

MONTHLY REPORT TO COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 8/20/2025
Prepared by: Mouhamad Zaher
Department: Public Works
Reporting Period: August 2025
CC: City Administrator John Walsh



Public Works Operations:

Road Maintenance

We are currently in the summer season focusing on pothole repair & street striping across the city. To date, we've successfully completed 75% of the scheduled maintenance work on main arterial roads, which has improved traffic flow and safety for both pedestrians and drivers.

Street Lighting Upgrades

We have initiated a citywide street lighting upgrade, transitioning to energy-efficient LED fixtures. This will not only reduce energy consumption by 30% but also reduce maintenance costs over the next 5–7 years. Currently, 80% of the planned upgrades have been completed with Riverside been the last one upgraded recently.

Metering & Services

- **Meter Reads:** Conducted routine meter readings and monitored heavy water users for billing accuracy.

Meter & Service Installations:

Installed 3 new meters and services to accommodate new developments.
Replaced 8 larger meters to ensure accurate readings and system efficiency.

Main Line Repairs:

- Repaired a leak in the main at 295 S. 4th St. ensuring continued service without interruption.
- Repaired another leak on Battle Mountain Rd. to prevent further water loss and maintain system integrity.

New Service Hookups:

- Hooked up new water service on Shore Dr. and Bradley St. to expand water access to residents.

Service Line Replacements:

- Replaced service lines at the intersection of 4th St. and Cowlitz St. This was a 4-day project that involved extensive coordination and work in a busy area.
- Replaced the shut-off valve on S. 7th St. to improve system control and efficiency.

Maintenance & Miscellaneous Tasks

- **Tree Removal:** Removed a fallen tree at 6th St. Park, clearing the area for safety and public use.
- **Asphalt Ramp Removal:** Removed outdated asphalt ramps by the City parking lot to improve traffic flow and comply with accessibility standards.

Staffing Challenges:

- **Labor Shortages:** As with many departments across the city, Public Works are facing staffing challenges. We currently have several positions that were not backfilled due to budget constraints, including utility worker I and Engineer II position. In addition to some retirements.
- Most recently, our beloved Roger and Brett who are both very senior Public Works professionals are retiring, and it will be very difficult to replace their institutional knowledge and experience. They will be missed, but we wish them the very best in their next chapter.

Significant Accomplishments, Developments & Milestones

Waterfront Project – Major Issues Resolved

- This month, key challenges regarding the stockpile and survey monuments on the Waterfront project were successfully resolved. Over \$700,000 in cost saving by leveraging strong negotiation and technical expertise.
- **Presentation at Bend APWA Chapter Conference:** The Waterfront project has been submitted for presentation at the upcoming **Bend APWA Chapter Conference**, showcasing our progress and collaborative efforts in improving public infrastructure. This is a great opportunity to put the City of St. Helens front and center for future funding mechanisms.

Challenges and Limitations

Wastewater Capacity Improvements – Construction Inspection

- The Wastewater Capacity Improvements project is facing a challenge in terms of construction inspection. Due to the scale of the work, we anticipate needing a full-time construction inspector. To meet this need, we will likely need to contract for this role on a temporary basis.

Firlock Area – Septic Tank Failures

- We continue to monitor ongoing sewer challenges in the Firlock area. The septic tank failures are becoming more frequent, and decisive action will be required soon to develop a sustainable solution to prevent further environmental impacts and ensure public health.

Ongoing Development Projects

Boulder Ridge Subdivision (P-498)

- **Status:** In Progress
- **Next Steps:** Developer must execute the performance agreement for their public improvements by **December 2025**.

S 1st and Strand Street / S 1st St – St Helens Intersection Improvements (P-525 / R-685 / R-685A / M-532)

- **Status:** Construction Phase
 - **P-525:** Remaining tasks include finalizing work on North Swale, Cowlitz Circle bollards, cracked masonry caps, stockpile management, and survey monument restoration.
 - **R-685:** Remaining work includes plantings, signage, and lighting.
 - **M-532:** Need to complete the City Hall connection.

St. Helens High School (P-527)

- **Status:** In Progress
- The contractor has begun work on their public improvements.

John Gumm School (P-539)

- **Status:** Closeout
- The process of executing the 2-year maintenance bond is ongoing, though progress has been delayed due to a legal hold-up from the County's attorney regarding the maintenance agreement. The City Attorney has confirmed the City will hold onto their performance bond for the duration of the agreement.

