

Roads chief sees merit to extra \$500,000 to expand Miller Road work

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
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By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - The Genesee County Road Commission wants to stretch a reconstruction of Miller Road much farther west than originally planned - almost to the Shiawassee County line.

Manager Director John H. Daly III suggested the expansion in a letter to the county Board of Commissioners, asking members for a half-million dollars to make the idea work.

If commissioners agree to spend from a rainy day fund to extend the job from VanVleet Road to Lansing Highway, the cost of the entire project would soar to nearly \$10 million, making it the most expensive job in the 69-year history of the road commission.

"My philosophy is, this is our shot. Rather than taking this in a piecemeal way, we should build (as far as possible) so that there's as little disruption as possible," Daly said.

"If we have to do it as a standalone project and chop this up so that we do a little bit every year, the costs are going to be blown out of sight."

County commissioners, three of whom are leaving office at the end of the year, haven't yet discussed Daly's request in public.

"It's certainly a project that needs to be done," said commission Chairman Richard E. Hammel. "It's just whether or not we can afford it."

The Miller Road project has been discussed most recently as stretching from Ballenger Highway to Linden Road -just under 2.5 miles.

This summer, construction on the project was delayed to 2008, but Daly has said some early field work could still happen in 2007. In the meantime, he has continued efforts to stretch the job farther.

In addition to rebuilding and expanding Miller Road in the busy commercial stretch from Ballenger to Linden, Daly suggests replacing sections of pavement from Linden to the Swartz Creek city limits and resurfacing Miller from Van Vleet Road to Lansing Highway.

Clayton Township Supervisor Rod Shumaker said the work on Miller between VanVleet and Lansing Highway is needed. That section of road separates Clayton and Gaines townships on the county's west side.

"There's a concern about losing the base on that road," Shumaker said. "Parts of the road have broken away."

Dan Andrews, owner of Fuddrucker's restaurant on Austin Parkway, near the Miller Road-I-75 exchange, said work is needed on some parts of the road.

Andrews said he hopes businesses are consulted before any decisions are made and that the county considers overnight work to cut the time of construction.

"They haven't given us any indication" about what's going to happen, Andrews said. "The road needs to be redone, but we need to know who's got what in mind."

Daly said he plans to appear before the West Flint Business Association early next year to discuss the project.

Crumbling roads raise concerns

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By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY -The busiest streets and roads in Genesee County are in increasingly poor condition, neglected so long that they now need expensive structural work, according to a new county evaluation.

The report from the county Planning Commission has not been published, but members of the county's Metropolitan Alliance were told the grim findings in a Nov. 9 letter that concluded, "Our overall system is deteriorating rather than improving."

"There is an increased need for capital/preventive maintenance improvements to help stabilize the ... road system," said the letter from Stanley Brantley, the county's associate planner.

The county rated all roads eligible for federal aid to come to its conclusions, scoring surfaces on a zero-to-10 scale with 10 being the best score and zero the worst.

Forty-two percent of the 1,045 miles of road surveyed -435 miles - were rated from zero to four, the bottom category of the rating scale. Just two years ago, only 99 miles were in the poorest category.

Brantley's letter said a more detailed rating process and closer examination of roads showing distress accounted for some of the change this year.

But Patricia A. Tilley of Mundy Township said the proof of neglected roads is in the driving.

"You can tell when you come into Genesee County by the roads (being so) bad," said Tilley, who questioned why her own road -Maple Avenue between Linden and Jennings - was resurfaced when others were in worse condition.

Areas with the most miles of federal aid roads that need structural work were Flint (41.2 miles), Mt. Morris Township (34.5 miles) and Grand Blanc Township (34.4 miles).

Areas with the least amount of streets even eligible for federal aid were Otter Lake (less than one-quarter mile), Otisville (0.61 miles), and Montrose (1.17 miles).

Roads eligible for federal aid are expected to carry heavy traffic loads like interstates, state trunklines, section line roads and major streets in cities.

John H. Daly III, manager director of the Genesee County Road Commission, said the county rating system isn't based on hard science but the observations testers make when they drive across a road, looking for cracking, surface wear, potholes and rutting.

Daly said he's not surprised by the ratings because his agency and others don't have the money needed to keep ahead of problems.

Daly said Michigan's Jobs Today program, which is accelerating 10 years of road and bridge construction work, will help but isn't enough to stop the trend. The county is using Jobs Today to speed up work on Miller, Bristol and Porter roads.

Robert Johnson of Mt. Morris Township, chairman of the Metropolitan Alliance, said this year's road ratings, unfortunately, are no surprise.

Johnson said the loss of General Motors plants in the county may have hurt the area's ability to win federal road money.

"They are just not being maintained," he said.

Road work billings
Municipalities can't shift cost of high overruns to neighbors

GENESEE COUNTY
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The Genesee County Road Commission should be taking seriously the duty to make reliable estimates on road work before starting a project, rather than stick local governments with high unexpected overages once the work is complete.

A mistake on the road commission's part has some Mundy Township residents squawking in protest, after being presented with a \$236,000 overage bill. It resulted from a \$844,657 estimate that wound up costing \$1.3 million. The road commission plans to pay half of the overage, which far from satisfies all its critics.

But while the onus is on the road commission to avoid errors, Mundy Township should not expect relief at the expense of other municipalities in need of county road work. Municipalities need to take on their share of a 50-50 formula, even when a project hits snags, and be prepared to pay for overruns.

The Mundy misstep is taking on a life of its own, as Grand Blanc Township attempts to cap its liability for overruns incurred by the Road Commission to 10 percent, which would hold the Road Commission responsible for the rest.

The Road Commission says no deal, noting that it is not legally permitted to pay more than 50 percent on local roads projects financed from Michigan transportation funds. In its defense, the Road Commission contends the Mundy Township overrun was an anomaly, due in good measure to the particulars of that project, and as the highest overrun seen in at least 15 years, hardly constitutes an ongoing problem.

That excuse might play this time, but the refrain does not bear repeating often. The Road Commission is responsible for presenting valid estimates, while the municipalities should be looking for measures to protect themselves when unusual circumstances arise. The suggestion of insurance is one worth exploring.

Some solution or combination of several needs to be found. But taking road-work money from one municipality at the deprivation of another does not qualify for consideration.

[Link](#)

In theory, new law lets townships reduce speed limits on gravel roads

GENESEE COUNTY
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By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - Don't expect quick reductions in speed limits on gravel roads even though a state law that takes effect today sets new, specific requirements for lower-speed zones.

The change will allow speed limits of under 55 mph on rural hard surface and gravel roads provided there are enough access points - such as driveways or intersecting roads - in the area.

The county, state police and townships still all have to agree to lower speed zones.

"I think there will be changes," said John Daly, manager-director of the Genesee County Road Commission. "It will give us more flexibility to tailor the speed limit to some of the growth going on that's not in cities or villages."

Under the existing law, Daly said, counties briefly had more authority to post lower speed limits in residential areas, but Genesee County left its 386 miles of gravel roads unposted.

Daly said he isn't expecting lower speed limits right away because townships aren't pushing for it yet and because police haven't laid out how they want to handle requests.

Township supervisors are expected to talk about the issue this month when they meet at the Road Commission.

Argentine Township Supervisor Robert Cole said he is not expecting big changes even though his township has more miles of gravel road, 45, than any other area in the county.

There just are not enough driveways, he said.

"There might be a couple - one or two areas - that this would apply to, (but not) most of my roads," said Cole, who supports lowering all gravel road speed limits to 45 mph.

Flushing Township Treasurer Carl G. Liepmann also said few, if any, roads there would meet the driveway requirements, and state police and the Road Commission can still veto what the township asks for.

"It looked like another way of saying townships can't make up their own minds," he said of the new law.

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Townships balk at having to cover roadwork overages

GRAND BLANC TOWNSHIP
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By Sally York
syork@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6322

GRAND BLANC TWP. - When a local road project goes over budget, who should pay?

Some residents say the bill should go to the Genesee County Road Commission, whose engineers estimate the cost.

"If the Road Commission makes a mistake, they should have to pay for it," declared retired diemaker George Russian, a resident since 1964.

"The township shouldn't be liable for any overrun."

Mundy Township was recently ordered to ante up \$236,000 - half of the cost overrun on a road improvement project in the Coventry Farms subdivision.

On the heels of that unexpected bill, the Grand Blanc Township Board authorized its attorney to try to cap the township's share of any overage on an upcoming road project at 10 percent.

In the original contract drafted by the Road Commission, the township was obligated to pay 100 percent.

But the Road Commission is balking. John H. Daly III, director of the Road Commission, said a 10 percent cap would be illegal. "We just can't do that," he said. "It could put us in violation of state law."

He said the most the commission can contribute to a local road reconstruction project using Michigan Transportation Funds is 50 percent.

Lyndon Lattie, a township attorney, disagreed.

"The state law I read said the Road Commission has a legal duty to maintain and reconstruct local roads," he said.

He said the township has a duty to protect taxpayer dollars.

"We wouldn't be doing a good job for our client (the township) if we made it a blank check," he said.

"As indicated in the Mundy Township situation, these estimates can be way off."

Daly responded: "Those were unique circumstances particular to that project," adding that the overage was the Road Commission's largest in at least 15 years.

If that's true, said resident Robert Wilson, then the commission shouldn't have a problem accepting a 10 percent cap.

"The township should hold the county Road Commission accountable for the projections they make regarding costs and estimates," said Wilson, a former Planning Commission member.

"If (the commission) can't do the job within 10 percent of their estimate, there's something wrong with the way they're doing their job."

In a letter dated Oct. 25, Daly offered a compromise: The Road Commission would be willing to pay half.

He said the township has other options as well, including purchasing insurance to protect against incorrect estimates or hiring its own engineer to estimate costs.

Lattie said it will be up to Township Board members to decide whether equal sharing is acceptable and what other measures to take.

Man, 64, on trial in death of road worker

FLINT

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By Kim Crawford

kcrawford@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6242

A 64-year-old Atlas Township man with a driving record a judge described as "not good" was charged Tuesday in the June 22 death of a Genesee County Road Commission worker.

John R. Quillen was arraigned in Central District Court on charges of manslaughter and operating a motor vehicle and causing death while his driver's license was revoked or suspended in the death of Dennis Bundy, 48, of Flushing.

Bundy, who was standing by orange cones in a construction zone on M-15 in Atlas Township, was wearing a reflective vest and had a surveying stick when he was struck by a sport-utility vehicle allegedly driven by Quillen.

Quillen, a former carpenter and contractor, could face up to 15 years in prison if convicted on the charges.

Davison District Judge John L. Conover conducted Quillen's arraignment before a court packed with Bundy's family and friends. Conover set \$100,000 10 percent bonds on both counts, which required Quillen to post a \$20,000 bond before he was released from the custody of Genesee County Sheriff's deputies. He quickly posted the bond, said his attorney, Chuck Desotelle.

During the arraignment, Desotelle noted that Quillen has cooperated with authorities and argued he was not a flight risk, given that he's been married for 42 years, has had serious health issues and is the father of three.

He said Quillen's driving record was not a matter of alcohol or criminal violations, but because of "vision problems."

