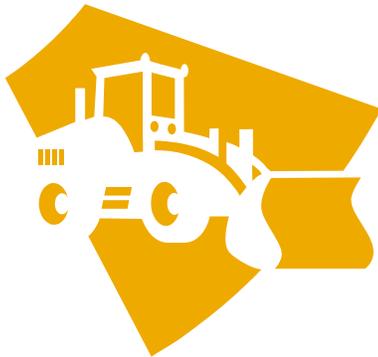


# So, you're the new County Engineer?



## An Introduction to County Engineering in the State of Washington

# **Foreword**

So, you've just accepted a position with a county to perform the duties of the County Engineer? During the interview process, you were able to demonstrate that you were the most qualified individual for the job, knowing that you possessed the necessary skills and required licenses to perform the duties of your new job. The Board of County Commissioners or the County Executive has offered you the opportunity to serve the citizens of the county and you have accepted the proposal.

Congratulations!! You are now one of 39 unique individuals in Washington State to possess the title of County Engineer.

Your first days with the county are spent getting acquainted with your staff, finding your way around the offices, and familiarizing yourself with the daily operations.

Soon, you may have a number of nagging questions about what this job really involves:

- How do I fit into this county organization?
- Who can answer my questions about laws and regulations, policies and procedures?
- How do I answer the questions that will be asked of me if I've never had to deal with this subject before?
- Why didn't the last engineer leave me the instruction manuals?
- Who can I talk to about these issues?
- Where do I find this information?

The Washington State County Road Administration Board (CRAB) is here to assist you in answering those types of questions! As a part of CRAB's ongoing program to provide technical and administrative assistance to county engineers, public works directors and management staff, we have provided this short primer to help you become more acquainted with your new position.

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# **The Board of County Commissioners or the County Council**

It all starts with the people on Election Day. They periodically elect representatives whose function it becomes to serve as the legislative and/or executive body of their particular county. These representatives are called County Commissioners in all statutory counties. They may be called something else in counties where the voters have approved home rule, such as County Councilmember in King County. For the sake of simplicity, the legislative body in these pages will be referred to simply as the Board.

The Board has a wide spectrum of responsibilities. These range from roads and streets to parks and recreation and from emergency services to planning. This publication deals only with the Board's responsibilities and relationships with the road and public works departments.

Simply stated, under the laws of the State of Washington, the Board is the policy-setting body and the Engineer or Director of Public Works is the manager and administrator. In its policy-setting role, the Board's primary functions are to adopt a capital improvement program; to adopt a budget sufficient to meet all capital, operational and administrative needs; to set a tax levy that will generate sufficient revenues; and to develop and adopt policies governing the operation of the department.

During the development of a Capital Improvement Plan (called a Six Year Transportation Improvement Program in the law), the Board receives specific recommendations from the Engineer, who provides the Board with the technical information on which their recommendations are based. The Board is required to go through a public hearing process and may ask for a planning department review relative to the recommended program. This gives the Board an opportunity to evaluate the plan's social implications and political ramifications. The Board, in due course, may revise the recommended program as it sees fit, but must adopt a final program that represents, as nearly as possible, the consensus of the Board.

The officially adopted program simply represents the Board's instructions to the Engineer, listing those projects to which he or she is to devote their attention, preferably in some order of priority. Having thus set forth its long-term objectives, the Board is required to adopt annual programs and to provide in the departmental

budget sufficient funds for the Engineer to pursue the projects that have been listed for that year.

An important responsibility of the Board is to approve an organizational chart showing the structure of the department and fixing the staffing levels. The chart, in conjunction with a written personnel policy, represents the Board's instructions to the Engineer concerning all employees in the department. These policies should be reviewed from time to time jointly by the Engineer and Board, especially after there has been a change in elected officials.

Having adopted a program, a budget and overall policies, the Board's function is then to monitor actual performance. This should be done to evaluate the department's performance in light of the directions that they have been given. The Engineer or Director of Public Works is given by law the responsibility of administering all the activities of the department, and is the individual who must keep the members of the Board adequately informed. Members of the Board should resist the strong temptation to become involved in administrative details. To do so can seriously undermine the effectiveness of the individual charged with these administrative responsibilities. It is most important that the Board and the Engineer or Director of Public Works maintain mutually understood methods of communication. Specific opportunities must be provided for an exchange of ideas, complaints, and reports relating to the operation of the department.

The Board is where it all starts and, if all else fails it is also where it all ends. It is the Engineer's responsibility to develop the best possible relationship with their Board to assure that the Board's stated policies are carried out to the greatest extent possible and with a minimum of controversy and confusion.

