

# Types of Public Roads under County Authority

Clatsop County has two distinct types of public roads within its authority. The degree of county responsibility depends on the status of the road and applicable state and county law.

A public road is a road that everyone has a right to use and which is a matter of legal record. State highways and city streets are types of public roads. Generally, the County has no responsibility to maintain state highways and city streets.



## County Road

A county road is a type of public road that was accepted into the county road system. Because the road has been accepted into the system, Clatsop County Public Works maintains the road (within the limits of the budget) and sets standards and specifications for road work.

## Local Access Road

A local access road is a public road under County authority that was not accepted into the county road system. A local access road was dedicated to the public, but it was not accepted by the County as part of the publicly-maintained road system. The County still has authority within the rights-of-way of local access roads, but local landowners have the responsibility for maintenance.

For all public roads under County authority, the County processes permits for uses within the right-of-way such as driveways, road approaches, utility installations, and any other work. The County's authority covers the entire right-of-way.

## Private Road

A type of road owned privately where access is only granted through easement(s), over the property to other than the owner of the property. The County does not exercise authority or perform maintenance on private roads.

Another type of road serving property in Clatsop County are State forest roads. Contact Oregon Department of Forestry, Astoria District or the private landowner(s) for information about these roads which may or may not be open for travel or use by the general public.

Finally, other jurisdictions manage public roadways in our area including local cities as well as the Oregon Department of Transportation. Please contact the appropriate jurisdiction for questions about roadways they manage.

## **Related Questions**

### **How are Local Access or Public Roads maintained?**

Public Roads are typically maintained by adjacent property owners and road users.

This usually occurs in one of five ways:

1. Informally: In which neighbors work together to hire a contractor or self-perform maintenance and “pass the hat” to share in the cost.
2. Formally: Through homeowners associations (HOAs) or other formal agreements to share in the cost of maintenance.
  - o LID’s local Improvement District
  - o LID for Maintenance
  - o County Forces

[Click here](#) for more information.

### **I am considering buying property on a "dedicated way". What does that mean?**

As on any other local access road, it means that you and your neighbors are responsible for maintaining the road. In dedicated ways, this is done through a formal agreement. The county is not responsible for regular maintenance of the road.

### **I live on a "Local Access Road" that the county does not maintain although it is a public road. Can my road become a county road?**

If a local access road can be improved to county standards for right-of-way width, base course, width of roadway surface, and so on, it can be accepted as a county road and be maintained by

the county. See our Local Improvement District page for more information.

## **I live on a county road within a city. Why isn't my street a city street?**

When land is annexed to a city, the jurisdiction for many government services becomes the city's. However, roads and streets are an exception. County roads do not automatically become city streets upon annexation. The city must formally accept the street as part of its system. To have your road converted to a city street you should contact your city's administrative office.

## **I own property with an unimproved road through it. Can I obtain title to this unused strip of land?**

Yes. This must be done by having the county formally vacate the road as part of the county road system (or as a public road if it is a local access road). To vacate a road the County Board of Commissioners must find that there is no public need for the given right-of-way and that no one's access to property would be cut off due to the road vacation. Please see our webpage on [Road Vacations](#) for more information.

## **I'm still confused. Who can answer my questions?**

For information about county roads, local access roads, and private roads, please call us at (503) 325-8631. For information about State forest roads, you should contact the appropriate Oregon Department of Forestry, Astoria District and for information about any road within city limits, please call your city's administrative office. For state highways please contact the Oregon Department of Transportation at (503) 325-7222.

## **What difference does road status make?**

The primary difference is in who is responsible to maintain the road: state, county, city or local property owners. The status also affects who must be contacted about permits for action in the right-of-way. A public road exists to allow the public to travel so gates or other blockages are only permitted under extraordinary circumstances.

# What is the status of the road I live on?

To check the status of a road, please visit our Public Works Webmaps page. [Click here](#) for a printable key for the jurisdiction of the roads.

Instructions:

1. Click OK for no use for legal purposes.
2. Search road by Find Taxlot or Find Road.
3. Click the exact street name and view jurisdiction in the pop-up window to the left located at the top.

For assistance, call (503) 325-1000 option 1.

If you need more information about a road, call Roads at (503) 325-8631 for road status information. Usually, we can tell you from our road maintenance records if a road is a county road, state highway, city street, local access road, or private road. However, it is difficult to give a definite answer for many unimproved roads without further research.

[View All FAQ's](#)