But on the question of bond, Conover said the charges against Quillen were serious felonies and he was concerned that Quillen might go out driving

"Not going to happen, your honor," Quillen answered.

Quillen faces a probable cause hearing on the charges in district court on Oct. 25.

Sign with care
Even tragedy can't sway placement of traffic controls

FLINT
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The Genesee County Road Commission needs to resist giving in to pressure - no matter how well intended - to add all-way stop signs at troublesome intersections where traffic deaths have occurred.

The commission is obligated to react scientifically, even if that risks seeming insensitive in the short term. John Daly, the commission's manager-director, is admirably holding the line while patiently trying to explain the complexities that go into making these decisions.

As Daly points out, the three- and four-way signage that some feel so strongly about could enhance driving dangers rather than reduce them. The commission is collecting data to help determine which is the case.

It's difficult because emotion and tragedy are helping to fuel the pressure. A request for a four-way stop at Hill and Elms roads in Mundy Township was prompted by the death of Fenton High School student Rachel Coe last December, and the fact that a fatal motorcycle accident had occurred there six months before.

The Mundy and Gaines township boards both asked for a four-way stop sign there, supported by petitions from Rachel's classmates. Driving southbound on Elms Road, she turned into the path of a pickup truck on Hill Road that was not required to stop. Daly is open-minded while data are gathered, and in the meantime has installed warning signs advising that Hill Road traffic does not stop. Whatever the ultimate decision on a four-way stop, he must live with the outcome.

Similarly, a pair of 2002 accidents about three months apart at Torrey and Lahring roads in Fenton Township - an intersection often used to reach three Lake Fenton schools - inspired Fenton Township Clerk Robert Krug to call for three-way stops there. Traffic control is to be bolstered by a yellow flashing light at that intersection, scheduled for installation next week, while traffic studies continue on whether to accede to Krug's request.

Like the other, it is motivated by a pure desire to save lives. But Daly's job is not to judge what are good intentions, but to foresee actual consequences. Sometimes that is lonely work.

Roads chief details options for spending milage money

FLINT TOWNSHIP
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By Jeff Smith

jfsmith@flinttownshipnews.com • 810.766.6328

FLINT TWP. - Divvying up nearly \$5 million for township road construction is not an easy task, especially when at least \$21 million is needed to complete all the work that needs to be done.

That's why John Daly, manager-director of the Genesee County Road Commission, spoke at a special meeting of the Township Board on Monday night, to offer suggestions on how to divide the pie.

Voters approved a 0.5-mill road tax on Aug. 8, which will generate \$4.8 million to repave neighborhood roads over the next 10 years. But Daly said it's barely enough to cover a quarter of the road work currently needed. And the township can't depend upon the road commission to come to its rescue, since it also lacks funding to repair all the roads on its to-do list, he said.

"There's no free lunches and there's no easy answer," Daly said. "Not unless someone is prepared to write a check for \$21 million."

Daly offered four scenarios to consider, citing the pros and cons of each. Three of the options involved road work in the Western Hills subdivision that has been in the planning stages for the last 18 months. The options:

- The township could do the Western Hills job (with residents being assessed 75 percent of the cost), do some work on other main roads, and replace masonry catch basins on some streets with more durable precast ones.

But once completed, there will be little money left over for other projects, Daly warned. And the roads that go untouched would continue to crumble.

- The township could cover the complete cost of repairing Western Hills roads, but that would leave no funding to do any other projects.

- Western Hills (with residents shouldering 75 percent of the bill) will be completed along with other subdivision streets while ignoring the needs of main roads.

- The township could skip work on Western Hills, focusing attention solely on mainline roads.

Daly recommended the township go with the first option: Foot 25 percent of the cost for Western Hills, do work on other main roads and replace catch basins throughout the township.

While township officials did not vote on the matter, Supervisor Doug Carlton reiterated several times his stipulation that any plan include improving the roads of Western Hills.

One estimate projected the Western Hills residents would be assessed more than \$2.1 million.

The township would cover the remaining 25 percent of the cost, or about \$726,000.

"This is not the last conversation you'll have with the road commission," Daly said. "We plan to be an active partner in this."

While the road commission can not cover any of the construction costs, Daly later said the commission will handle the expenses of engineering studies and inspections for the township.

Kettering student lightens paper load at Road Commission

FLINT TOWNSHIP
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By Marjory Raymer
mraymer@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6325

FLINT - The paper trail at the Genesee County Road Commission is getting zapped, thanks to a little ingenuity and know-how by a Kettering University student.

Robin Mullonkal, 24, a senior at Kettering University, developed a new computer program to overhaul and speed up purchases.

Right now, all requests are done on paper, which is passed from desk to desk for approval and can easily take the better part of a work week, if not all of one.

Mullonkal's software instead creates an internal, e-mail-based system that automatically puts requests - for everything from pencils to consulting services - in front of the right person. And it shows how much is in the budget and automatically deducts approved purchases from the budget's bottom line.

"It will definitely increase productivity. It will definitely cut down on delay time," said Mullonkal, who grew up in Sterling Heights.

Mullonkal is expecting to graduate in March with a degree in computer science and computer engineering. He's been a co-op student at the Road Commission since 2002 - alternating between working there and school studies every three months.

From the very first meeting where the idea was discussed to its completion took about a year to a year and a half, he said. He is using the project as his final thesis toward graduation, which already has been stamped approved.

"He's always looking for ways to improve the system," said Robert Slattery, director of information systems and planning for the Road Commission.

The system is now in the testing stage and is being gradually introduced to other employees for use.

He gave road commissioners a presentation on his efforts, and they applauded his work - especially the system's security and budget implications.

"That's the way we want it," said John H. Daly III, manager-director of the Road Commission. "It will be a good tool."

Tax shift would spend sewer funds on road repairs

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By Joe Lawlor
jlawlor@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6312

QUICK TAKE

On the ballot The polls will be open on Aug. 8 from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., and Flint Township voters will decide whether to shift 0.5 mills that previously went to sewer construction to road improvements. The plan would pay for \$4.8 million in road repairs over the next 10 years.

To find out your polling location, call (810) 732-1350 ext. 104.

FLINT TWP. - Junior Dennie said the road he lives on is so bumpy that a pothole he hit ruined the rim on the wheel of his Saturn.

He bought another rim for \$75 at a salvage yard, so he's in favor of a plan by township leaders to shift money from sewer debt to a neighborhood road resurfacing program.

The money shift, if approved by voters on Aug. 8, would free up \$4.8 million to pay for neighborhood roads.

"My road (Westwood Drive) hasn't been fixed in the 10 years I've lived here," Dennie said. "They have to do something. It's going to save you money on your cars in the long run."

If residents do not approve the tax shift, property owners would save \$27.50 per year on a \$110,000 house.

The tax would replace a 0.5-mill tax for sewer construction that is set to expire this year. The township has 89 miles of paved roads, and about one-third of the roads need repair.

"There's bad roads all over the township," said Trustee Tracey Tucker, who supports the millage.

But Trustee John MacGillivray said he has reservations about the plan.

"There's certainly not enough information on it. It's very speculative, and all of the subdivisions will want to be the first to get their roads done," MacGillivray said.

If voters approve the shift, a nine-member committee would be formed, consisting of seven residents and two trustees. The committee would decide what roads to repair and when over the next 10 years.

MacGillivray said he's also concerned that if residents approve the tax, the Genesee County Road Commission might reduce the township's allotment for road repairs.

"They're going to see that we have this big pot of money, so they might give our money to some poor township that doesn't have any money," said MacGillivray, who reluctantly voted to place the plan before voters.

But John Daly III, manager-director of the road commission, said Flint Township still would receive the \$60,000-\$80,000 per year in matching money to pay for road repairs.

"Flint Township would be taking a fairly progressive step, and we would not punish them for that," Daly said.

Deadly driving must stop to get roads fixed

THE FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO
THE EDITOR MUNDY TOWNSHIP FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
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By Marsha M. Keeler

Last month, we at the Genesee County Road Commission suffered a terrible tragedy in the loss of our friend and co-worker, Dennis Bundy, a great guy with a beautiful family. The sadness runs deep, with anger running a close second. The public wants (and deserves) safe roads to travel on, yet doesn't want the "inconvenience" of the work it takes to make them so. As an employee whose job requires working on the roadway, not a day goes by that I (and I'm sure all of my co-workers) don't see several irresponsible drivers behind the wheel of a 3,000-pound potential "killing machine." So many drivers are aggressive and belligerent. We try to make ourselves as visible as possible, but they totally ignore our signs and flashers. They refuse to slow down and move over, often yelling obscenities and making lewd gestures, often with children in their vehicles, setting an excellent example and perpetuating their behavior in the next generation. Whether you know us or not, we all have families we want to return to every night in one piece; we all have lives we'd like to live, children to raise, plans to fulfill. Our job is not to detain you in your travels or to anger you by blocking or holding up traffic. We are out there trying to make the roads as safe as possible for everyone. Please extend to us the courtesy of helping to make our work environment as safe as possible so we can do just that. Marsha M. Keeler Mundy Township.

Family man gone
400 mourners, 20 road vehicles honor fallen worker

FLUSHING

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By Beata Mostafavi

bmostafavi@flintjournal.com o 810.766.6210

FLUSHING - Dennis Bundy's last night with his family was a happy time. Bundy played Frisbee in the yard with his son, Carter, 16, and some of Carter's buddies before cooking chicken and baked potatoes on the grill. He shared chuckles with the family when daughter Colby, 13, told him how goofy his jokes were. Then his wife of 20 years, Pattie, kissed him goodnight.

About 9:30 a.m. the next day, Thursday, Bundy was killed while working for the Genesee County Road Commission when he was hit by a vehicle during a routine engineering operation on M-15 in Atlas Township. Bundy, 48, of Flushing was hit by a sport-utility vehicle driven by an Atlas Township man with a revoked license. Bundy was hit in the southbound lane and thrown into the path of oncoming traffic in the northbound lane.

Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton said Tuesday the case remains under investigation. The SUV driver could face felony charges.

Bundy's family will remember the good memories he left behind, the Rev. Roy Horning said Tuesday during Bundy's funeral at St. Robert Catholic Church in Flushing.

"(He was) always directing, encouraging and being with family," Horning told the crowd of more than 400 people. Lining the curb on Cherry Street and winding around the corner outside the church were more than 20 vehicles, representing Genesee, Shiawassee and Huron counties' road commissions. The pickups and heavy-duty trucks topped by blinking yellow lights were part of a long processional following the funeral. The Genesee County Road Commission office closed for about three hours during the funeral.

After the funeral, John Daly, the road panel's manager-director, said an annual safety training day will be dedicated to Bundy, and officials are looking into the possibility of naming a bridge in his honor. He said the commission, which hadn't had a death on the job in more than 20 years, will conduct a complete review of all of its safety procedures in light of the incident.

Bundy reportedly was wearing a reflective vest the morning he died, and his position was marked by orange cones. "You can't be too safe," Daly said, adding "Dennis was a great loss to the Road Commission, as he was to his family. They will always be a part of the Road Commission family."