# The Engineer

The County Engineer or County Road Engineer (statutory title, referred to here as the Engineer) is appointed by his or her Board and serves at its pleasure as constrained by State law. He or she may also be designated by the Board as Director of Public Works. In many cases, the positions of County Engineer and Director of Public Works are held independently by separate individuals. In these cases, unless the Public Works Director is also a Professional Engineer, the County Engineer retains all the legal responsibilities and authority assigned by statute.

The Engineer, under the direction of the Board, supervises the establishment, laying out, construction, alteration, improvement, repair, and maintenance of all county roads. He or she is required by law to be a licensed professional civil engineer. There is a vast variety of laws to be reckoned with by the Engineer in carrying out his or hers obligations, some of which may be distasteful to the Board. The Engineer must execute the Board's instructions in a most diplomatic fashion within legal requirements. The best resource in doing so is the Washington State Association of County Engineers' adopted "Code of Ethics." This code is customarily on display in the office of each Engineer and sets forth the relationship that must exist between the Engineer, the Board, and the Public. The ten basic tenets of the code are:

1. The position of county engineer is one requiring high professional stature, and the individual occupying that position shall conduct themselves in a manner that shall be a credit to their profession and to their county.
2. He or she shall manage and administer the county road department and other departments lawfully under their jurisdiction, in accordance with the spirit and intent of the appropriate statute, and in a professional manner suggested by professional training, continual professional improvement, and professional guidance from state and national groups and professional organizations.
3. He or she shall gather and prepare factual data and reports, and make professional recommendations to their board as engineering support for the board's policymaking decisions.

4. He or she shall use their professional engineering skills and knowledge to carry out the board's decisions or policy.
5. He or she shall use their professional engineering ability to appraise results of actions and operations and, in a professional manner, take appropriate actions to have necessary items brought to the attention of the board with recommended policy changes.
6. He or she shall consult regularly with their board to attain and insure complete understanding of decisions made by the board so that their professional actions as county engineer will result in compliance with policy decisions of the board.
7. He or she shall act at all times in the highest professional manner as a county engineer to maintain the dignity and honor of the position in the county and state.
8. He or she shall be professional in all aspects of conduct, in their professional duties, community activities, and personal conduct as a private citizen so that honor and respect shall be reflected on the engineering profession.
9. He or she shall stimulate professional attainment of qualified staff members, and provide the opportunity for the advancement and development of every employee's skills.
10. He or she shall serve in the public interest and treat all citizens courteously, equally and fairly.

In those counties where the Engineer also functions as the Director of Public Works, he or she may find himself dealing with such things as operation of water and sewer systems, solid waste collection and/or disposal, airports and more. In that role, considerably expanded from running a road department to that of managing, directing, coordinating, and expediting these services, he or she must staff their organization with competent people and keep them trained for whatever their jobs may be.

He or she must keep in mind that they and the staff are first and foremost public employees performing for the convenience and common good of the public. It is

imperative that all possible and proper measures be taken to assure the taxpayer that they are receiving full value for every dollar spent.

The Engineer must make certain delegations of authority and responsibility for the proper operation of their department. How much, of course, depends upon the size of the department and its program. In all cases, each level must clearly understand the authority and policy limits within which it is to exercise its delegated responsibilities. The Engineer must assure himself that all such delegations are being properly discharged and that the people to whom delegation is made are fully capable. It is absolutely essential that competent personnel be employed on their staff. However, ultimately, it is the Engineer who is legally responsible for the actions taken on behalf of the department.

Integrity, confidence, interest in the work, and freedom from political interference must prevail at all levels of the departments administered by the Engineer in order for the departments' services to be satisfactory and in the public's best interest.

The County Road Administration Board, through its staff, serves Engineers and Commissioners by keeping them up to date with changing times and conditions. This agency was created to improve road department management through emphasis on development of policies and standardized modes of operation, and as such, it extends that valuable service to the public works area. The Engineer should utilize this resource.

An excellent way to keep much of the information you may need to answer questions and fulfill your statutory duties is to prepare your own County Engineer's Reference Manual. A suggested Table of Contents for this manual can be found in the back of this document.

# **The Organization**

Good organization and good management are necessary for the department to be responsive to the overall needs of the county. They allow planning for needs to avoid a haphazard reaction to problems as they arise.

## **The Board's Responsibilities**

The Board cannot shift its ultimate responsibility. The Board members are the ones who must still face the taxpayers at each election. It is therefore the Commissioners' responsibility to develop broad policies that allow the Engineer the authority to organize and staff the departments under his or hers jurisdiction in the best possible way to get the entire job done.