N 6th/Columbia Blvd Improvements (P-540)

- **Status:** In Design
- Public improvements for the N 6th St/Columbia Blvd commercial-residential development are in progress.

CCMH Gable Road Public Improvements (P-542)

- **Status:** In Design
- Progressing with public improvements at the CCMH site. Issues with Al Petersen have been resolved, and work continues smoothly.

Miscellaneous Projects

Technical Specs Update (M-540)

- **Status:** In Progress
- Work continues updating the engineering division technical specifications to improve efficiency and standardization.

St. Helens Dock Repair (M-541)

- **Status:** Completed

- The **grant-funded** dock repair project is now complete, enhancing the City's waterfront facilities.

Sewer Projects

Sanitary Sewer Capacity Upgrades (S-679)

- **Status:** Design Phase
- Consor is addressing 90% plan comments and working on permitting requirements. Several SRF loan documents have been submitted to DEQ, and we are collaborating on the next set of required documents.

Pump Station 7 (S-679A)

- **Status:** Design Phase
- We will proceed with full design of Pump Station 7, which will be funded by the CDBG grant. However, funding constraints mean we won't be able to proceed with construction at this time.

Stormwater Projects

TMDL Implementation Plan (SD-194)

- **Status:** In Progress
- Updates to the Erosion Control Ordinance are being made in response to Council comments, with a scheduled agenda for September 3rd. The Illicit Detection and Discharge Ordinance is almost complete and will also be presented to the Council this fall. The TMDL Implementation Plan will be updated by November 2026, including a new temperature component.

South 21st Street Public Improvements (SD-198)

- **Status:** Completed
- The public improvements related to stormwater are completed. Additional improvements such as sidewalks and trees will be separately bonded as requested by the Developer.

Storm Drain CCTV & Cleaning (SD-201)

- **Status:** Design Phase
- **CCTV** and storm drain cleaning (per TMDL requirements) are out for bid. However, there has been limited interest from contractors, which may delay project execution.

Water Projects

Reservoir Siting Study (W-484)

- **Status:** In Progress
- Keller Associates has begun the work on the siting project, which will help identify optimal locations for future reservoir development.

Railroad Ave Watermain Replacement (W-485)

- **Status:** In Design
- The replacement of the failing watermain off Railroad Ave is designed in-house, with survey work complete. The project is expected to go out for bid this winter.

Roadway Projects

Transportation System Management Plan (R-714)

- **Status:** In Progress
- The contract with DKS for the Transportation System Management Plan is still being finalized.

Street Moratorium (R-720)

- **Status:** Complete
- The street moratorium is fully effective as of August 15th. All relevant information for contractors and developers is available on the City's website.

Pavement Patching (R-722)

- **Status:** Awarded
- The 2025 Pavement Patching project is on the August 20th City Council agenda for award to S-2 Contractors.

Annual Striping (R-723)

- **Status:** Awarded
- The 2025 Annual Striping project is also on the August 20th City Council agenda for award to Specialized Pavement Marking.

Other Notable Projects

St. Helens Mill Site

- **Status:** Ongoing
- Engineering is continuing stormwater monitoring and inspections at the St. Helens Mill Site, while Facilities and Operations manage on-site compliance.
- The air quality permit transfer to Arcadia is in progress.

Traffic Calming – Speed Hump Request

- **Status:** Ongoing

- The City continues to address neighborhood traffic calming needs. For more details or to request traffic calming measures, residents can visit the City's Traffic Safety Page.

Water Filtration / Wastewater Treatment Plant

The wastewater, water filtration, and pump station systems have seen consistent operations with some minor interruptions, including algae blooms and mechanical failures that were quickly addressed. The team continues to manage ongoing challenges, such as pump issues and high turbidity alarms, while also maintaining focus on regular system maintenance and pretreatment compliance. We anticipate another productive month as we work through annual projects and continue to monitor and improve water and wastewater system performance. We appreciate the continued support from City leadership as we maintain and enhance the City's infrastructure.

Budget Management

Despite the challenges of inflation and workforce management shortage, the Public Works Department has maintained strong budget discipline. Additionally, through competitive bidding, combined purchasing agreements, and efficiency improvements, we have realized significant cost recovery last fiscal year.

The Public Works Department continues to make significant strides in improving and maintaining the City's infrastructure while managing resources efficiently. While we face ongoing challenges, particularly with staffing and supply chain disruptions, our focus on effective project management, proactive maintenance, and community engagement ensures that we remain on track to meet our goals.

Thank you,
Mouhamad Zaher
Public Works Director