



John S. Foote, District Attorney for Clackamas County

Clackamas County Courthouse, 807 Main Street, Room 7, Oregon City, Oregon 97045
503 655-8431, FAX 503 650-8943, www.co.clackamas.or.us/da/

Clackamas County District Attorney Supports Continuing the Courthouse Replacement Program

We again wish to express our appreciation to Chief Justice Balmer and the Association of Oregon Counties for the inclusion of Clackamas County's courthouse replacement plan in your funding consideration. Continued state support would assure that Clackamas County has the planning funds it needs to accelerate its courthouse replacement project to meet the needs of residents in the County.

We are requesting your support for \$1.25 million to continue our planning for a new courthouse in Clackamas County.

The Clackamas County Courthouse was originally constructed in 1936 to contain one courtroom, as well as other county offices, including commissioners, etc. Over the past 81 years, it has been continually reconfigured as the county has grown enormously. Today all other county offices have been moved to their own separate county buildings, except for most of the functions of the court and District Attorney's Office. Because the courthouse is small, it only contains 11 courtrooms and slightly less than half of the District Attorney's Office.

Clackamas County is the third biggest county in the state, surpassed in population only by Washington and Multnomah Counties. However, because of the small size of the old courthouse, the county has been limited to 11 sitting circuit court judges, which is less than both Lane County (with 15 judges) and Marion County (with 14 judges). This chronic shortage of judges in Clackamas County, caused by a building that has limited capacity, has substantially impacted the Clackamas County court's ability to meet all of its timely obligations to its residents and visitors. In addition, the Clackamas County District Attorney's Office, like virtually all other District Attorney offices in the state and around the country, has been located in the courthouse since its inception. However, due to space shortages, more than half of the current District Attorney's Office, is located in buildings around Oregon City. These buildings are old and lack any kind of courthouse security. Only a new larger courthouse will solve these challenges.

The jury assembly room, a few small meeting rooms and the law library are contained in a building about a half block away, necessitating that all juries called to serve in the courthouse, must travel with juror badges plainly displayed, outside on the sidewalk around to the opposite side of the courthouse to a separate entrance. The jurors, by necessity, must walk past legal counsel, witnesses, victims and defendants entering the front of the courthouse, while they are outside the secure perimeter of the courthouse. Even within the courthouse, without a jury assembly space within the building itself, cramped circulation places prisoners among the public, Judges, court staff and attorneys.

There is no secure perimeter around the courthouse because it sits within a small, but vibrant historic shopping area with extremely limited parking for visitors, witnesses, victims, law enforcement and staff.

A recent seismic study of the courthouse found that it sits on a sandy base which will become liquefied in a significant earthquake. The courthouse sits on a slope and its western foundation sits within feet of the banks of the Willamette River. The recent seismic study indicates that liquefaction in an earthquake would result in the courthouse sliding into the river, obviously placing the entire area around and in the courthouse in significant danger.

Clackamas County established what is called its Red Soils Masterplan in 1998. A proposed new courthouse on the Red Soils campus has been in the masterplan since its inception. The plan provides a cohesive and integrated public service center for all residents of and visitors to the county, including a new fully functioning courthouse.

We urge the Committee to support Clackamas County's current funding request for \$1.25 million in the planning funds from the 2017 legislature.

Sincerely,



John S. Foote
District Attorney