## **Written Policies**

It is to everybody's benefit to have written policies to cover situations that come up on a regular basis, or to cover problems or situations that the Board would like handled in a specific way. A good written policy will save time for the Board and for the Engineer. It will also serve to provide improved service to the public, since answers can be given to specific questions and services can be performed in specific ways, without having to try to remember, "How did we handle it last time?" Refer to the Section "Required Policies" for a discussion of policy necessary to meet CRAB annual requirements. CRAB's website is also an excellent resource for model policies.

## **Who Is Responsible?**

Tasks are carried out best when everyone knows his or her job and when everyone knows who is responsible for what. This means that responsibilities must be assigned at each of several levels. To accomplish this, authority must be carefully delegated throughout the organization in accordance with approved policies.

The public elects Commissioners who set down the policies for getting the work done. The Engineer carries out those policies. The Engineer is delegated that responsibility, and the Board hold him or her responsible to see that all of the functions of the departments under their jurisdiction are carried out in a timely,

economical and expeditious manner. The Engineer, in turn, must also delegate certain responsibilities to subordinates.

The best tool for assigning responsibility and keeping everyone informed is through the use of an organization chart that has been adopted by the Board. Such a chart will help the Board to better understand the chain of command within the department.

Another responsibility that looms ever larger in the light of today's rules and regulations pertaining to equal employment opportunity, fair labor standards, etc., is the problem of hiring the best person for the job. The best way to ensure this is to have a sound hiring procedure that is understood and approved by the Board.

The hiring procedure should be an integral part of the county's written personnel policies, and should be reviewed and updated periodically. In an increasing number of counties, all hiring is being handled through a Human Resources Department whose head is responsible to the Board.

## **Training**

Once hired, the employees need to be kept up-to-date with the latest techniques of their job. This can best be done through a training program that has been recommended by the Engineer, approved, and adopted by the Board. The training might range all the way from how to fill a chuck hole, how to best operate a complicated piece of equipment or front line supervisory training for road supervisors and lead people. It should include both temporary seasonal help and experienced employees. The training may range from formalized classroom training to "on the job" training or demonstrations. There is always a better way to do any job. Training must apply to everyone in the department.

Two fringe benefits of adequate training are improved employee morale and better public relations. Nothing is more important to any organization than having everyone in it feel like a valued member of the team.

# **Communications**

The Engineer and the Board of Commissioners are the team that is responsible for the management of the road department. In order to do so successfully, it is essential that they develop and maintain channels of communication, not only interpersonally but also with the public, within the department, and with other agencies.

## **Interpersonal**

The Engineer should always arrange their schedule so that he or she can be available on all regular Board meeting dates. He or she should be prepared to answer questions and to make recommendations. It is easy for the Engineer to become so wrapped up in their work that he or she begins to make decisions without the Board's knowledge. He or she should be careful not to do so except in areas where he or she has clear authority.

Whether or not verbal progress reports are made to the Board, it is well worth the effort to prepare concise written progress reports. Personal contact between the Engineer and the Board members, individually and collectively, is very helpful to gain an understanding of particular areas of concern to them. The Engineer must be careful not to become the instrument of only one Board member. If one member does give instructions, it is wise to obtain a letter or resolution of approval from the whole Board so that the Engineer is not placed in the untenable position of working for only one member. Occasional opportunity should be taken for the Board and Engineer to review adopted policies pertinent to the operation of the department. This is especially important whenever there has been a change in Board members or Engineers.

## **With The Public**

Methods of informing the public and/or receiving comments from the public are vital to the effective operation of the department. The public always deserves a sympathetic ear, and every complaint should receive a response. Every county is required to have a policy on handling of complaints and everyone in the

department should be familiar with the policy and be required to follow it at all times.

Whenever a Commissioner receives a request for additional services or new facilities, it is very important that he or she consult with their fellow board members and the Engineer before making any commitment. Equally important is that the Engineer consults with his or her Board before providing any new services other than in the case of emergencies or when previously covered by established policy.

It is very important, working under the current open meetings laws that all decisions are made in open meetings. Today's public demands they be informed of all activities, and their advice should be sought in developing projects that concern them. This can be accomplished through small conferences, home meetings, advisory committees, public forums, etc., to reach many of the different segments of the public.

Newspapers are one of the most practical and inexpensive ways to convey information to the public. Journalists are usually exacting in their work. Their training is to probe for facts, and they are anxious to develop reliable news sources. They normally will welcome news stories once you have earned their confidence. They may need help in translating engineering terminology or explaining complicated problems. There will be times when they will report information not complimentary to your operation. It is important to be completely honest and to maintain good communications between county officials and the news media.

