proposed updates may result in developers experiencing additional upfront project costs and potential cost increases. The updates may also require developers to adopt new business practices.

In addition, the road standard updates will align with Fire Marshal code requirements (Title 20) in the County code. The Kittitas County Public Works Department has and will continue to communicate with the Fire Marshal during and after the update process to ensure code consistency, and most importantly, life safety.

### **What are the priority updates?**

The County has identified four road standard items in Chapter 1 that require extensive updates:

#### *Second access requirements*

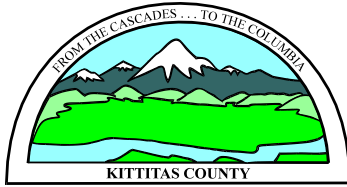
The current road standards are unclear about second access requirements. The proposed update includes clarifying the requirements of privately maintained ingress-egress routes. See Appendix A Row 3 or Proposed KCC 12.01.095(B) for more information.

#### *Timing of improvements*

The current road standards are unclear regarding when a developer must build roadway improvements. The proposed update specifies that developers must construct and improve roadways prior to the County's issuance of final project approval. Or, in lieu of construction, the developer may bond for the estimated costs of construction, per RCW 58.17.130 (Bond in lieu of actual construction of improvements prior to approval of final plat — Bond or security to assure successful operation of improvements). For more information, see Appendix A Row 6 or Proposed KCC 12.01.150 and KCC 12.01.090(C).

#### *Bringing new county roads onto the county system*

Current road standards specify that the County considers on-system road requests after a road is constructed. The proposed road standards update specifies that developers must petition the Board of County Commissioners prior to roadway construction to provisionally accept the road onto the County road maintenance system. After construction and approval by the County Engineer, the developer shall petition the Board of County Commissioners for final approval to



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bring the road onto the County road system for maintenance. For more information, see Appendix A Row 7 or Proposed KCC 12.01.070.

### *Working with other agencies*

The current standards are unclear about the joint review process. The proposed update clarifies the process in which the County jointly reviews applications with other agencies and requires a permit or agreement from other agencies prior to preliminary approval. For more information, see Appendix A Row 8 or Proposed KCC 12.01.180.

The County has also identified a road standard item in Chapter 4 that requires extensive updates:

### *Private road standards*

Currently, there are four different private road standards, which vary by average lot size. The proposed update eliminates two of the four standards by requiring developers to construct private roads serving 15 or more lots to public road standards. For more information, see Appendix A Row 18 or Proposed KCC 12.04.070.

Other proposed updates to the road standard include variance procedure (Appendix A Row 5 or Proposed KCC 12.01.130), road certification requirements (Appendix A Row 19 or Proposed KCC 12.04.090), and access spacing (Appendix A Row 21 or Proposed KCC 12.05 Table 5-1). The County proposes several general updates to the Kittitas County Road Standards for consistency and grammatical accuracy purposes. The County proposes to re-write and clarify all standards that are confusing and/or contradictory in nature. The County will also re-organize the material into logical chapters and formats.

### **What are the costs associated with communicating the road standard updates?**

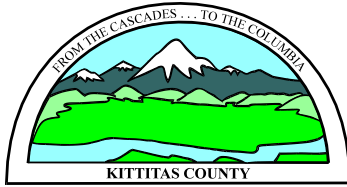
QUADCO has provided \$10,000 for public outreach. Public outreach tactics may include media relations, County web site updates, fact sheet creation, and informational e-mail campaigns. The County may also host a professionally facilitated public meeting or charrette, or use the standard County public meeting process, to address public concerns and obtain input on the road standard updates. The County will consider all comments received during the public meeting / charrette. The comments received may or may not impact the final road standard updates.

### **Authorizing RCW:**

Chapter 36 of Revised Code of Washington (RCW): Counties

Chapter 36.75 of Revised Code of Washington (RCW): Road and Bridges - general provisions  
The State statutes have vested Kittitas County with powers to maintain, administer, alter, add, delete, acquire property, and regulate traffic on the public roads under its jurisdiction.

Chapter 36.86.030: Standards



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Road and bridge standards may be amended from time to time by resolution of the county legislative authority, but no standard may be approved by the legislative authority with any minimum requirement less than that specified in this chapter. Two copies of the approved standards shall be filed with the Department of Transportation for its use in examinations of county road work.