

# Public Health Policy and Program Updates

August 13, 2019

## **Clean Air Construction**

The Portland metropolitan area experiences diesel particulate matter pollution 5-10x over the health benchmarks established by the Department Environmental Quality. Most of the pollution is created by non-road diesel equipment (i.e. construction equipment). To help address this problem, Washington County is a part of a regional collaborative, the Clean Air Construction Collaborative (CACC), with partners from Multnomah County, City of Portland, Clackamas County, The Port of Portland, Metro, and the Department of Environmental Quality. The CACC is working to find a meaningful and feasible solution to our region's diesel pollution with the adoption of clean air construction procurement standards. Clean air construction procurement standards for projects funded by the participating organizations will reduce idling on project sites, utilize the cleanest available diesel non-road equipment and cement mixers and dump trucks, increase the use of alternative fuel and electric vehicle equipment, and will retrofit older diesel equipment which is helpful to minority, women owned, and small business firms needing to comply with the standards (a more affordable emission reduction option).

The Washington County Board of Commissioners (BOC) received and a presentation on this work from public health division and support services staff in February, the BOC was supportive of the work and Washington County's continued collaboration with regional partners. Public health division and support services staff have been working with an internal stakeholder group comprised of representatives from Facilities, Land Use and Transportation, Sustainability, and the County Administrative Office to identify how these standards can be implemented for Washington County construction projects and who the lead departments would be. The specifics of how this work will move forward in Washington County will go before the BOC later this year.

## **Public Health Modernization**

The State Legislature provided an additional \$10 million for a total of \$15 million in state funds across the biennium for modernizing the Public Health System. This is a continued small step towards what was estimated to be a 100-million-dollar annual gap in financial resources needed for public health. Although we are pleased with this continued support from the State and we are experiencing very strong support from our County we still are sorely underfunded to be able to meet the current needs, assess and plan for emerging issues and focus on prevention.

With the state funding provided the State-wide goals are to continue and leverage regional and local work started in 2017-19 biennium and to focus attention on building a public health system for the future. And because of limited funding we will focus on three key areas: improving systems/structures to prevent and deal with communicable disease; improving health equity and cultural responsiveness; improving internal leadership and governance systems and structures. We are in conversation with Multnomah and Clackamas about a regional application likely centered on using and reporting data. The funding that will be specific to our local efforts will be \$772,881 for the biennium. With that funding we plan to increase our staffing resources to support equity and community engagement and communication.

## **Tobacco Retail Licensure**

On August 6th, the Board of Commissioners gave their approval to begin work on tobacco retail licensure (TRL) for Washington County. TRL would require all businesses, including large/small retailers, convenience stores, gas stations, pharmacies and bars to purchase a license to sell tobacco/vaping products in the county. This would be similar to what's already in place by the OLCC for alcohol and cannabis retail sales.

TRL will create an opportunity for relationships with retailers (similar to restaurant inspections), enforce Tobacco 21 and other tobacco laws while effectively decreasing illegal tobacco/vape sales to minors. In terms of neighboring counties, Multnomah is in year two of their program and Clackamas County is in progress with TRL development. There are many elements to a TRL program and we expect this work to take close to two years before implementation. The first phase of this process involves engaging cities, community stakeholders, commerce, and community residents. Subsequent phases include: Policy and Program element and budget development, policy study sessions, rule development, implementation/enforcement protocol development, and evaluation. A team has been put together to work on TRL with Gwyn Ashcom, Tobacco Prevention Coordinator, as lead on the project. Other members of the team consist of PhyuSin Myint and Erin Jolly from the Health Equity, Planning and Policy Program, Genevieve Ellis from Children Youth and Families, and Jon Kawaguchi and Jillian Powell from Environmental Health. PHAC will be given updates along with relevant materials for review as this project unfolds.