

# Infrastructure projects integral to Port of Morrow operations

*Strategic business plan outlines future infrastructure investments and project goals*

Roads, rail, barge terminals, power, water, wastewater disposal, steam and fiber optic connections all seem like a given in an industrial park. However, making sure utilities and transportation options are available requires time, careful planning and funding.

The Port of Morrow completes an annual strategic plan and a large portion of that plan is dedicated to goals and future port projects. The plan gives the port a tool to plan those projects financially and logistically.

Economic development director Lisa Mittelsdorf said the Port of Morrow has done a strategic plan for the last 20 years. Mittelsdorf said the information is used to decide which projects are the highest priority, and where grants can be sought. She said this planning also helps the budgeting process.

The port has \$23 million in capital improvements underway with another \$34 million slated for planned projects. These capital projects include road construction and extensions, while the planned high-priority projects range from various railroad and overpass projects to building a connection from the East Beach Industrial Park to Highway 730.

Making these improvements is a large part of accomplishing the port's mission to maintain a positive business environment, develop water sources, provide and expand utility services, expand its role as a regional transportation hub, and enhance the community.

Port of Morrow general manager Gary Neal said these projects are tied to developing infrastructure, site development, and transportation flow.

"Those will help us open up volumes of land and set up better flow for



**Crews prepare to pour concrete for the stem walls on the Lewis and Clark Drive bridge project. This project is funded by H.B. 2001 – a state transportation bill passed in 2009 – and is planned to be complete by the end of May.**

transportation," Neal said in reference to the Lewis and Clark Drive bridge and the Highway 730 connection.

Work on Columbia Avenue is being done as an Immediate Opportunity Fund project. The IOF is administered by the Oregon Department of Transportation to support primary economic development in Oregon through construction and improvement of streets and roads.

"This was triggered by the Lamb Weston-ConAgra expansion, which was an important part of their infrastructure needs," Neal said.

The port installed an access road connecting Columbia Avenue and Industrial Way, which allows trucks to access scales through the new road.

New rail crossings were also installed and as a result, a new rail switch was installed in mid-December 2013 along Industrial Way.

The switch serves Boardman Foods

and Collins Products Upper Columbia Planar Mill. The remainder of the project will be resurfacing Columbia Avenue and adding an extra lane on the north side of the road.

"That will allow westbound traffic to travel freely compared to stopping at the interchange," Neal said. "The lane will merge further west, eliminating the stop for Lamb Weston and other traffic. This will result in better circulation and help overall movement of people and freight."

Neal said movement will also be improved on the Lewis and Clark bridge. The structure will allow traffic to move freely and avoid stopping for trains, while trains can pass underneath.

Once the bridge is complete, about 7,000 feet of rail will be installed passing under the bridge. The rail project is funded through a Connect Oregon IV grant, Neal said. ■

– Contributed by Anna Aylett, Port of Morrow