



TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director
Mike Schrankel, GIS Manager
Connie Acker, Administrative Analyst

DATE: October 12, 2021

RE: **Information Item:** Progress Report on the ACCESS Database Replacement Project

Purpose

The purpose of this staff report is to provide an overview of the ACCESS Database Replacement Project funded in the 2021-2023 biennium budget.

Program Background

The Commission received an additional \$425,000 funding for the 2021-2023 biennium for the first phase of work to replace the Commission's ACCESS database and to design a new, more efficient, and transparent cloud-based information management system. The agency has been operating with an old, inefficient database system that requires manual entry of information, is not linked to the GIS, is not indexed for retrieval of information, and cannot be upgraded to incorporate new software advances for IT security or allow online public access. This project will improve day-to-day operations by replacing labor intensive manual entry and the use of Excel spreadsheets, with a system that will allow landowners to utilize online land use development applications, reduce redundant paperwork, improve the accuracy of responses to public record requests, and make much better use of our small staff's time.

The Commission worked with the Oregon Enterprise Information Service and the Washington Chief Information Office the past few years to determine how best to move forward with our request for assistance. Both states agreed to provide endorsement letters to accomplish our mission and goals, improve workflow, transparency and public access to information which were needed to be eligible for this additional funding. The legislatures eventually approved the request for funding.

The approved project funding has four "gates"; one each quarter for the 2021-2023 biennium. In order to receive any funds, the states must approve a technology budget developed by staff. The technology budget lays out the spending plan for two years with specific deliverables every six months, an investment plan, and an overall workplan that describes each task and a schedule for achieving those tasks. The 2021-2023 biennial funding will allow the Commission to hire an IT contractor using a competitive bid process to conduct a workflow analysis of how ACCESS is currently being used by staff, identify gaps, and develop and design a solution that will work for our agency's information management needs. The funding will support the IT contractor and enable hiring a part-time project manager to oversee the assessment work at the Commission.

The Commission will create a “Steering Committee” with representatives from staff, Washington Office of Financial Management, Washington Chief Information Office, Oregon Chief Financial Office and the Oregon Enterprise Information Services. The committee will meet approximately every six weeks to ensure that each state’s requirements are being met. In addition, a “Governance Committee” will be created with a small group of Gorge Commissioners and staff to oversee and advise on the workplan.

The Commission will request a second phase of funding for the 2023-2025 biennium to complete the project. This request will include the costs for consultants to implement the new information management system, scan and index all the old paper files and transfer them to the new system, conduct staff training, and create better public access opportunities through the Commission’s website. Accomplishing these tasks will enable the Commission to better serve landowners, the public, counties, agencies, and others who need critical information about specific parcels of land and development impacts on natural, cultural, scenic, recreation and economic resources in the National Scenic Area. Replacing the Commission’s outdated and limited database with new information technology will increase the capacity and the efficiency of the agency to perform its regulatory responsibilities.

Progress to Date

The Commission staff prepared the technology budget, which was approved in early September and funding for the first gate will be released in early October. “Gate 1” ends December 31, 2021.

Mike Schrankel, GIS Manager, will be serving as the day-to-day project manager during this 2021-2023 biennium for the Phase 1 needs assessment with assistance from Connie Acker for contracting vendors. Aiden Forsi, Land Use Planner, will be the lead to assist the IT consultant with staff workflow analysis of how the staff currently use ACCESS and to make recommendations for improvements. Mike and Connie have completed extensive training courses in purchasing and procurement and in contract management as required by the state of Washington and have used the knowledge gained in those trainings to begin preparing a Request for Proposals/Qualifications and a draft contract for services for a vendor who will be tasked with completing a business analysis and feasibility study. The solicitation will be posted by mid-October and will follow a competitive bid process with proposals and qualifications due in early to mid-November. Staff will select the vendor after reviewing proposals and interviewing top-ranked vendors in early December.