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New Snohomish County Road Maintenance Director has Shown Leadership throughout Career

James Parker has held many positions within Road Maintenance during his 26 years with the county

EVERETT, Wash., July 31, 2020 – Arlington resident James Parker took over as interim Snohomish County Road Maintenance director after multiple storm and flood disasters caused widespread damage – and at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. He stepped into the interim role after the previous director left for a new position. Parker has worked for Snohomish County Public Works nearly his entire adult life and those around him knew his military background and strong leadership skills would guide the division through the challenges. Parker was recently hired as the permanent Road Maintenance director for Snohomish County after a competitive hiring process with many excellent candidates.

“Road Maintenance provides a critical public service, ensuring county roadways are kept safe, clean and secure. Jim’s extensive experience and effectiveness in leading the Road Maintenance Division as the interim director, including his depth of knowledge, leadership and vision, were big factors in why he is unquestionably the right person for this role,” Snohomish County Public Works Director Kelly Snyder said. “He has earned everyone’s respect and has demonstrated his ability to lead over and over again. He will continue to build strong teams to meet the needs of our community.”

Parker began his career working two jobs – one for the Mill Creek Country Club and one as a seasonal laborer for Snohomish County Public Works. After becoming a full time employee with Road Maintenance, he would spend the next 26 years with the county, working his way up through the ranks in both the field and administrative positions, with a reputation for creating strong teams.

“He is used to dealing with changes and challenges and has always risen to the occasion,” Public Works Deputy Director and County Engineer Doug McCormick said. “This includes working with the team to make health safety changes during COVID-19. When assuming the role as interim director, I think his leadership shined through by galvanizing the team in response to COVID-19, inspiring teamwork and planning and demonstrating operational agility.”

Looking forward, Parker said he sees an opportunity for the Road Maintenance team to develop a more diverse and experienced workforce. His next challenge may come as the division prepares for the possibility of operating in a flood or snow emergency while deploying COVID-19 safety measures. The division has evolved during the

pandemic, with social distancing and numerous procedural changes to improve safety in the field. Parker has shown and promoted a strong vision for the Road Maintenance Division, including leadership in developing the 2021 budget.

During normal times, the division has approximately 160 full-time employees and 100 seasonal employees. It is responsible for keeping approximately 1,600 miles of unincorporated Snohomish County roads safe and operational as well as maintaining more than 200 bridges. Parker has been on the front lines – with many of those same employees – working to repair road and bridge damage, replace and clean signage, clear debris, restripe lanes and undertake many other tasks that keep unincorporated Snohomish County roads safe for our community.

“Our strong road maintenance team goes from routine operations to disaster control many times a year,” Parker said. “From snow and wind storms to landslides and floods, I have learned firsthand what it takes to switch gears in a hurry. I have learned that having an established chain of command and open communication channels is critical.”

Parker is certified as a lead worker and crew chief, project assistant, asset management systems lead, bridge crew journeyman, and district operations manager, to name a few. His field experience has been supplemented with educational and training course work.

“I have grown up with staff who have been here at the county a long time, learning the tricks of the trade and working as a team,” Parker said. “I try to be a very collaborative leader and listen to those on the front lines. Because of their innovation, many things have changed for the better. I enjoy talking to our citizens and I hope to be able to create a culture of leadership where everyone has a say. But, one of my biggest goals right now is keeping all of our staff safe and healthy and ensuring that our essential services are delivered to our residents.”

About Snohomish County Public Works

The Snohomish County Public Works Department constructs and maintains county roads; controls and manages surface water quantity, quality, and fish habitats; and oversees the recycling and disposal of solid waste. The department’s main office is located at 3000 Rockefeller Ave., Everett, WA 98201. For more information about Snohomish County Public Works, visit www.snohomishcountywa.gov/PublicWorks.

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