

08 November 2021

RE: Country Club Road Culvert Emergency Repair and Replacement

Dear County Commissioners,

I heard about the Country Club Culvert emergency repair and potential replacement, and watched your briefing. I have worked for 18 years as a federal restoration planner in salmon recovery and climate change resilience. It is in The County's interest to plot a course towards removal and restoration of the Country Club Road crossing at Green Cove Creek, and not replacement of the culvert. The road has very limited value. Replacing the failing culvert with a modern culvert dramatically increases project costs, compared to removal and restoration. We will be more competitive for state and federal funding with a full restoration proposal.

Country Club Road is a tiny neighborhood connector. Closure would result in approximately 40 households suffering up to a 1 to 4 minute delay (see attached figures). **Describing this road as an "important part of our transportation system", as you heard in your briefing, is not accurate.**

The steep ravine, the important fishery habitat and the 50-foot drop from the road to the stream makes this a very expensive replacement project on a minor road. Removal and restoration would be much less expensive. If you replace it you then have to maintain it forever. We would **never** permit this project today, we should not reflexively repeat the mistakes of the past. We have more important work to do.

Full restoration will be more competitive for state and federal funding. Putting forward a strong restoration project might mean getting a large subsidy rather than having to foot the whole bill alone. This decision could be worth over a million dollars. With the federal infrastructure bill in play, there has never been a better time to put forward an exciting restoration project.

Our county engineer describes the alternatives analysis as figuring out "what the best and most cost-effective means will be **to replace the structure.**" The Commission should not accept replacement as a given. I recommend that you consider the many benefits of removal and restoration.

Thank you for your careful consideration,

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Figure 1 – Two routes from West Olympia, with equal travel times. A very small segment of road shows any drive-time benefit by retaining the Country Club Road stream crossing. The affected households appear to be those described in figure 2.

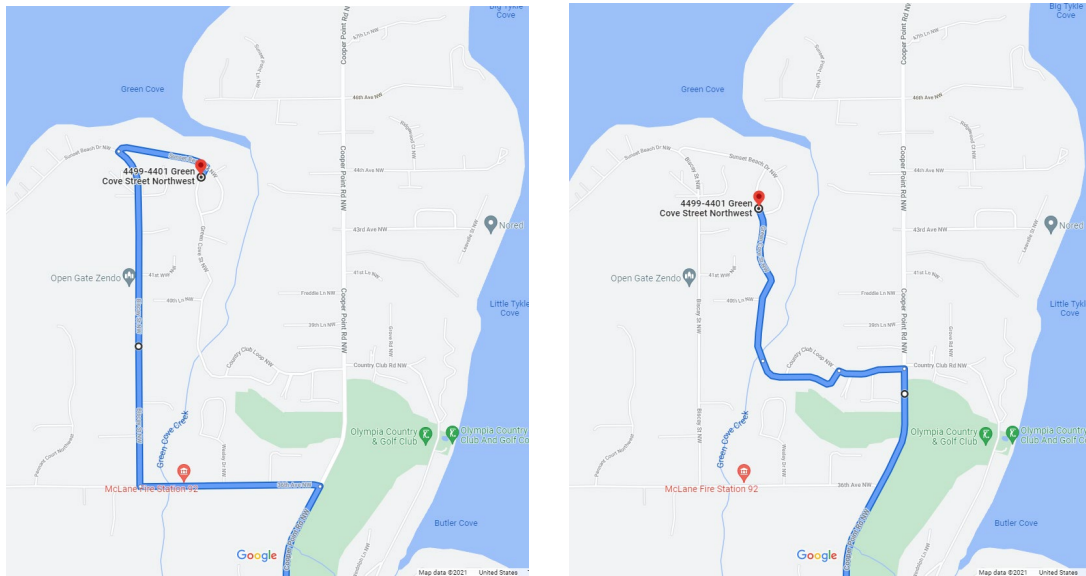


Figure 2 – Households benefiting from culvert replacement. A large portion of project cost provides a small benefit for a few households. This undermines the argument that this fish passage project serves state and federal interests. Removal and restoration produce a much higher benefit/cost ratio to attract state or federal investment.