Radio and television broadcasters are required by law to spend some time on public interest programs and announcements. Getting to know the media people who are covering the Courthouse and road departments, and being on a first-name basis with them, will help in their accepting your news and reporting it in the best light. Using statistics is a poor method because to most people they are very boring. Any news releases should be kept simple, so that any layperson can understand them.

The rise of the computer age has brought perhaps one of the most profound changes to the communication of public information since the printing press was developed. Instant access to the World Wide Web and the ability to send electronic mail anywhere in the world at any time has revolutionized how the public contacts it's public service providers. Web sites for the county are excellent

venues for dispensing information, updates, and alerts and can provide and receive public feedback in real time. In order for this information to be truly useful, frequent updates to the sites must be made. This can be very time consuming and labor intensive if not done on a regular basis.

### **Interdepartmental**

In small counties many instructions can be given verbally. As county personnel increases in size, an organizational chart becomes more important, and additional methods of communication must be developed. Interdepartmental memos and emails, policy guides, and employee manuals are some of the methods used. Monthly or weekly staff meetings can be very helpful for sharing information. Staff meetings should be kept short. Matters that need to be discussed between individuals should not take staff meeting time. Personal contact regardless of county size is essential. The communications from the bottom up are very important and must be encouraged to have a smooth running operation.

### **Intergovernmental Relations**

Effective communication between counties and with state and federal agencies is necessary in improving and maintaining an efficient organization. The Washington State Association of Counties, through its Olympia office, its district meetings, along with the Washington State Association of County Engineers, provides an excellent forum for sharing problems with other Commissioners and Engineers. The meetings are also an excellent source of information from state agencies that are frequently represented. Staff members should be encouraged to meet from time to time with their counterparts in other counties to share their experiences in developing solutions to common problems. Good communications with other counties, cities, and political subdivisions within your area can mean many dollars saved through mutual assistance.

It is important to know and to communicate with all public agency and utility personnel who are involved with roads or public works functions. Many times mutual aid can be given when open communications are maintained. Road programs should be coordinated with any agency affected.

There are many publications and periodicals available in the Engineers' office that report on problems others have faced and solved. An excellent source of more detailed information on communications can be found in the National Association of County Engineers Action Guide Series, Volume IX, entitled "Public Support."

# **Budget and Program**

## **Budget**

The Board has the responsibility of approving budgets for expenditures of all County Departments, and of levying that amount of taxes necessary to meet the estimated expenditures as finally determined.

Preliminary budgets in most counties are submitted to the County Auditor and in due course the Board holds a public hearing, after which final budgets are adopted.

The Engineer is responsible for submission of a preliminary budget, for each department he or she manages, to the County Auditor. Budget forms are available from the Auditor's office. Budgets are all to be in accordance to the BARS (Budgeting, Accounting, and Reporting System) Manual, published by the State Auditor. The preliminary budget, in general, shows the actual expenditures for the preceding year and the first six months of the current year, and the estimated expenditures for the proposed budget year. The same applies to estimated revenues. Budget balance and cash position should not be confused, although they are indirectly related. The County Auditor should keep the Board and the Engineer informed as to the implications of cash flow in the budgeting process.

The final budget for the ensuing calendar year shall not be altered or exceeded, except as provided by law. Internal transfers may be made by Board resolution, but any net increase can be authorized only by supplemental budget process.

Information regarding major revenue sources is available from the following:

Road levy (property tax): County Assessor's Office

Motor vehicle fund (gas tax): CRAB

Federal Highway funds (STP, etc.): WSDoT H&LP Office & MPO/RTPO's

UATA funds: Transportation Improvement Board

Federal Forest funds: US Forest Service

Timber excise tax: Dept of Revenue

Revenue sharing funds: Board of County Commissioners

State Forest funds: Dept of Natural Resources

Historical records should be consulted whenever authoritative revenue estimates are not available.

The law requires that the Board must commence final budget hearings no later than the first Monday in December. All other dates affecting the budget process are subject to determination by resolution of the Board pursuant to RCW 36.40.071.

## **Program**

The laws of the State mandate a programming process intended to assure that careful thought and preparation precede all major expenditures. This makes it important to have a long-range road program in which priorities are established by the Board, for without such a program it will be impossible for the Road Department to operate satisfactorily. The statutes require that the programming process be divided into two segments: the long range or Six Year Transportation Improvement Program, and the annual or Annual Construction Program.