During the service, Horning recalled Pattie Bundy's account of how she met her husband. She "stalked and watched" the "good-looking guy" who lived down the street from her sister for some time, he said.

She finally asked him out, and the couple married two years later on Valentine's Day in 1986.

After the funeral, Pattie Bundy said she will miss hearing her husband's mantra, "You know the rules," and his encouragement, such as his pushing her to follow through with her goal to train for the Crim race.

"His family loved him very much," she said. "You could just tell from the funeral he was well-loved, and he's going to be missed incredibly."

Driver who hit worker had no license

ATLAS TOWNSHIP
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By Ken Palmer
kpalmer@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6313

ATLAS TWP. - A man whose vehicle hit a Genesee County Road Commission worker Thursday morning on M-15 was driving on a revoked license and could face felony charges, police said.

Dennis Bundy, 48, of Flushing was killed when the man's sport-utility vehicle struck him in the southbound lane and threw him into the path of a northbound vehicle.

The incident occurred about 9:30 a.m. during a routine engineering operation on the highway, just south of Maple Avenue.

Police have not released the name of the SUV driver, but they said he is in his 60s and lives in Atlas Township.

The driver was booked at the county jail and released pending further investigation, Genesee County Sheriff's Capt. Chris Swanson said.

Bundy was standing in the southbound lane, holding a surveying stick, when he was hit by the SUV, deputies said. He was wearing a reflective vest, with his position marked by orange cones.

There were no lane-diversions or road work signs to mark his presence, Swanson said, but regardless of the circumstances, the driver has "some culpability" because his license was revoked.

Driving on a suspended or revoked license causing death is a felony in Michigan punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

The county prosecutor's office will determine what, if any, charges are warranted in the accident, Swanson said.

John H. Daly III, manager-director of the Road Commission, said Bundy and another engineering inspector were reconfirming the position of the road in preparation for a curbing project there.

Bundy was the first Road Commission worker to die on the job during his tenure, Daly said. In 2000, a Road Commission worker was severely injured on I-75, he said.

Bundy, who was married and the father of two children, came to the Road Commission in June 2001 after working for the city of Flint, Daly said. His brother, John, is a Flint police sergeant.

"Dennis was an outstanding employee," Daly said. "Certainly, his loss will be felt by his family and also by his professional family at the Road Commission."

M-15 was closed for about three hours after the crash.

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Unlicensed drivers
road worker's death spotlights a persistent problem

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Genesee County Road Commission worker Dennis Bundy's death on M-15 last week demands a critique of the consequences - or lack thereof - that law enforcement delivers

for driving on a revoked license. Bundy was struck by a driver of that status, which knocked him into path of oncoming traffic in Atlas Township.

The prosecutor is determining whether criminal charges are warranted in light of a state law making it a felony for a driver whose license was suspended or revoked to cause a vehicular death. But a revoked license points to a pattern of gross infractions. Why did this driver presume that he could get away with taking a spin in spite of it? And could there have been a way to deprive him of the opportunity?

We hear often that the Genesee County Jail lacks sufficient space for putting innumerable offenders off the street, let alone those who break traffic laws - even if they do so incorrigibly. So even the most egregious unlicensed driver, if caught, might simply wind up with a ticket to appear before a judge, and may or may not bother to show up.

If jail is truly not an option for those driving illegally, then perhaps their vehicles ought to be mechanically disabled or even impounded with the understanding the owners would be responsible for the costs incurred.

Family and friends with clean driving records might share those same vehicles and rely on them heavily, so any such policy could wind up imposing unjust penalties. But where was justice for Bundy?

The driver of the SUV faces consequences now, including a possible prison sentence along with the certain horror of reliving for the rest of his days that fateful moment when he encountered Bundy.

The unfolding investigation will reveal just what caused the law to take the extreme penalty of revocation. But for Bundy and many others killed and maimed by chronically dangerous and unlicensed drivers, it was insufficient.

Mr. Dennis Bundy

BUNDY, Dennis Ward - Loving husband, father and friend to everyone, born July 17, 1958, was taken home to a better place on June 22, 2006. His life short-lived but well served, Dennis leaves his wife of 20 years, Patricia (Carter); son, Carter Jacob (16); and daughter, Colby Lynn (13). Dennis was a young retiree from the City of Flint after 20 years of service, followed by 5 years with LCC Surveying before accepting a position with the Genesee County Road Commission, where he's been for the past 4 years. He was a devoted husband and father who would do anything for his wife and family. He was

strongly supportive of and active in his son's academic and athletic abilities, and he was, although a bit hesitant that his baby girl was growing up, very proud and protective of her as she continues to grow into a beautiful woman. Dennis loved the Lord with all his heart, and we take solace in that we can rejoice in his happiness as he continues to watch over us. Dennis loved life, his family and many friends, and will be sadly, sadly missed. Besides his wife and children, surviving relatives include: mother, Genevieve Bundy; brother, Bob Bundy (Lynn) of Vicksburg; sister, Linda NaDell (Gary) of Otisville; brothers, Dan Bundy (Tresa) of Davison, John Bundy (Anne) of Flint, Jim Bundy (Vicki) of Berthoud, CO, Ken Bundy (Linda) of Cota De Casa, CA, Chris Bundy (Rebecca) of Mt. Pleasant; in-laws, Bob and Jackie Carter of Swartz Creek, Nancy Walter (Arthur) of Swartz Creek, Donna Frase (Jerry) of Flint, Jennifer Jewell (Michael) of Flint; and many nieces and nephews, all of whom he loved very much. Dennis was preceded in death by his father, Robert Bundy, whom he greatly missed, but is now reunited. Funeral services will be held 11AM Tuesday, June 27, 2006 at St. Robert Catholic Church, Fr. Roy Horning officiating. Entombment will follow at New Calvary Catholic Cemetery. Visitation will be Noon-4PM and 6-8PM Sunday and Monday at Rossell Funeral Home. A Vigil for the Deceased will be 7PM Monday at the funeral home. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to a scholarship fund for his children.

Road funding a good step

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR
FLUSHING TOWNSHIP
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, March 22, 2006
JOURNAL READER

Earlier this month in Lansing, in my capacity as president of the County Road Association of Michigan and manager-director of the Genesee County Road Commission, I participated in a news conference with Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

At this news conference, Gov. Granholm announced that she is proposing legislation which will help Michigan cities and counties to pay the local match portion on additional federal highway projects this year and in 2007.

Her proposal has been introduced as a bill by Sen. Michael Prusi, D-Ishpeming, and calls for the state to provide the matching funding to local units of government through bonds or grants so that almost \$400 million in additional road projects can be accomplished over the next two years.

A unique aspect of this proposal is that these additional highway and transit projects will be selected by the local units of government rather than the Michigan Department of Transportation or other level of state government.

Since the emphasis is on making the dirt fly as soon as possible, the result could be the creation of as many as 7,200 new jobs in Michigan over the next two years.

While the program is not a final solution for the long-term shortfall of road and transit funding, the governor's proposal does represent an innovative step in the right direction.

Her proposal is unprecedented both at the state and federal level. It is the best thing that has happened to public road projects in Michigan during the past 15 years.

John H. Daly III

Flushing

Low-salt roads keep environment, budget fit

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Sunday, February 19, 2006
By Elizabeth Shaw
eshaw@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6311

Quick Take

Not so salty

Here's a comparison of Genesee County road salt usage since new application methods went into place in 2004:

JAN. 16-31, 2003: 2,442.05 tons over 411 lane miles. Average 5.94 tons per mile.

JAN. 8-21, 2006: 1,121.53 tons over 688.62 lane miles. Average 1.63 tons per mile. Be careful what you spread

When it comes to thawing your own sidewalk or driveway, note that some home de-icing products on store shelves have exotic ingredient lists and lengthy warnings. Experts advise sticking to plain sodium or calcium chloride. "Use elbow grease first, and try to get to the stuff before it freezes," said Dr. Martin Kaufman, a professor of earth and resource science at the University of Michigan-Flint. "And I'd never recommend using anything with a scary warning label."

GENESEE COUNTY - Sure, we all know cutting salt from our diets is good for a healthy heart. Turns out cutting salt from our roads is good for a healthy environment and pocketbook.

That's what's happening in Genesee County, where this winter the Road Commission is in the middle of spreading an estimated 50,000 tons of road salt. If that sounds like a lot, consider that it's far less than the county used to spread.

Road Commission Manager-Director John Daly says that over the past three winters, improved equipment and application methods have reduced the county's salt consumption by thousands of tons a year.

Of course, drivers may be more interested in whether there's enough salt being spread.

"As far as I'm concerned, sometimes they can't get it down soon enough," said Reggie Jones of Swartz Creek.

In line at the Wizard Wash in Mundy Township last week, Jones said he doesn't mind a few extra trips to the car wash to hose off all that salt. He can still remember what happened five years ago when he lost control on a slippery patch of I-94 in Clinton Township.

"Before I could do anything about it, I slid right off the road. I got two flat tires and had to get towed out. I ended up this far from a tree," he said.

With concerns over cost, safety and the environment, road de-icing is complicated.

"We don't believe in just throwing the salt down. First, because it's not cost-effective, but also because we're sensitive to fisheries issues and other environmental concerns," said Daly. "The trick is to put down just enough to do the job - but no more."

That's a fine line to walk, agreed environmental experts.

"Unlike a lot of other pollutants, it's a tough choice between public safety and longer term environmental concerns," said Dr. Martin Kaufman, a professor of earth and resource science at the University of Michigan-Flint. "Especially when we're talking about schoolchildren on buses, it's not a slam-dunk case (to cut salt)."

"Everybody's aware of it, but no one really talks about it because it's such a necessity here in Michigan," agreed Genesee County Drain Commission engineer Susanne Kubic, who is working on watershed management plans for the Flint and Shiawassee rivers. "It's something we have to have until something better comes along."

That doesn't mean salt is harmless to the environment.

On the contrary, a Michigan Department of Transportation report indicates that high chloride levels can leave small bodies of water starved of oxygen, and can interfere with plants' ability to take up water. During spring thaws, chloride levels in streams can temporarily surge to toxic levels for aquatic life.

"There are places along I-75 up north where you can see where the tamarack trees have died off because of road salt run-off," said Kaufman. "But a lot depends on where you're laying it down, in what concentrations and in what frequency. That's why, nowadays, road crews go through safe-salting training so they don't over-apply it."

Bigger issues come after the road salt has vanished.

"When the salt gets into the soil, that's where the real cost comes in. It's down there eating at fiber optic cables, underground electric lines and traffic signal wires, gnawing away at bridges and overpasses," said Kaufman. "With a lot of older cities with old infrastructure, it's literally pouring salt on the wound."

So what about the alternatives?

Sand - while cheap and chemically harmless - clogs drainage ditches, creating huge clean-up costs. Besides, soil erosion and sediment run-off are the most serious problems impacting our watershed, said Kubic.

Most alternatives are far more expensive and come in liquid form that would require a costly new fleet of tanker trucks and liquid storage facilities. Many also carry their own environmental impact concerns.

