
How do I get a road vacated?

The process to “vacate” or abandon a County road is in state law. It is in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Chapter 36.87. The law lists several steps. They include a petition from owners of the majority of the road frontage. Some Counties have developed specific procedures.

Is the road vacation up to the County Engineer?

No, the vacation is decided by the legislative authority of the County, the County Commissioners or Council. The County Engineer gives them a report of facts and an opinion on the “value to the County Road system.” The Commission considers that report at a public hearing along with citizen input.

The County road goes to the lake past my property. We are tired of traffic and litter from people who don’t live here. Why won’t the County Engineer recommend a yes on my request to vacate?

State law does not allow vacation of roads abutting bodies of water except in very specific cases. The County Engineer may have received legal advice that indicates an exception to the statute is not allowed.

Will I be charged a fee to complete the road vacation?

Yes, if the County has decided there will be a charge for road vacations. The amount will depend on the County Code. Some will simply charge administrative costs. Others may charge for the cost of improvements paid by the taxpayers, or for the appraised value of the land.

Can a vacation desired by a majority of landowners be denied?

The decision to vacate is up to the Commissioners. In addition to the state law limit about bodies of water, it is doubtful the County would vacate a public road if it would take away a property owners access.

What happens to public utilities when a road is vacated?

State law allows the County to retain a utility easement. However, it is generally favored for the utilities to obtain an easement directly from the property owners.

Pete Ringen, P.E., Wahkiakum County Engineer

Questions about this article, or any of the series, or on other topics related to County Roads, may be directed either to your County Engineer, or to Al King, P.E., County Road Administration Board, Olympia, at Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov.