

City Info

A NEWSLETTER FOR LONGVIEW CITIZENS

September/October 2012

FAQs about the upcoming street maintenance advisory vote

The Longview City Council has called for an advisory vote related to street maintenance for the November 6 general election. Proposition No. 2 will ask Longview residents whether or not the City should create a transportation benefit district (TBD) and assess an annual \$20 per vehicle fee to pay for maintenance and improvement of city streets. The following questions and answers are provided to help you better understand this issue.



Cracked, broken, and displaced concrete and asphalt streets can be found throughout Longview.

Why is the Longview City Council seeking a street maintenance advisory vote in November?

An annual \$20 per vehicle license fee would generate approximately \$560,000 more per year for street maintenance and improvements. Pursuant to state law RCW 36.73, the City Council is authorized to create a transportation benefit district (TBD) to fund transportation improvements. However, the City Council would like to know the desires of the citizens before it considers such a district and assesses a vehicle license fee to pay for maintenance and improvements to city streets.

What vehicles would be subject to the annual \$20 TBD license fee?

Owners of most vehicles registered in the city of Longview would pay the annual license fee.

Vehicles exempt from the \$20 annual license fee include:

- ◆ Commercial vehicles greater than 6,000 lbs
- ◆ Farm vehicles
- ◆ Single-axle trailers less than 2,000 lbs
- ◆ Collector, horseless carriage, and restored-plate vehicles
- ◆ Off-road vehicles
- ◆ Commercial trailers
- ◆ Mopeds
- ◆ Government vehicles

What is the current condition of the road system in Longview?

City streets are composed primarily of two different materials – 64 miles are asphalt streets, and 74 miles are concrete streets.

The condition of a street is rated based on a variety of factors such as roughness, rutting, the amount of cracking and potholes, and other indications of deterioration and failure.

Citywide, Longview’s streets currently have an average pavement condition index (PCI) rating of 68 out of 100, or “good.” At the current level of street maintenance funding, the overall condition of the City’s streets is projected to drop to 58 (or “fair”) within four years according to a report prepared by Infrastructure Management Services in January 2012.



How much does the City spend on street maintenance?

The City currently spends about \$560,000 per year (about \$15 per capita) for street maintenance, the same amount as a decade ago. During that time, material costs have doubled and street maintenance staffing has been cut by 17%.

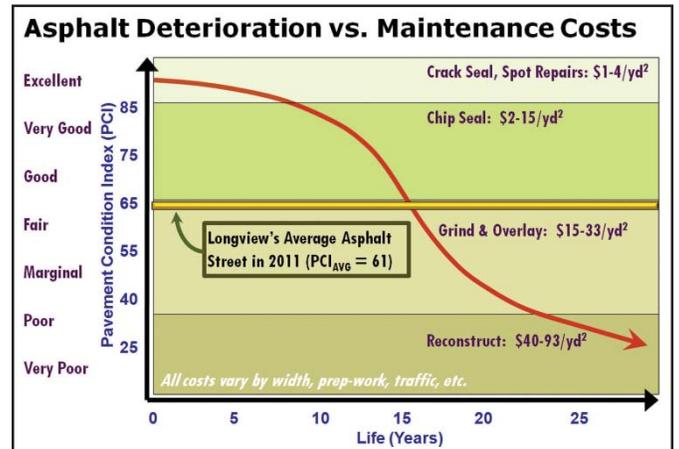
Why can't the City afford to pay for more street maintenance?

- ◆ The City's general fund (the source of most street maintenance dollars) has lost more than \$450,000 per year since 2000 due to the recession, voter initiatives, and state legislative actions; however, the cost for street maintenance and essential public services such as police and fire protection continue to increase.
- ◆ Property taxes, sales taxes, business and occupation taxes, and gas taxes are the main sources of general fund revenue used to pay for street maintenance. Revenue from these sources has not kept up with inflation and the increasing costs to maintain streets and provide police and fire protection and other services.
- ◆ The City has implemented cost cutting measures to keep pace with the economic climate, including refinancing debt, reducing the number of City employees (except in public safety), ensuring the City's utilities are not subsidized by the general fund, deferring building maintenance and equipment replacement, and negotiating for reduced health care costs. In addition, the utility tax was recently reduced by 2.5%, resulting in \$500,000 less revenue.

What will it take to maintain our roads in good condition?

It would cost \$2.8 million per year to maintain city streets in their current condition. The cost of repairing a street gets much more expensive when maintenance is postponed and its condition deteriorates. The adjacent graph shows how an asphalt street deteriorates over time and how the cost to repair the street increases significantly as the condition gets worse.