"The bottom line for us is cost-effectiveness, and MDOT has not yet found an alternative that can compete," said Daly.

Instead, the answer has been improved storage and application to lower the amount of road salt used.

Salt trucks are now equipped with computerized counters that allow drivers to control the amount of salt spread from inside the truck cab.

Spot treatment with special compounds helps slow ice formation on bridges and overpasses.

Storage methods have improved, too.

The county has six enclosed salt barns: Oakley Street in Flint; Morrish Road at I-69 in Swartz Creek; Seymour Road, south of M-57 in Montrose Township; State and Vienna roads in Forest Township; Hegal and Gale roads in Atlas Township; and Silver Lake Road near Hogan Road in Linden.

The Flint and Swartz Creek barns have concrete walls and floors, with sewer drains to prevent stormwater run-off. Plans are under way to replace another metal barn this year, said Road Commission maintenance director Anthony Branch.

As for the other big salt question - "When will they get to my road?" - well, Daly points out that the county de-ices nearly 4,000 lane miles of county roads and 650 lane miles of state trunk lines.

"To hit every place in the county one time would be like driving across the entire U.S. and halfway back again. Remember that," he joked, "the next time you're wondering why the salt truck hasn't been down your road yet."

Builders shiver under road frost restrictions

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, February 08, 2006
By Marjory Raymer
mraymer@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6325

GENESEE COUNTY - Local builders, frustrated by burdensome frost and weight restrictions, called on road commissioners Tuesday to ease rules that they say cost them money and hurt the economy.

Frost restrictions are used every year to try to protect vulnerable roads from damage. They can force some contractors to use smaller vehicles or keep them off job sites entirely. Both options cost time and money and can force layoffs.

"We really need to get things moving," said Barry Simon, executive director of the Builders Association of Metropolitan Flint. "Residential construction has been the lifeblood of this community."

Frost restrictions went into effect Monday, two weeks earlier than normal. It came as a shock to builders because the move coincided with the return of freezing temperatures after a record-warm January.

Simon said the restrictions came as a double whammy to builders because the warm and wet January turned construction sites to mud and left contractors hoping for the freeze.

"We're just trying to make a living," Steve Steffey, a Burton developer, said at Tuesday's Genesee County Road Commission meeting.

Frost restrictions are designed to protect road surfaces. They are put in place not when the ground frosts, but when the frost is only partially thawed. The soft ground leaves roads prone to crumbling under the weight of heavy trucks.

"Until the frost freezes again, the roads are at risk," said Michael Mansfield, director of traffic engineering and permits for the Genesee County Road Commission.

John H. Daly III, manager-director of the Road Commission, agreed to increase testing of frost levels from once to twice a week and even daily if reports started showing the restrictions could soon be lifted.

But, he warned that air temperature does not directly correlate to soil temperature, so there is no way to predict if and when the restrictions could be lifted even if the area sees below-freezing temperatures.

"The Road Commission has absolutely no interest in keeping those frost limits one second longer than necessary," Daly said.

Steffey also asked the commission to consider speed restrictions only, without the weight restrictions, and Daly said he would see if it's legal to do so.

There is considerably less frost in the ground than usual - 13 to 36 inches, when it often is twice that amount.

Tests last week showed the frost becoming thawed, or honeycombed, and the restrictions were put in place. The road panel gave contractors three days' advance notice, Daly said.

If the frost becomes solid again, the restrictions could be lifted before the spring thaw, Daly said.

Retired UAW Activist Named to Road Commission

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, February 01, 2006
By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

About Billy W. Bradshaw

Grand Blanc Township resident and Louisiana native.

Flint Northern High School graduate.

Retired in 2003 as international representative at UAW Region 1-C, former president of UAW Local 659 and former chairman of the board of the Model Cities Development Corp.

Married with two children, five grandchildren and one great grandchild

GENESEE COUNTY - Billy W. Bradshaw, a retired UAW activist, is the county's new road commissioner.

Bradshaw, 68, was elected after four rounds of voting by county Board of Commissioners. After a short recess, Bradshaw got enough votes on the fifth ballot, settling what has been a difficult appointment.

The commissioners' first choice - Harold McIntyre, a member of the Westwood Heights Board of Education - resigned before attending a single meeting because of conflicts with his job at The Flint Journal.

"I don't have a preconceived impression" of what needs to be done, Bradshaw said of his new position. "I'll go in with an open mind.

"I won't be critical, but I'll say so when there can be some improvement. My hopes are that I can make a contribution -not be a fly on the wall."

Bradshaw never applied for the position but was appointed over 11 other candidates who did.

Commissioner Rose Bogardus, D-Davison, walked out of Tuesday's meeting once it became clear Bradshaw would be picked, but she wouldn't comment on why she left without voting.

In initial votes, support was split between Valaria Conerly Moon, a former Valley Area Agency on Aging executive, and James A. Pomeroy of Thetford Township, a former Road Commission employee.

Bogardus, who supported Pomeroy, has said the east side of the county has historically been poorly represented on the road panel.

Commissioner Miles Gadola, R-Grand Blanc, started the swing of support to Bradshaw by nominating him after initially backing Pomeroy.

"I like the idea of someone from my area" getting the spot, Gadola said. "Grand Blanc has as many, if not more, road issues" than other areas.

Appointee Won't Take Road Commission Seat

HOMETOWN HEADLINES
GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, January 25, 2006
By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - A Westwood Heights Board of Education member is leaving the Genesee County Road Commission days after having been appointed and without ever participating in a meeting of the panel.

Harold McIntyre, community services coordinator for The Flint Journal, said he won't be able to take on the position because of conflicts with his job.

McIntyre, 58, a member of the Westwood Heights school board, beat out 11 other candidates in being appointed to the road panel by the county Board of Commissioners.

County board Chairman Richard E. Hammel, D-Mt. Morris Twp., said commissioners will likely pick McIntyre's successor from the previous 11 candidates.

Road commissioners earn \$6,000 per year and set road, bridge and ditching priorities and policies for the agency, which has a \$62.8-million budget.

- Ron Fonger

County Names New Road Panel Member

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, January 18, 2006
By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

About Harold McIntyre

AGE: 56

HOMETOWN: Born in Flint; lives in Mt. Morris Township

PROFESSION: Community services coordinator for The Flint Journal

EDUCATION: Flint Northern High School graduate; associate's degree from George Washington University

FAMILY: Married, three children

GENESEE COUNTY - A Westwood Heights Board of Education member has been appointed to the county Road Commission, beating out 11 other candidates for the influential job.

Harold McIntyre, community services coordinator for The Flint Journal, won the position Tuesday after four rounds of voting by the county Board of Commissioners.

McIntyre, 56, said he goes into the position with an open mind and a lifetime of local driving experience.

"I think overall our roads are good, ... but there are some improvements that need to be made," he said.

Commissioners picked McIntyre for the position from a crowded field that included Albert Watkins, former director of Flint Township's Central Business Development Authority, and Valaria Conerly Moon, former executive director of the Valley Area Agency on Aging.

U.S. Rep. Dale E. Kildee, D-Flint, lobbied on Watkins' behalf. Watkins was hurt, however, by the fact that another member of the three-person Road Commission is also from Flint Township.

Watkins told commissioners he was up to the job. He left quietly after the vote.

Commissioners Raynetta P. Speed and Woodrow Stanley, both Flint Democrats, voted for Moon through all four rounds of voting. McIntyre won 6-2. Commissioner Ted Hammon, D-Burton, was not at Tuesday's meeting.

Road commissioners earn \$6,000 per year and set priorities and policies for the agency, which has a \$62.8-million budget in the current fiscal year.

Less Snow Means More Filling On Area Roads

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, January 14, 2006

By Marjory Raymer

mraymer@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6325

Sure, it's January but with no snow who can help but have a little spring in their step - and bumps in their road.

The unseasonably warm temperatures may be a pleasant surprise to most, but they also are wreaking havoc on the roads.

"We're used to seeing this more toward spring," said Kay Bradley, secretary at Genesee County Courier, a delivery service on Dye Road. She said drivers resorted to the weave and dodge technique to avoid some of the worst spots.

She said Ballenger Highway south of Miller Road is especially bad and she's seen road crews out there repeatedly trying to keep the surface up.

The water expands and contracts along with the thaw freeze cycle, undermining road integrity and causing potholes.

Especially hard hit are dirt roads.

"It's turned into soupy mess, that's for sure," said Paul J. Fortino, Gaines Township supervisor, who lives on one of the township's 37.5 miles of dirt roads. "The country's nice and this is one of the prices you pay."

On Cook Road near the Shiawassee County line, resident Beth Roberts said you can see the gravel road deteriorate a little bit more with each freeze and thaw.

"It would only take a few more days like this for it to be impassable," said Roberts, a homemaker. "You have to idle down the road and sometimes that's too fast."

Residents there have complained about the poor condition of the road for at least a year. Sometimes, winter driving is actually easier because the packed snow levels out the surface, Roberts said.

Road Commission Manager-Director John H. Daly III said crews freed from snow removal are instead busy patching and sealing potholes and even grading some gravel roads.

"I've been here six years and I have not seen anything like this since I've been here," Daly said.

And this weird mid-winter weather is expected to continue for at least a week, said meteorologist Dennis Dixon of the National Weather Service.

Temperatures will continue to drop below freezing at night and rise above the 32-degree mark during the day. A cold front that could momentarily keep temperatures freezing is expected Wednesday, but by Friday it should be back up, said Dixon, who has no complaints over the weather.

"If it's going to be above normal temperatures, I'd just as soon have it be in January than July," he said.

Relatively Low Fuel Taxes Keep Michigan From Catching Up

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, January 11, 2006

With the numerous orange barrels, closed lanes and detours Genesee County motorists cope with every construction season, it would seem road agencies were making headway on the backlog of repairs. No way, nohow.

And we might as well get used to enduring these conditions all across Michigan without a substantial boost in gasoline and diesel taxes that are far lower here than in some neighboring states with better roads.

Local drivers know only too well the consequences of this inadequate revenue, which explains why a recent report on the poor condition of Genesee County roads surprised virtually no one.

Nearly 15 percent of more than 155 miles of generally primary roadway surveyed last year was deemed failing. This was an increase over 2004 and 2003, when the yearly reviews began under state legislation passed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the quality of Michigan roads.

Furthermore, that 15 percent is an overall number, masking vast differences among municipalities. For instance, 45.7 percent of the roads surveyed in Genesee Township were failing, but Flushing Township had none rated that poorly. While that disparity may seem unfair, limited repair dollars result in the Road Commission spending its money where it will benefit the most people, which is not necessarily fixing the most damaged pavement.

But are we doing the best we can? Debate, of course, is always valid over the management of public money. Yet even getting more bang from the \$3 billion spent annually by the Michigan Department of Transportation and local road agencies - with some of this money going to rail, transit and airport systems, too - won't make up for the inadequacy of revenue.

Consider that Michigan's gas tax has been frozen at 19 cents a gallon since 1997, and the Legislature irresponsibly keeps the diesel tax 4 cents lower in deference to the trucking industry, despite the disproportionate share of damage it causes.