The development of the Six Year Transportation Improvement Program provides the Board an opportunity to give long-range direction to the county's road development program. The Engineer is required to make specific recommendations and to provide background information on road and bridge conditions. It is the Board's responsibility, after having considered all available data and having invited public comment, to adopt a six-year program which the Engineer will then use as their planning document in scheduling the various steps in the actual construction process. Each year in June, the Board has the opportunity to re-evaluate its long-range program and make whatever adjustments it deems appropriate. The individual steps in the total programming are:

### **Six Year Transportation Improvement Program (RCW 36.81.121)**

An estimate of the annual revenues and a functional classification map are desirable.

A priority array of arterial roads and all bridges (WAC 136-14-040).

A bridge inspection report (WAC 136-20-060).

The Engineer's recommended Six Year TIP submitted prior to budget adoption.

Public hearing on the recommended program prior to budget adoption.

The Board must adopt a Six Year TIP by resolution before budget adoption.

Within 30 days of adoption, a copy of the six year program shall be filed with the WSDoT Highways and Local Programs, the County Road Administration Board, and, when applicable, the Transportation Improvement Board.

Revisions to the Six Year Transportation Improvement Program can be made at any time by a majority of the Board, but only after a public hearing thereon.

Annual Construction Program (RCW 36.81.130)

The recommended Annual Construction Program, which should conform as nearly as practical to the first year of the Six Year Transportation Improvement Program, must be submitted to the Board prior to budget adoption, or at such other time as may be specified by the Board (RCW 36.40.071).

Projects that require permits to construct in or near water and wetlands should be identified as per state and local agency requirements. All environmental requirements, as adopted by the Board or as required by state and federal regulations, shall be observed.

A list of all major equipment purchases contemplated for the year with estimated cost thereof should be included. Total amounts should be approximately equal to the item of Equipment Purchases in the annual Equipment Rental and Revolving Fund Budget. ER & R rates must be reviewed and approved annually by the Engineer as part of this process. Review and approval of the rates by the Board is suggested.

The Board may adopt the Annual Construction Program at any time prior to adoption of the budget. Any appropriations contained in the county road budget shall be void unless the county's Annual Construction Program was adopted prior to such appropriation (RCW 36.81.130).

After adoption, a copy of the Annual Construction Program and appropriate resolution shall be forwarded to the County Road Administration Board within 30 days, but not later than December 31 of each year.

The final Annual Construction Program for the fiscal year shall not thereafter be changed except by unanimous vote of the Board, and shall be by resolution and require the same information as the original program.

**Maintenance Management**

An increasingly important tool to getting more accomplished with the available funds is an effective management program for maintenance. This is a well-planned, well-publicized, and effectively carried out maintenance policy. There are many advantages.

First, it will result in better service to the public, as maintenance activities will be carefully planned and scheduled. Secondly, it will reduce the number of calls and/or requests for action by the public. When people become accustomed to regular maintenance of certain key functions, as long as the level of maintenance is adequate, then they know when to expect service. Lastly, it ensures a consistent level of maintenance throughout the county. The overall effect should be a significant decrease in complaints from the public about road conditions and an overall better maintained road system at the most cost effective and time efficient level of service sustainable.

# **Required Policies**

## **Personnel**

An extremely important facet of management responsibilities is the preparation and implementation of effective personnel policies. These policies should be developed by the Board with the cooperation of the Engineer. The written policies should be adopted by resolutions as required by WAC 136-10-052. The contract between the County and the Local Union representing the employees generally covers a few of the items that should be enumerated in the personnel policies. The Union contract alone is not generally sufficient to cover the areas adequately. A complete written statement of all policies relating to the personnel of the department should be prepared. Any matters contained in the Union agreement may be referenced as such. Copies of the adopted personnel policies should be provided to all employees and additional copies of the policy should be kept in the office of the county engineer and in all road department shops in so that it is readily available to all road department employees and prospective employees.