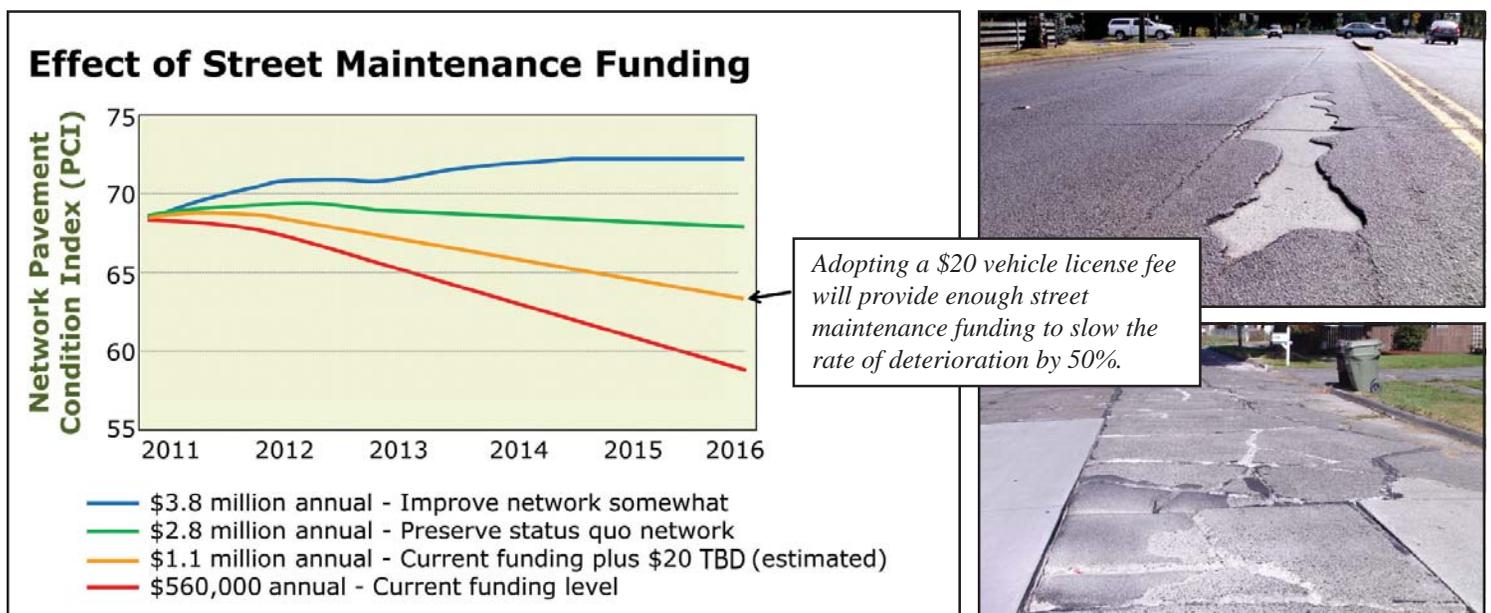
Restoring streets in poor shape can be prohibitively expensive. According to Tripnet.org, driving on poor streets costs motorists an extra \$324 per year in increased auto maintenance and decreased fuel efficiency.



What happens if we maintain the current level of funding for City streets?

If street maintenance funding stays the same, City streets will continue to deteriorate and are projected to lose about \$16 million in value by 2016. The overall condition rating will drop from "good" to "fair."

The effect is even greater for asphalt streets because they deteriorate faster than concrete streets. The overall condition of the City's asphalt streets will drop from a rating of "fair" to "marginal," and the backlog of asphalt streets in "poor" and "very poor" condition will almost double to 24% of the streets.



If a transportation benefit district with a \$20 vehicle license fee is adopted, what will it provide?

Adopting a \$20 vehicle license fee will provide enough street maintenance funding to slow the rate of deterioration by 50%. The additional funding will triple the amount of asphalt street overlays, double the amount of concrete street replacement, triple the amount of street chip seal surfacing, and quadruple the amount of sealing of roadway cracks. The additional funding will also provide for new equipment to increase the efficiency and productivity of the City's street maintenance crews, and generate matching funds for grants, allowing the City to apply for competitive grants that may help offset maintenance costs.



2012 Longview City Council

Back row:
Mike Wallin, Chet Makinster,
Mayor Pro Tem Mary Jane Melink,
Tom Hutchinson.

Front row:
Ken Botero, Mayor Dennis Weber,
Don Jensen.

If you have any questions about the advisory vote or the conditions of our city streets and roads, please contact the Public Works office at 442-5200. You may also obtain additional information from the City's website at <http://www.mylongview.com/publicworks/streetmaintmain.htm>.



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