Neighboring Ohio, meanwhile, has a 28-cent-a-gallon tax for each, and in Wisconsin it's 32.9 cents for both. Indiana and Illinois are more comparable on gasoline taxes, but they soak commercial vehicles on diesel fuel, taking advantage of heavy traffic passing through.

It's no wonder that Michigan can't match their pace on repairs, with the possible exception of the 9,400 miles of major roads MDOT handles. Those thoroughfares receive three-fourths of the \$1 billion in annual federal highway money and about 40 percent of the state-generated revenue. Road commissions, cities and villages get most of the remainder for the 110,000 miles of streets they maintain.

It's an impossible job for many of them, which explains why road interests want about a 10-cent-a-gallon hike in fuel taxes. No one expects the Legislature to go along with any increase soon, which means Michigan will have to keep up the best it can on repairs, while really not keeping up at all.

Argentine

ARGENTINE TOWNSHIP
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Tuesday, August 30, 2005
By Robert Snell
rsnell@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6302
QUICK TAKE
New tax

The Township Board on Monday narrowly approved a new \$175 tax for property owners who live along dirt roads, while those with vacant lots will pay half. The tax would pay to apply gravel and limestone to some or all of the township's dirt roads.

ARGENTINE TWP. - Supervisor Bob Cole's gravel gamble to repair dirt roads, which includes a new tax, lacks concrete plans, some Township Board members said.

The board Monday narrowly approved a \$175 tax that will be paid by residents who live along dirt roads for gravel and limestone applications and ditches.

The new seven-year tax was part of a slate of tax assessments approved.

The board increased police and fire taxes by a combined \$30. The \$120 police and \$130 fire taxes will help pay for equipment and maintenance and will raise an extra \$83,000 a year.

Cole's idea involves mining gravel from a local Genesee County Road Commission pit, processing it and having it hauled and applied to local roads.

The new road tax would raise about \$1.1 million.

But dissenting board members - Clerk Joe Graves and Treasurer Norm Schmidt - preferred having a plan that prioritized roads. And they said it is unknown if \$1.1 million is enough money to improve approximately 46 miles of dirt roads in the township - the most countywide.

Cole said he would formalize and submit a plan for board approval at a later date. Trustees Jason King and Bob Longlois, along with Cole, voted for the road-improvement tax.

If the project is too expensive, the money could be returned to residents, Cole added.

Resident Bob Magnan embraced the road-improvement idea, but questioned the costs.

"I'm concerned about how the money gets spent if you can't justify what the costs are," he said.

The clerk and treasurer, although saying they thought the tax was premature, nonetheless expressed faith in Cole and that he would devise a plan.

Cole said delays would only increase costs.

"The only way (to fix roads) is to reach into your wallet and pay," he said.

During Cole's previous stint as supervisor in the late 1990s, he launched a plan that used gravel from the pit. The plan improved more than 20 miles of road for about \$301,000, he said.

The \$175 tax is on top of the \$75 residents will pay to have chloride applied to dirt roads to minimize dust. The \$75 fee is \$10 more than residents paid last year.

Commuting

FLINT JOURNAL COLUMN
GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Sunday, January 02, 2005
By Robert Snell
JOURNAL COLUMNIST

Commuters sick of highway backups and stretches of roads with more red lights than a Christmas tree will love the state's holiday gift to local drivers.

This year, the state will unveil a \$2.2-million plan to build changeable message signs - like those in the Detroit area - alerting motorists to traffic jams and synchronizing traffic lights along Genesee County's busiest corridors.

The plan includes three message signs: On northbound I-75 south of I-475; on southbound I-75 north of I-475; and on westbound I-69 east of I-475.

"The biggest benefit is commuters will definitely see significant reduction of wait times," said Derek Bradshaw, a senior planner with the Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission.

The signs will be triggered by a device in the pavement that measures speed. When speeds slow, the signs will alert drivers to the congestion and suggest alternate routes, Bradshaw said.

The other component is using computers to coordinate traffic lights on some roads to improve traffic flow and trim commuting times, he said.

Those corridors include:

- Saginaw Street in Grand Blanc from Center Road south to Bella Vista Drive and Holly Road at Jewett Trail.

- Dort Highway between Saginaw Street in Grand Blanc Township and Mt. Morris Road in Genesee Township.

- Corunna Road between Morrish Road in Clayton Township and Ballenger Highway in Flint.

- Hill Road between Torrey Road in Mundy Township and Saginaw Road in Grand Blanc Township.

- Pierson Road between Elms and Clio roads in Mt. Morris Township.

- Main Street in Flushing from Maple Street to McKinley Avenue.

The projects are federally funded and could be finished by next fall, Bradshaw said.

The Genesee County Road Commission would also like to include a stretch of notoriously clogged Miller Road, he said.

What do you put in your bag? Flint Township commuter Sam Wells said he packs a bad-weather bag for the 100-mile drive to his job at Delphi Corp. in Troy.

The Global Business Systems and Process manager brings the standard change of clothes and an encyclopedic knowledge of gas stations between home and Troy. And he never lets the gas tank get below one-quarter full.

But it's what else he packs that is important.

"Patience - I pack it each morning and evening," Wells, 49, wrote in an e-mail. "I let the overly aggressive drivers pass by."

He also passes the time listening to the Tom Joyner radio show in the morning and books on tape at night.

There's more.

"Prayer - I ask the Lord for a safe journey each and every day," he wrote.

What do you think?

-- TOOT YOUR HORN: Share your commuting stories or whatever's on your mind. Reach me at: rsnell@flintjournal.com or (810) 766-6302.

Commuting appears every other Sunday on page A3.

Michigan Road Money to be Tight

Friday, November 12, 2004

By Sarah Kellogg

Booth Newspapers - Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - U.S. highway construction and maintenance work is expected to grow by 4.5 percent next year, but not in Michigan where officials say they'll have to get by on 2003 spending levels.

The American Road & Transportation Builders Association, which represents U.S. road construction companies, estimates that highway and bridge project spending will climb to a record \$69 billion next year, up from \$66 billion in 2004.

"All the economic indicators are positive, and I think we'll continue to see that trend going forward," Matt Jeanneret, a spokesman for the national group, said Thursday. "Local economies and state budgets are doing better."

Michigan, however, is still struggling with a tight state budget and uncertainty about how much federal money it will receive for next summer's road work. State officials expect road funding to be at 2003 levels through the beginning of the 2005 construction season next spring.

"This is going to have an impact on what we can and can't do," said Ben Kohrman, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Transportation.

While it's still too early to know which projects will be funded, Kohrman said one thing's for sure: " We know we'll have less (than planned), and our folks are working on putting the 2005 program together knowing that."

The state had planned to spend about \$3.28 billion on transportation projects in 2005. Of that, \$1.4 billion will be used for state highway and bridge construction and repairs, \$640 million for local road projects and the remaining for airports, mass transit and traffic safety.

Michigan received about \$1 billion in 2003 and in 2004 from the federal government, and the state budget estimates that federal contribution will inch up to \$1.1 billion in 2005. But that's not a done-deal yet.

Congress returns to Washington from the election recess next week, and lawmakers could approve the six-year federal transportation funding bill that expired in September 2003 and has been extended six times since then, most recently until May 31. Until the new bill passes, funding stays at 2003 levels.

Some members of Congress are hoping that some quick action could guarantee states a boost in federal funding for 2005 road projects, some of which were put off in 2004 due to a lack of funding. Under the proposed legislation -- there are differing House and Senate versions -- Michigan would receive between \$100 million and \$300 million more a year, on average.

Much of the delay in passing the bill is due to a dispute between donor states such as Michigan, which pay more money in federal gas taxes than they get back in federal road funding, and the donee states that get more back than they pay in gas taxes.

Michigan gets 88 cents in federal transportation funding for every \$1 drivers pay into the Highway Trust Fund in federal gas taxes. Michigan ranks 47th nationally in its return on gas tax dollars.

Donor states want more of their money back, and the best way to do that is to raise gasoline taxes to raise more money or to strip some funds from the donee states - both extremely controversial options.

Michigan observers aren't optimistic about Congress bridging the gap between donor and donee states this fall.

"The prognosis for transportation funding is flat at best for 2005," said Gary Naeyaert, a spokesman for the Michigan Road Builders Association, which represents the state's highway construction companies. "In Michigan we're probably going to be on a downward spiral because Congress won't get it done in time for the 2005 construction season."

Road Commission Reorganizes; Sabin to Retire

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Friday, November 12, 2004
By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - Tim Sabin, the former deputy director of the Genesee County Road Commission, will retire in March, and the agency has reorganized some of the responsibilities he performed.

Manager-Director John H. Daly III said the reorganization has already occurred and is working well.

Sabin, 54, is working during the transition before his retirement. He has spent more than 30 years with the commission, most recently working as deputy director and head of the special projects department, which oversaw purchasing, equipment maintenance and facility maintenance.

As a part of the reorganization, that department has been eliminated as has the position of deputy director. Purchasing oversight has been transferred to the finance department and a new department of facilities and equipment maintenance has been created, according to a memorandum from Daly to the Road Commission.

Smoother Rides Felt on Flint Roads

FLINT
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, November 10, 2004
By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - Flint's most heavily traveled streets are in better shape today than they were a year ago, according to a new county study.

The miles of city streets eligible for federal aid and considered to be in failed, very poor, poor or fair condition dropped 20 percent from 2003-04, according to the county Planning Commission report.

Improvement was so dramatic that the city no longer owns the most miles of bad roads in the county - an unwanted distinction that now belongs to the county Road Commission.

A county department head and some residents said Tuesday that Mayor Don Williamson deserves credit for the turnaround, even though much remains to be done.

"This guy Williamson is trying, I think. I really do," Victor Bennett, 75, said as he swept leaves from the curb on his Colon Street home Tuesday. "But there's still some bad ones."

A few blocks away, Joy Rappas, 24, said she's noticed more street work. Both she and Bennett live on side streets that connect to Franklin Avenue, which was rated in poor condition before it was resurfaced this summer.

"Before, they didn't even attempt to do anything," Rappas said. "I noticed a lot (this summer) - especially around this area."

Williamson said he's just doing his job.

"I don't know that they should give me credit for anything," Williamson said. "I'm only doing what the taxpayers' wishes were."

The county study rated only roads eligible for federal aid, accounting for only about 20 percent of all roads statewide. Those streets typically are not residential.

In Flint, 125 miles of road were rated. Only the county Road Commission (454 miles) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (329 miles) are responsible for more.

Countywide, 199 miles of road were rated as very good or excellent, 691 miles were rated good or fair and 117 miles were rated fair, poor, very poor or failed.

Representatives of the county Road Commission, MDOT and the county Planning Commission inspected federal-aid roads in late July and early August, scoring the streets based on visual defects.

An asphalt road with a score of 10 means it is in excellent condition and has been newly constructed. A score of 1 on a road means the road is failed and in need of total reconstruction.

William C. Ayre, Flint's transportation director, said inspectors would find even more roads in better shape today than they did when inspections were performed earlier this year.

"I hope to do that or better (next year)," Ayre said of the results. "We'll put another good dent in them."