The policies should include, but not be limited to:

1. Supervisor-Employee Relations, including:
  - a) Supervisors' responsibilities to subordinates
  - b) Employee relation principles.
  - c) Position toward Union affiliates
  
2. Employee Induction and Orientation, including:
  - a) Equal Employment Opportunity policies
  - b) Affirmative Action policy
  - c) Definition of employee status
  - d) Requisition and recruiting
  - e) Minimum standards for employment
  - f) Pre-employment interviews
  - g) Hiring of former employees, friends, handicapped
  - h) Employee referrals
  - i) Gender and other employee-to-employee relationships

3. Hours of Work, Attendance, and Absenteeism, including:
  - a) General work hours
  - b) Straight time
  - c) Overtime
  - d) Work interruptions
  - e) Coffee breaks
  - f) Absences
  - g) Labor agreement clauses
  
4. Wage and Salary Administration, including:
  - a) Salary administration program
  - b) Job
  - c) Shift premium
  - d) Overtime
  - e) Time spent on County-sponsored affairs
  - f) Call-in pay
  - g) Job evaluation policy
  - h) Performance appraisal policy
  - i) Reductions in Force procedures
  
5. Seniority Policies, including:
  - a) Determining seniority
  - b) Types of seniority
  - c) Exceptions to seniority
  - d) Loss of seniority
  - e) Departmental seniority
  - f) Classification of seniority
  - g) Termination of seniority
  
6. Transfers, including:
  - a) Transfers to a lower rate position
  - b) Promotions
  - c) Limited assignment jobs
  - d) Waivers
  
7. Performance Review Policies, including:
  - a) Exempt salaried employees
  - b) Nonexempt salaried employees
  - c) Exempt hourly employees

- d) Nonexempt hourly employees
- e) Layoffs

8. Employee Benefits, including:

- a) Vacations
- b) Holidays
- c) Leaves of Absence for salaried employees
- d) Leaves of Absence for hourly employees
- e) Leaves of Absence for military service
- f) Maternity leave
- g) Medical leave
- h) Family leave
- i) Bereavement leave
- j) Jury duty leave
- k) Short-term leave
- l) Leave for religious observances
- m) Vacation policies for salaried personnel
- n) Vacation policies for hourly personnel
- o) Insurance (life, medical, dental, disability, travel accident, etc.)
- p) Retirement benefits, including deferred compensation
- q) Death of employee
- r) Education, training, and self-improvement programs
- s) Length of service recognition

9. County Rules and Disciplinary Procedures, including:

- a) Regulations and disciplinary actions
- b) Disciplinary procedure
- c) Rules for personnel
- d) Charity solicitations
- e) Garnishments
- f) Employee activity during off-duty hours
- g) Employees working for others
- h) Safety policies

10. Complain and Grievance Procedures, including:

- a) Grievance policies and procedures
- b) Employee grievance procedure
- c) Employee counseling policies
- d) Suggestions and complaints

11. Termination of Employment, including:
  - a) Resignations and discharges
  - b) Separation policies
  - c) Termination questionnaire preparation and utilization

**Additional policies required by CRAB under WAC 136-50**

WAC 136-50-051 requires the Engineer to have a policy regarding organization of the road department. It is the duty of the county engineer to organize the road department in accordance with the policies of the county legislative authority, into such departments, divisions, districts, or units as may be necessary to meet statutory requirements and to perform such additional services as may be directed by policy of the legislative authority.

The county legislative authority adopts a written policy, including a chart or other pictorial representation, designating the interrelationships of all positions in the road department from the county legislative authority through all employees. The chart shall clearly show the complete chain of command throughout the entire organization. Copies of such chart must be retained in the office of the county engineer and in all road department shops so it is readily available to all road department employees and the general public.

WAC 136-50-053 requires that a written policy regarding handling of complaints be adopted by the county legislative authority establishing the methods for handling complaints from the general public and others related to road department activities. The purpose of this policy is to assure that each county have an orderly procedure to insure that citizen complaints receive prompt attention.

WAC 136-50-054 requires that a policy for handling work for other public agencies and county departments. The county legislative authority must adopt a written policy regarding the approval of all work for other public agencies and county departments. The policy must include, but is not limited to, the following:

- (1) A statement of intent indicating whether or not the legislative authority will accept requests for work for other public agencies or other county departments.
- (2) A statement indicating procedures to be followed in processing such requests in accordance with applicable statutes.

(3) Statement indicating any delegation of authority in processing such requests.

Finally, WAC 136-50-055 requires that the county legislative authority must adopt a written policy outlining the county's administrative, procedural, and technical requirements regarding the installation, replacement, adjustment, relocation, and maintenance of all utilities in, on, or above the county road right of way.

Many excellent examples of these policies have been compiled and developed into model policies by the County Road Administration Board. These model policies are collected and documented in the “County Engineer’s and Public Works Director’s Manual, Volumes 1 and 2.”

It is important that once the policies are adopted, they should be periodically reviewed and updated as needed by the Board. These policies should be dynamic documents that reflect the changing environment of state and county government regulations. Do not let them collect dust on your bookshelf. Refer to them often and keep them updated for recent changes to statute and code.

