



OREGON

MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Work Session Summary Minutes

Marion County Radio Project Monthly Update

August 26, 2025. 1:30 PM

Courthouse Square, 555 Court St. NE, Salem
5th Floor, Suite 5232, Commissioners Board Room

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Kevin Cameron, and Danielle Bethell.

Board's Office: Heather Inyama, Matt Lawyer, Alvin Klausen, Chris Eppley, and Trevor Lane.

Legal Counsel: Steve Elzinga.

Public Works: Brian Nicholas, and Richard Grabotin

Sheriff's Office: Nick Hunter.

Commissioner Danielle Bethell called the meeting to order at 1:40 p.m.

Marion County Radio Project Update

- Latest Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting aimed to reach consensus on the user fee methodology.
- Agencies prefer a simplified fee structure, two flat fees (one for law enforcement, one for fire) over a variable model.
- Agreed projecting costs with a maximum 3% annual escalation would help agencies plan and commit.
- Agencies shown five-year projections with 3% cap on cost increases:
 - Aligning with fire district revenue caps.
- TAC reached consensus that the methodology is fair:
 - Removes a major hurdle for agency buy-in.
- Silverton Fire's potential participation is pivotal for bringing other agencies in.
- Agency participation was reviewed:
 - Most law enforcement agencies in the county:
 - Excluding Salem, Oregon State Police, and Keizer:
 - Keizer is on Salem's system.
 - Most fire departments.
 - Agencies with non-zero radio counts will not participate.
- The financial model assumes a "worst case scenario" for agency participation:
 - Ensure project remains viable even with lower revenue.
- User Fee Methodology:
 - Flat fee for all users, with a variable component based on system usage.
 - Law enforcement agencies, due to higher standby radio counts, would pay more per radio than fire agencies.
 - Average law enforcement rate is approximately 1.287 times the fire rate.
 - Discussed law enforcement paying more and feasibility of a single fee for all.

- Aim to balance cost distribution and ensure affordability for smaller groups.
- Methodology adjusted based on feedback from the previous TAC meeting:
 - Lead to broader agreement.
- Model includes projections for the first five years:
 - With a 3% annual cap on fee increases.
- Approach designed to provide transparency and predictability for all participating agencies.

Radio Fund

- Proposal to establish a separate “Radio Fund” distinct from the existing Road Fund.
- Current communications program is a subset of the Road Fund:
 - Dedicated fund would improve transparency and accountability.
- Radio Fund would operate similarly to the existing Fleet Fund:
 - All users paying into the system for a dedicated purpose.
- Main advantage is clear tracking of revenue and expenses:
 - Easier for stakeholders to understand and audit the fund.
- Separate fund requires starting process in December to be effective for the next fiscal year.
- Broad support for the change:
 - It addresses concerns about the opacity of the current Road Fund structure.
- New fund needs to be self-sustaining:
 - All user payments covering operational costs.
- Expected to align with ongoing efforts to improve financial mapping and reporting.

Other

- Need clear communication and consensus among all stakeholders:
 - Including the TAC and agency representatives.
- Some agencies may have concerns about affordability, especially smaller cities.
- Need ongoing grant applications to secure additional funding was noted.
- Project’s financial model is conservative:
 - Built-in contingencies to ensure sustainability even if participation is lower than expected.
- Need transparency and avoid perception of hidden costs or cross-subsidization.

Next Steps:

- Present the finalized fee structure and participation model to the Metcom Board on September 3rd.
- Allow agencies time to review and decide on participation:
 - Goal of finalizing commitments in the coming months.
- Add to the agenda for the management update meeting for next week to review fee structure.
- Begin preparations in December to establish the separate Radio Fund for the next fiscal year.
- Continue outreach to agencies, especially those hesitating, to encourage participation.
- Monitor financial projections and adjust as needed to ensure the project remains on solid footing.
- Maintain open communication with all stakeholders to address concerns and provide updates.

Adjourned – time: 2:10 p.m.
Minutes by: Mary Vityukova
Reviewed by: Gary L. White