The city resurfaced about 30 miles of streets this year, including streets that would have been eligible for federal aid if the city would have waited several years for federal funds.

Instead, Ayre said, Flint officials pushed ahead with straightforward resurfacing with fewer fringes - such as rebuilt curbs - than it might have been able to afford if it waited for federal dollars.

"Some of them, we couldn't wait. They were in too bad of shape," he said.

Chapin Cook, director-coordinator of the county Planning Commission, said many of the federal-aid roads that were fixed in the past year already had been planned before Williamson took control of the city from a state emergency financial manager.

But Cook said Williamson's emphasis on taking action now on roads is being felt.

"The city of Flint has gotten back into the game," Cook said. "They've got a renewed vigor in dealing with major roads."

Ayre told the Flint City Council earlier this year to expect big improvements in road repairs in the city, and the council authorized the use of \$2.5 million for major street work - money that was left over from last year's state transportation funds.

He said repairs on major streets this year don't constitute reconstruction but still should give motorists a good surface to drive on for about seven years and should slow deterioration.

John H. Daly III, manager-director of the county Road Commission, said it will take a few more years of results to draw conclusions from the pavement rating system, which has been in use only a few years.

The ratings are subjective and don't take a deep look at the underlying condition of a road, he said.

Of roads under the county's jurisdiction, 50 miles were rated as very good or excellent this year; 359 miles rated fair to good; and 45 miles rated as fair, poor, very poor or failed.

"As bad as their roads were, if you did anything, it's going to improve them," Daly said of Flint's program. "The question is, what will it look like in three or four years?"

Flint still has more than its share of roads considered in the worst condition (31 percent), compared to all rated county roads (12 percent).

On state roads and highways in the county, just 5 percent were rated in the worst category.

Journal staff writer Christofer Machniak contributed to this report

Police Shut Down Bristol Road in Pursuit of Gunman

BURTON
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Thursday, August 05, 2004
By Bryn Mickle
bmickle@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6383

A stretch of Bristol Road was closed for more than three hours Wednesday night after police looking for a gunman surrounded a small apartment building near Holy Redeemer Church.

Police were called to a Bristol Road car wash about 5 p.m. after it was robbed by a man toting a blue-steel pistol, Lt. Thomas Hudson said.

A Flint Township police dog tracked the robber to an apartment next door to the car wash, where police suspected he was holed up in one of the units.

The Burton police special tactics team and other officers surrounded the apartment building for about three hours, before setting off a flash grenade about 9:15 p.m. and storming inside. The apartments, however, were empty.

Police were still looking for the suspect late Wednesday and said he is described as 6-foot-1, with dark curly hair and a mustache, wearing jeans and a black, white and orange shirt.

Anyone with information is asked to call Burton police at (810) 742-2543.

Buses on Target; Parks Out of Luck
MTA Millage Less for Shorter Time

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, August 04, 2004
By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - Buses fared better than parks with county voters Tuesday as a Mass Transportation Authority tax increase won approval while a parks millage failed.

The 10-year, 0.5-mill request for the Parks and Recreation Commission was apparently too much for too long as voters turned it down -?3,162 to 11,368. The proposal also sought renewal of an existing half-mill levy for seven years.

The MTA tax will add 0.4 mills to property taxes for the next five years. It was approved with a comfortable 54 percent of the vote.

Parks Director Amy McMillan said officials will be forced into budget-cutting because of the loss. At least \$450,000 and perhaps as much as \$1.4 million must be cut from the coming year's budget, McMillan said.

"I really do believe there is an issue of taxes (here) and not a (verdict) on the importance of parks to people," she said.

McMillan had previously said a voter rejection would likely mean a cut in parks services, probable layoffs and possible parks closings and increased fees.

The parks commission also will have to consider whether and how soon to go back to voters. The existing 0.4861-mill parks levy is set to expire in 2006.

The proposed added tax would have paid for more park rangers, maintenance workers and naturalists, along with new biking-hiking trails, playgrounds, rebuilt campgrounds and other improvements.

Budget problems also were facing the MTA, which said it needs more local tax money to offset losses in state and federal funding and to increase services.

Enough voters saw the need for the higher tax to deliver approval.

"I voted for it because people can't afford money to buy cars, or they can't afford to pay insurance for their cars," said Rose Thomas of Flint Township.

MTA General Manager Robert Foy said people recognized the need for public transportation even if they don't use it themselves.

"On behalf of the 40,000 people who use public transportation -?e're very, very grateful," Foy said. "Having mobility is an essential ingredient in every community."

Road Commission Wins Two Statewide Awards

By Robert Slattery, Information Systems & Planning Manager [GCRC]

Who says government agencies are secretive and mysterious? And who says a stock room is just a dusty place where unused parts go to die, never to be thought of again? Not the Genesee County Road Commission. This government agency has been busy pushing the envelope of procedural effectiveness and becoming a model of efficient inventory management, while at the same time reaching out to local and county officials to help them better understand the intricacies of road funding and finance. And for their efforts the Road Commission received statewide recognition for excellence and innovation at the County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM) annual conference in Lansing on March 18, 2004, netting both a "Best Practices" Award for its creative procedures to drastically reduce parts inventory and costs, and a "CRAMMY" for its "Road Funding 101" public education initiative.

Like many road agencies, the Road Commission had burgeoning inventories of infrequently used or seasonal equipment parts that tied up road improvement dollars. It was not uncommon for parts to become obsolete or unusable just sitting on the shelf, and then be auctioned, returned at a discount or scrapped.

But the Road Commission still needed to have critical parts on hand when repairs became necessary or when preventive maintenance was scheduled.

To address this dilemma, Equipment Manager Darryl Ertel and Stockroom Foreman Kevin Hammermeister first contacted several regular Road Commission suppliers and developed consignment arrangements wherein the supplier would stock parts on Road Commission shelves, charge for them only when they were used, and take them back if they were not going to be needed or not used for a period of time.

They then used a fleet maintenance management program called Dossier to track movements of parts into and out of the stockroom, and established procedures to maintain appropriate accountabilities.

Since 2000, the Road Commission has used and expanded these procedures, and saved over \$243,000, reducing its parts inventory to \$177,362. Their goal is to reduce inventory to \$100,000 by September 30, 2004.

In accepting the award, Road Commission Chairperson Bonita L. White credited the dedication and creativity of Ertel and Hammermeister and their crew. "We asked them to identify ways to reduce our inventory cost while still maintaining a ready supply of critical parts", White said. "They really stepped up to the challenge. The procedures they have developed could undoubtedly benefit any road commission."

Meanwhile, Manager-Director John Daly was developing "Road Funding 101", a "CRAMMY"-winning course to help newly-elected township supervisors and Genesee County commissioners better understand the complexities of getting road improvements funded, enabling them to more easily identify ways to achieve economies and cost savings. Understanding the timing of the state's funding cycle and how it relates to the County's and the Road Commission's budget processes, and the limitations on each, for example, enables supervisors to better plan their road maintenance activities and make best use of limited road funding dollars. "We can work together more effectively when we all know what to expect," said Daly. "Everybody wins."

Michigan Wants Highway Money Speed-Up

Michigan Asks for Funding Fast-Track

By ABC12/The Associated Press

Washington — (02/26/04)-- A delegation from Michigan is urging Congress to move quickly on a highway funding bill.

The group says only three other states have gotten a lower return on their federal fuel taxes in the past half-century.

The delegation that traveled to Washington included members of the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce and state transportation officials.

Earlier this week, Governor Granholm also met with federal officials to ask for more road funding.

Weight Restrictions Go into Effect on Area roads

POLICE BLOTTER
GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, February 25, 2004

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Annual weight restrictions were to go into effect today for large trucks that travel county roads, the Genesee County Road Commission has announced.

The restrictions are seasonal, to prevent large, heavy trucks and semis from tearing up roads during periods of when the ground alternately freezes and thaws.

According to Michael Mansfield, director of traffic engineering and permits at the road commission, trucks traveling on "frost-restricted" routes must have axle loadings reduced by 25 percent and 35 percent, depending on the type of road surface. The speed limit for all vehicles over 10,000 pounds in "gross weight" is also reduced to 35 mph on these routes.

The restrictions usually last through April, with the lifting of them depending on the amount of snow on the ground.

- Kim Crawford

Hit a pothole? You've Got Options

In some cases, cities and counties can pay

By Jason Carr
ABC12.com

Mid Michigan — (02/18/04)--As frozen asphalt thaws out, potholes sprout like mushrooms on Michigan roads. This week's mild warm up has road crews patching up a storm. But what if they miss the one crater that wrecks your rims and blows out your tires?

Should the city or county pay for your damage? ABC12's Jason Carr joins us with more on your options. Most people probably resign themselves to calling their insurance agent, assuming they have a low deductible. But in some cases, it may be worth it to go another route.

There are two kinds of March Madness. The good kind is known to fans of college basketball, who gorge on the non-stop goosebumps provided by the NCAA tournament.

The other kind of March Madness -- the bad kind -- is known to Michiganders, who gnash their teeth over potholes that could swallow a basketball.

Some times the damage is so bad, the driver wants the city or county to pay. But where does that driver go for satisfaction? John Daly is with the Genesee County Road Commission.

Daly says: "Notify use, send them a claim form, the form goes to the insurance company, which makes a ruling to the claim filer directly."

As for city roads, the Flint DPW says it refers claims to the city clerks office. Before filing any claim, local attorney Tom Donnellan offers these tips: First, take a photo or video of the pothole ASAP. If possible, place a shoe next to it for scale purposes.

Then find people who live or work nearby who can testify the pothole had been there for at least 30 days. You could also take photos of repaired potholes nearby, which could prove the city or county overlooked the pothole you hit.

Finally, and most important, how bad is the pothole? That's an important question. Let's say the city or county denies your claim. If you can demonstrate the pothole was so bad that it should have been repaired immediately, you could go to court and fight the city or county.

Highways Most Dangerous Place for American Workers

The 10 most dangerous jobs in America

The workplace death rate continued to fall in 2002, but some jobs remain staggeringly risky.

By Kim Khan

Loggers and fishermen faced the most daunting odds of dying at work in 2002, but the highways remained the most dangerous place for American workers.

On-the-job accidents and homicides claimed the lives of 5,524 Americans last year, down 6.6% from 2001. The Bureau of Labor Statistics says the workplace death rate is the lowest it has seen since recordkeeping began in 1992.

Of that 5,524, only 104 were timber-cutters, but those fatalities represent a death rate nearly 30 times that of a typical workplace. Loggers died at a rate of 117.8 per 100,000 workers, the BLS said, with most of them killed by falling trees. The death rate for American workplaces as a whole was 4 per 100,000. (That's among occupations with more than 30 fatalities in 2002 and more than 45,000 employed.)

Fishing was the second most dangerous occupation, with 71.1 deaths for every 100,000 workers, followed by pilots and navigators, 69.8, structural metal workers, 58.2, and, perhaps surprisingly, drivers-sales workers, which include pizza delivery drivers at 37.9.

Roofing is another dangerous job, with 37 deaths for every 100,000 workers. Electric power installers, farm occupation, construction laborer and truck drivers also made the top 10.