# **The County Road Administration Board**

The County Road Administration Board was created by the Legislature in order to give the counties an opportunity to improve road department administrative practices from within their own ranks. The CRABoard is composed of six County Commissioners and three County Engineers who are appointed to staggered three-year terms by the Executive Committee of the Washington State Association of Counties. To assist the CRABoard in its work, the law provides for the employment of an Executive Director, who serves at the pleasure of the CRABoard, much the same way as a County Engineer serves at the pleasure of his or her Board of County Commissioners. The Executive Director hires staff to carry out the directives of the Board that are developed during the quarterly meetings.

It is the CRABoard's obligation under the law to develop and adopt Standards of Good Practice to be applied in the administration of county road departments. The adopted Standards of Good Practice are listed below:

**WAC 136-11 -- Maintenance Management (under development per RCW 36.78.121)**

**WAC 136-12 -- Vacancy in Position of County Engineer**

**WAC 136-14 -- Priority Programming**

**WAC 136-15 -- Procedures for Preparation of the 6-Year Transportation Program**

**WAC 136-16 -- Annual Road Program, Annual Construction Report, and Day Labor Limits**

**WAC 136 - 18 -- Day Labor Construction**

**WAC 136 - 20 -- Inspection of Bridges on County Roads**

**WAC 136 - 28 -- Cooperative Procedures for Processing of County Road Accident Reports**

**WAC 136 - 40 -- Accommodation of Utilities on County Roads**

**WAC 136 - 50 -- Statutory Relationship between County Engineer and County Legislative Authority -- Adoption of Written Policies**

**WAC 136 - 60 -- Maintenance of County Road Logs**

**WAC 136 - 70 -- Pavement Management System Requirement for County Arterial Preservation Program Eligibility**

The Standards of Good Practice are available from the CRABoard's offices and on the web site in electronic form. As new standards are developed or old ones revised, they are distributed to all County Commissioners and County Engineers.

It is also the CRABoard's responsibility to ascertain that all county road departments are operating in accordance with the Standards of Good Practice adopted by the CRABoard and in accordance with statutes passed by the State Legislature. The Executive Director and the staff make official county visits to the Engineer's offices every two years to perform an appraisal of the compliance and progress in the operations of the road department. A report is developed after the visit to document the discussion of the visit and is sent to the Engineer and the Board of County Commissioners.

The CRABoard makes an annual report to the Legislative Transportation Committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate and the Department of Transportation. All County Commissioners and County Engineers receive a copy of this report.

The CRABoard administers two grant programs for the counties: the Rural Arterial Program, with a dispersal of \$22-25 million per year, and the County Arterial Preservation Program, with a dispersal of \$15-20 million per year. The Board also calculates and distributes fuel tax receipts among the counties, totaling approximately \$145 million per year.

The office of the County Road Administration Board also serves as a reliable information center for County Commissioners and Engineers in road department matters. Many of CRAB's Engineering Services staff are former county engineers or served on engineer's staff and have many years of experience in road department administration. The Information Technology staff of the County Road Administration Board offers training and technical assistance in computer software programs including AutoCAD, several road design software and maintenance management systems and hosts the annual Road Design Conference and Professional Development Conference.

Excellent examples of the required policies have been compiled and developed into model policies by CRAB. These model policies are collected and documented in the "County Engineer's and Public Works Director's Manual, Volumes 1 and 2." Many of the questions Engineers may have can be answered by consulting this reference and CRAB staff available for telephone and on site discussions as well.

## **Other Agencies**

In conducting the operations of his or her department, the Engineer, under direction of their Board or Council, deals with numerous other agencies, some routinely, some only occasionally, depending upon the area of concern. Some of these agencies are:

### **Federal Agencies**

Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)  
Department of Transportation, United States Coast Guard  
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers  
Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Department of the Interior, Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management  
Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation  
Department of the Interior, Fish, and Wildlife Service  
Department of the Interior, Geodetic Survey  
Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service  
Department of Agriculture, Forest Service  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service

### **State Agencies**

County Road Administration Board (CRAB)  
Region Highways and Local Programs Engineer, Department of Transportation  
Transportation Improvement Board  
State Auditor (State Examiner, Division of Municipal Corporations)  
State Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
State Utilities and Transportation Commission  
State Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Washington State Patrol  
State Department of Ecology

### **County**

Elected County Officials or their Deputies  
Other Appointed Officials

# **Duties of the County Road Engineer**

This is a brief synopsis of the Revised Code of Washington statutes that govern the position of County Engineer:

## **RCW 36.33A.040**

- Rates (for all ER&R assets) shall be determined by the county engineer subject to annual review by the legislative body.