The 10 most dangerous jobs
Occupation Fatalities per 100,000
Timber cutters 117.8
Fishers 71.1
Pilots and navigators 69.8
Structural metal workers 58.2
Drivers-sales workers 37.9
Roofers 37
Electrical power installers 32.5
Farm occupations 28
Construction laborers 27.7
Truck drivers 25

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; survey of occupations with minimum 30 fatalities and 45,000 workers in 2002

Mining tops list of dangerous industries

Going underground is still one of the most dangerous jobs. Mining is the most perilous industry as a whole to work in, according to the BLS.

There were 23.5 deaths in mining for every 100,000 workers in 2002, the BLS said. That was just slightly ahead of agriculture, forestry and fishing, where there were 22.7 deaths for every 100,000 workers. But deaths in mining are still down 22% from the 2001 rate.

Overall, the number of deaths occurring in the workplace dropped 6.6% from the year before to 5,524, the lowest number since the workplace fatality census was started in 1992, excluding the Sept. 11 attacks. Following mining and agriculture, construction saw 12.2 deaths per 100,000 workers. Transportation, which includes trucking and air travel, saw 11.3 work-related deaths per 100,000 workers.

“In addition to the new all-time lows in total workplace fatalities and fatality rates, it is especially encouraging to see a 6% decrease in fatalities among Hispanic workers after seeing increases every year since 1995,” Labor Secretary Elaine Chow said. “The Department's outreach efforts, such as the Hispanic Task Force on Worker Safety, our Spanish-language Web sites and hiring of Spanish-speaking OSHA employees, will continue to make Hispanic workers safer.”

On-the-job killers

Type of incident 2002 deaths

Aircraft accidents 192

Caught in running equipment 110

Drowning 60

Electrocution 289

Exposure to substances 98

Falls from ladder 126

Falls from roof 143

Fires/explosions 165

Highway collisions 635

Assaults/violence 840

Jackknifed or overturned truck 312

Overturned farm/industrial equipment 164

Struck by falling/flying object 506

Struck by vehicle 356

Suicides 199

Workplace murders fall

Homicides in the workplace fell to 609 in 2002. The total is slightly lower than the 643 in 2001, but well below the in high of workplace homicides of 1,080 in 1994. Nearly nine out of 10 retail cashiers who died on the job last year were murdered.

Restaurant and hotel management also saw a high percentage of workplace murders, with homicides accounting for 80% of workplace deaths. Cab and limousine drivers were also targeted. Fifty-nine percent of drivers and chauffeurs killed on the job were murdered, much higher than the percentage killed in highway accidents.

But highway accidents were the biggest overall killer in 2002, accounting for a quarter of all worker deaths. Falls killed 13%. Men were still, by far, the most likely to be killed on the job. Ninety-two percent of all workplace fatalities were male.

Among the 441 women who died on the job, though, the chief cause of death was homicide.

County to Take Over Pothole-Ridden Patch of Torrey Road

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, October 13, 2003

By Ron Fonger
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Flint - The city's emergency financial manager is apparently ready to turn over to the county control of a small stretch of Torrey Road where drivers have complained for years about potholes and poor conditions.

For nearby residents such as Sandra Mize, it's a move that can't come soon enough.

"I think it's going to be a good thing," said Mize, who has lived on Maple Road near Torry Road for about 20 years.

Before the city's section of the road was given a surface fix a few weeks ago, "you just fell in the potholes," she said.

Genesee County Road Commission Manager-Director John H. Daly III said the agreement for the county to take over Torrey Road came at a recent meeting with Ed Kurtz, Flint's emergency financial manager, and still requires formal action.

A transfer of the road could happen in early 2004, according to a letter from Daly to Kurtz. But Daly's letter said the county plans to take over maintenance of all of Torrey Road on Nov. 1 - before the road transfer is complete.

Daly said it's possible the road could be re-engineered to be easier to drive in the future.

He predicted that the quarter-mile stretch of Torrey, just south of W. Bristol Road, would be in better condition in the long run because of the switch.

The city recently paid to resurface its part of the road, but it's a short-term fix expected to last only a few years. Because of limited money and its remote location, the road hasn't received much attention.

"I don't see any problem with it," said 8th Ward City Councilman Lawrence B. Murphy of the turnover plan. "I know it's been bad. I take my time when I do" go that way.

Kurtz said he still must talk to city attorneys about the plan to be sure there are no potential complications for Flint.

Four Carman-Ainsworth students recently were injured on that section of Torrey Road when returning to the high school from the GASC Technology Center. School officials

and students are among drivers who have complained about the condition of the road near Bishop Airport.

Poor U.S. Infrastructure Demands Remedial Work

Monday, September 08, 2003

FLINT JOURNAL EDITORIAL

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Like a home that's been neglected by its owner, America's roads, dams, sewage systems and electrical grids are crumbling faster than they can be fixed. Last month's massive power failure affecting eight states and Ontario is the most dramatic, but not the only, sign that our infrastructure has declined dangerously.

From Our Advertiser

The American Society of Civil Engineers says the country should invest \$1.6 trillion in repairs and new construction over five years, and suggests Congress impose a six-cents-a-gallon user fee on gasoline to help finance the work.

As unpleasant as that may sound with the recent spike in gas prices, the proposal shouldn't be dismissed out of hand. Such a tax would be relatively acceptable compared to other forms of revenue raisers. And it would make users of the nation's roads and

bridges pay for an accelerated maintenance program just like they fund this work now. Congress also could use national priorities in assigning spending, which ideally would reflect the country's greatest needs rather than a community's wealth.

An infrastructure levy would let the public see its tax dollars at work. What motorist doesn't enjoy driving on a highway that's just been resurfaced or rebuilt? And a new street or road would inspire property owners bordering it to invest as well.

Even accepting that the civil engineers are looking out for their own interests, our eyes tell us they're speaking the truth. And their message is scary. On roads, one of 12 categories of infrastructure the engineers graded, they said, "The nation is failing to even maintain the substandard conditions we currently have."

The condition of the country's school buildings isn't much better. Overall, the engineers said U.S. infrastructure grades out as a D-plus.

That score amounts to a fundamental threat to the country's future. How can we read this report card and not agree that major remedial work is overdue.

Vienn Twp.: Road Work to Close Part of Neff Road

Wednesday, August 06, 2003

By Ken Palmer
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

A repaving project will close a section of Neff Road for about three weeks.

From Our Advertise

Beginning today, Neff will be closed to through traffic between Frances and Dodge roads during the day only, the Genesee County Road Commission said.

Crews will crush and shape the existing pavement, cover it with asphalt and build limestone shoulders.

No detour will be posted during the project, which is set for completion on Aug. 29.

Michigan Lawmakers Push for More Federal Highway Funding

The Associated Press

3/13/03 1:38 AM

DETROIT (AP) -- Michigan lawmakers are fighting to bring home more of the federal gas tax money the state sends to Washington, D.C. as Congress debates a highway reauthorization bill to be decided later this year.

The state currently gets back about 88 cents for every \$1 it contributes to the Highway Trust Fund, making it the fourth-largest donor state behind Georgia, Indiana and Texas, The Detroit News reported in a Thursday story.

Donor states get less money back than they put in to the program, which is funded entirely by gas taxes and earmarked for highways and mass transit.

Since 1956, Michigan motorists have contributed \$16.5 billion in federal gas tax money - \$1.7 billion of which went to build roads in other states.

Michigan's congressional delegation wants to see the state's rate of return increase to 95 percent, which would mean an additional \$70 million a year in federal funding.

Some members of the delegation also would support boosting federal fuel taxes to achieve a \$200 million annual increase in the state's road funding, bring the total to \$1.13 billion a year.

"Michigan historically has been a bottom feeder in terms of rate of return for our own dollars sent to Washington," said Gary Naeyaert, spokesman for the Michigan Road Builders Association. "We are looking for a big win this year for the state."

Naeyaert is a member of Michigan's Transportation Team. The coalition of 70 private and public groups is pushing Congress to set the rate of return for all states to a minimum of 95 percent.

"Every \$1 million paves another mile of road or rehabs one bridge structure," Naeyaert said. "Every Michigan motorist knows our roads and bridges still need a lot of work."

A report released in January by The Road Information Program, a national research group sponsored by the road building industry, ranked Michigan dead last nationwide in interstate bridge upkeep and fifth-worst in pavement repair on major highways.

U.S. Rep. Vern Ehlers, R-Grand Rapids, who sits on the House Transportation Committee, says he supports increasing the gas tax to be able to give all states more money, in addition to changing the formula that determines a state's share of highway funding.

"The gas tax is a user fee," Ehlers said. "People say they want the bridges not to fall down and the roads not to have pot holes. You don't get that for free."

Gov. Jennifer Granholm is backing the push to raise Michigan's rate of return from the Highway Trust Fund to 95 percent, said John Bruchett, director of Granholm's Washington office.

"Governor Granholm wants Congress to patch the funding pot hole dug by other states that take more than their fair share of highway money," he said.

County to Send Bills for Hazardous Spill Cleanups

Tuesday, February 11, 2003

By Ron Fonger
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Companies that cause hazardous materials spills can expect to receive a bill for the cleanup.

The Genesee County Board of Commissioners has approved an ordinance that spells out how a responsible party can be billed when the county's new hazardous materials team responds.

The resolution says the county can bill for costs including salaries and wages, disposable materials and supplies, and the rental or leasing of equipment.

Commissioners agreed in April to spend nearly \$30,000 to train police and firefighters from around the county to handle incidents from gasoline spills to bioterrorism.

Ron Fonger covers Genesee County government and transportation. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317 or rfonger@flintjournal.com.

Road Commission Manager Earns Designation Tuesday, February 11, 2003

By Ron Fonger
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Genesee County Road Commission Manager-Director John H. Daly III has received the "credentialed manager" designation from the International City/County Management Association.

Daly is one of 435 local government officials nationwide - and the first public administrator in Michigan at the county level - to receive the credential, according to a news release from ICMA.

To receive the designation, officials must have qualifications including experience as a senior management executive in local government and a degree in public administration or a related field.

Ron Fonger covers Genesee County government and transportation. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317 or rfonger@flintjournal.com.

Board Cuts Funding for Parks, Road Systems
Thursday, September 12, 2002

By Ron Fonger
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Genesee County -- The county parks and road systems apparently will keep getting cash injections from the Board of Commissioners, but not as much as they got this year.

Commissioners agreed in a committee meeting Tuesday to free up \$300,000 for the Parks and Recreation Commission and to help pay an additional \$135,000 on its bonds next year. That's 26 percent less than parks Director Amy McMillan had hoped.

On Wednesday, the county board gave the same kind of treatment to the Road Commission, agreeing to put \$456,000 into a matching program that pays for local road maintenance work.

Road Commission Manager-Director John H. Daly III had asked for nearly twice as much money as his programs are slated to receive, but commissioners are looking for nonessential areas to cut.

Already, they are faced with the prospect of spending more than \$6 million from a variety of rainy day funds to balance next year's \$82-million budget.

Board Chairman Richard E. Hammel called the road money, which is matched by townships to make repairs, "one of the best programs we've put together."