## **RCW 36.40.020**

- (For the annual budget,) prepare such estimates of cost for the county commissioners ... for all new road and bridge construction ... similar statement showing the road and bridge maintenance program ... to be financed from the county road fund and bond issues.

## **RCW 36.54.015**

- Advise and assist the board to prepare a fourteen-year long-range capital improvement plan embracing all major elements of the ferry system.

## **RCW 36.75.050**

- The powers and duties vested in or imposed upon the boards (of county commissioners) with respect to establishing, examining, surveying, constructing, altering, repairing, improving, and maintaining county roads, shall be exercised under the supervision and direction of the county road engineer.

## **RCW 36.77.010**

- Prepare such maps, plans, and specifications as shall be necessary and sufficient (for) any county road (to be) laid out and established and altered, widened, or otherwise constructed or improved

## **RCW 36.78.020**

- Apply CRAB “Standards of good practice”

### **RCW 36.80.030**

- Examine and certify to the board all estimates and all bills for labor, materials, provisions, and supplies with respect to county roads
- Prepare standards of construction of roads and bridges
- Have supervision, under the direction of the board (for all county roads), of
  - establishing
  - laying out
  - constructing
  - altering
  - improving
  - repairing
  - maintaining

### **RCW 36.80.040**

- Record and file in his or her office
- All matters concerning the public roads, highways, bridges, ditches, or other surveys of the county
  - with the original papers, documents, petitions, surveys, repairs, and other papers
  - to have the complete history of any such road, highway, bridge, ditch, or other survey
- And shall number each construction or improvement project.

### **RCW 36.80.050**

- Keep a highway plat book in their office ... accurately platted all public roads and highways established by the board

### **RCW 36.80.060**

- Maintain in their office complete and accurate records of all expenditures for
  - administration
  - bond and warrant retirement
  - maintenance
  - construction
  - purchase and operation of road equipment
  - purchase or manufacture of materials and supplies
- Maintain a true and complete inventory of all road equipment.

### **RCW 36.80.070**

- All road construction work, except minor construction work, contract, or day labor, shall be in accordance with plans and specifications prepared therefore by or under direct supervision of the county road engineer.

### **RCW 36.82.160**

- Each county legislative authority, **with the assistance of the county road engineer**
- Prepare detailed and itemized estimates of all expenditures required in the county for the ensuing fiscal year
- In the preparation and adoption of the county road budget the legislative authority shall determine and budget sums to become available for the following county road purposes:
  - (1) Administration
  - (2) Bond and warrant retirement
  - (3) Maintenance
  - (4) Construction
  - (5) Operation of equipment rental and revolving fund; and
  - (6) Such other items relating to the county road budget as may be required by CRAB

### **RCW 36.87.040**

- Examine any county road or portion thereof proposed to be vacated and abandoned
  - report their opinion as to whether the county road should be vacated and abandoned
  - whether the same is in use or has been in use
  - the condition of the road
  - whether it will be advisable to preserve it for the county road system in the future
  - whether the public will be benefited by the vacation and abandonment
  - and all other facts, matters, and things which will be of importance to the board
  - and also file their cost bill.

### **RCW 47.36.060**

- Local authorities in their respective jurisdictions shall place and maintain such traffic devices upon public highways under their jurisdiction as are necessary to carry out the provisions of the law or local traffic ordinances or to regulate, warn, or guide traffic.

# **County Engineers Information Reference Table** **of Contents\***

- **Organization and Personnel**
  - Current Organization Chart
  - Function #'s (for time and equipment usage accounting)
  - Current Union Contract
  - Equipment Rates (\$/hr or mile)
  
- **Administrative Information**
  - Current CRAB Annual Certification
  - Current County Road Log (system inventory)
  - County Arterials Listing
  - County Roads by Name
  - County Roads by Number
  - Annual Bridge Report
  - Current Three-Year Accident History
  
- **Financial Information**
  - Current Annual Road Budget
  - Current County Road Levy Certification
  - Year-to-Date County Road Expenditures Report
  
- **Construction Information**
  - Annual Construction Program (contract and county forces projects)
  - 6 Year Transportation Improvement Plan (6 Year TIP)
  
- **Maintenance Information**
  - Annual County Arterial Preservation Program (seal coat schedule)
  - Annual Maintenance Program (Maintenance Management Program)
  
- **Selected RCW's and WAC's**
  - Title 36, Ch. 32, 33, 33A, 55, 75-89 (minimum)
  - WAC 136 (CRAB)

**\*This is only a suggested list and may not include all the documents for your particular county.**