But with at least a handful of layoffs likely, Hammel said it wasn't right to continue the road program without slowing spending.

In addition to deciding appropriations for parks and road systems this week, commissioners have:

Cut annual spending on travel by board members from \$12,000 to \$6,000, despite a "no" vote from Commissioner Ted Hammon, D-Burton.

Cut youth activity funds by one-third --from \$27,000 to \$18,000 --despite "no" votes from commissioners Raynetta Speed and Floyd Clack, both Flint Democrats, as well as Hammon.

Commissioners use the program to funnel general fund dollars to groups and individuals in their districts. Last month they agreed to give a 10-year-old Burton girl \$825 to help cover her expenses in a national pageant.

Unanimously agreed to cut a requested \$32,450 increase from Genesee Circuit Court for visiting judges.

Ron Fonger covers Genesee County government and transportation. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317 or rfonger@flintjournal.com.

Don't Cut Road Funds

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Tuesday, August 06, 2002

JOURNAL READER

The state Legislature is considering legislation to cut local road funds when it meets on Aug. 13. Because of the state's budget crisis, the governor wants to take local road funds and use them to support state departments. Ironically, these cuts are in House Bill 5651, the 2002-03 transportation budget bill.

When the gas tax was increased in 1997, Michigan's taxpayers were told that their gas taxes would only be used to repair and maintain state and local roads. Instead, this money will be used to support state bureaucracy and bureaucrats.

If H.B. 5651 passes, the Genesee County Road Commission will lose \$773,587.06 in road funds next year. As a result, we will be unable to continue many maintenance projects on roads and bridges in the Genesee County road system. We cannot do our job and serve county residents if these cuts are allowed to happen.

We are asking the residents of Genesee County to call their state legislators and urge them to vote no on the House Bill 5651 Conference Report. Let them know that they should pass a transportation budget that does not take local road funds to pay for state bureaucracies. We need a transportation budget that does not use local road funds to balance the state's budget.

John H. Daly, Flushing,
manager director,
Genesee County Road Commission

Lansing Bills Draw Better 'Maps' for Road Repairs

Sunday, May 26, 2002

FLINT JOURNAL EDITORIAL

More money is sure to be needed to fix too many abysmal roads in Michigan, but the state and local governments also need a better way of going about it. Surprising as it

sounds, there's no consistent method of thoroughly appraising the condition of Michigan's road network, nor uniform definitions for construction and maintenance to guide spending.

State Rep. Larry Julian, R-Lennon, and Rep. Thomas George, R-Kalamazoo, are close to correcting that with bills that have passed the state House and are pending in the Senate. Both should be adopted.

George's bill would help clarify the perennial debate over the amount government spends on road maintenance versus new construction. That issue has been muddled by loose language, so it's never certain just what dollars are going for.

His legislation would take out the guesswork by establishing precise definitions for maintenance. No longer could road widening, reconstruction, or even resurfacing be called maintenance. Those would come under road construction.

The new terminology doesn't settle the debate, which Democratic gubernatorial candidate David Bonior joined last week, over whether too much money is going for new pavement instead of taking care of what's already built. But George's bill, if it becomes law, would remove deception or confusion about what the Department of Transportation or other road agency is spending the public's money on.

Julian's bill would mandate a systematic approach to what gets built or repaired. It would set up an "asset management council" at the state level to assess the condition of most major state roads and develop an overall strategy to maintain and improve them. Starting in October of next year, every road commission, city and village in the state would have to annually prepare and publish a multi-year road program, which would help the state coordinate planning.

The legislation would create a uniform system for grading pavement quality, too. That would prevent highways on their last legs from somehow being judged in "good" repair.

The asset management council would be able to give an honest appraisal of the condition of the state's road network and how big a repair bill the public might be facing. Whether motorists would be willing to pay it with higher gasoline or other taxes is another question, but the legislation George and Julian have sponsored at least would make it possible to accurately map out the job.

Statistics Back Up Local Road Criticism, MDOT Tags 65% for Replacement Sunday, May 12, 2002

By Ron Fonger
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Two-thirds of state roads and interstates in Genesee County need to be replaced within seven years, and a sizable chunk of those have less than two years of remaining life, according to new state ratings.

Michigan Department of Transportation statistics show fewer local roads in the very worst condition compared to the late 1990s. But drivers still say the busiest roads still need a lot of attention - especially in Genesee County.

And there is evidence to support their view.

"I do home visits and, oh my God, the roads (in Genesee County) can be terrible," said Cathy Merriman, who commutes daily on I-69 from her home in Lapeer County to the Family Independence Agency in Flint.

Merriman said she notices a rougher ride when she leaves home and heads into work on I-69 -something that MDOT pavement ratings confirm.

More than 73 percent of Lapeer County's major roads were rated as having eight to 22 years of remaining life -more than twice as many as Genesee County had in the same categories.

"You can absolutely tell when you cross the county line," Merriman said.

There were more than 200 lane miles that needed immediate attention in Genesee County when MDOT's last ratings were completed in 2000. Ratings from last year were not available, officials said.

MDOT spokesman Mike Hemmingsen said more roads are and will move out of what MDOT calls its "poor" category -anything with less than two years of remaining life - partly because roads are being fixed before they fall into extreme disrepair.

But there hasn't been as much progress when looking at roads that require fixes within seven years. The percentage of roads that need repair in seven years or less moved from 67 percent in 1998 to 65 percent in 2000.

A spokesman for the Michigan Land Use Institute, an environmental group, said roads aren't improving despite an MDOT marketing effort to convince drivers that the road system is getting better.

The nonprofit institute has been critical of MDOT for changing what it classifies as a "poor" and "good" road in recent years.

"If you look at the trend ... in statewide numbers they are not making very much movement," said Kelly Thayer of the institute, which advocates less money for new roads and widening projects and more for repairing existing roads.

Hemmingsen said he hears complaints about road conditions, but said drivers often don't know whether a city, county or the state is responsible for maintenance.

MDOT statistics are based only on freeways and state roads such as M-21, M-24 and M-52.

"People don't know who owns what roads (and) good roads are something people take for granted ... ," he said. "But when you hit a pothole, you notice."

Lapeer County roads continue to be rated in much better condition than those in Genesee or Shiawassee counties.

Hemmingsen said Lapeer County's relatively rosy numbers compared to Genesee County are easy to explain.

There is more traffic -particularly truck traffic -in Genesee County, which takes life out of pavement. Most of Lapeer County's state roads also are less expensive to fix because they are just two lanes while Genesee's major freeways are much more expensive to repair.

Genesee County Road Commission Manager-Director John Daly said so many roads need attention because of funding shortages from the state.

"All of the public highways in Michigan are underfunded and have been for probably 20 years," Daly said. "It's bad for us (because) we have the intersection of two interstates (and a) tremendous increase in traffic in the corridor."

The Journal requested the most recent pavement ratings -collected by MDOT in 2000 - from the state road agency. MDOT breaks down interstate and state road conditions in five categories, spelling out how many years of life are remaining in each lane.

The state hires contractors to calculate remaining life, factoring in previous work, whether the road is made of concrete or asphalt and readings from sensors which calculate the number and degree of cracks in each lane.

Ron Fonger covers Genesee County government and transportation. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317 or rfonger@flintjournal.com.

Gas Tax Boost Would Put Road Repairs in Fast Lane

With gasoline costing around \$1.50 a gallon and likely going higher now that Iraq has temporarily halted its oil exports, Michigan lawmakers probably aren't in any mood to consider a fuel tax increase. However, they shouldn't be too quick to dismiss the idea because so many state and local roads remain in poor shape, and the pool of cash to fix them is going down.

Over the next five years Michigan Department of Transportation will have about \$1 billion less than it planned on a year ago to upgrade the highways it maintains. And that outlook might get worse depending on how much Washington cuts its share of road dollars the state spends.

Despite that bleak revenue picture, MDOT says it's on schedule to have 90 percent of state roads in good condition by 2007, which was the goal when Lansing raised the state gas tax from 15 cents to 19 cents a gallon in 1997. But even if MDOT's prediction is accurate, and Michigan's road builders don't share that optimism, the state only takes care of 8 percent to 9 percent of the most heavily used highway miles with its 40 percent share of gas-tax dollars. Road commissions, cities and other local units maintain the rest, and not terribly well if streets in Flint and other parts of Genesee County are indicative of conditions across the state.

It's obvious the repair job is bigger than road budgets can handle. The Legislature can plug some of that gap by standing up to the trucking lobby and raising the tax on diesel fuel 4 cents a gallon to match the tariff on gasoline. But that would bring in only \$44 million annually, not nearly enough.

Another fuel tax hike has to be on the table this year unless lawmakers and their constituents are willing to keep putting up with all the rough rides.

The virtue of a gas tax is more visible than almost any tax we pay. A few more pennies a gallon is a price worth paying to put state and local road repair programs in the fast lane.

The Flint Journal
Editorial Board
"Our Views"
April 9, 2002

April 10, 2002

Paul M. Keep
Editor, The Flint Journal
"Your Views"
The Flint Journal
200 E. First Street
Flint, MI 48502-1925

Dear Editor Keep:

The Genesee County Road Commission appreciates The Journal's editorial, "Gas tax boost would put road repairs in fast lane," [April 9, Our Views, Page A8] supporting the proposed diesel fuel tax increase. The editorial correctly spotlights the looming infrastructure crisis facing Genesee County's roads - and Lansing's failure to address it.

Increasing the diesel fuel tax is appealing. It would make trucks and other diesel-powered vehicles pay the same 19-cents-per-gallon rate as motorists. Truckers would benefit from reduced paperwork and an improved collection system would eliminate fraud.

But any fuel tax increase should be used to maintain all of Michigan's roads- fairly and equitably. As currently proposed, 85 percent of the new diesel tax revenue would go to paying \$35 million in debts from Build Michigan III road projects that are already underway. It will not deliver any new road or bridge projects on the state's highway system and will provide only minimal funding for local roads and streets. The proposal also includes a questionable extension of the state's growing road debt. It would add \$150 million in bonds to repair just 12 percent of Michigan's local critical bridges- but only provide half of the funding needed to pay the debt service on those bonds.

County road agencies and cities are responsible for about 110,000 miles of roads in Michigan - 10 times more road miles than the state is responsible for maintaining. Michigan's Public Act 51 provides a formula to ensure all road agencies receive their fair share of road funding. Public Act 51 ensures localities like Flint and Genesee County have enough money to build and repair local roads without incurring excessive debts.

As currently proposed, the diesel fuel tax increase significantly shortchanges local road agencies. The proposed increase would send just \$45,596 in additional revenue to the Genesee County Road Commission. The City of Flint would only receive \$19,091. In contrast, if the additional \$44 million generated by the proposed increase was distributed as directed by Public Act 51, Road Commission Revenue would jump by more than \$586,000 and Flint's share would increase by nearly \$246,000.

The only way to ensure a fair and equitable use of revenue from the diesel tax increase and help local road agencies is to follow the Public Act 51 formula.

Sincerely,

John H. Daly III,
Ph.D. Manager Director
Genesee County Road Commission

County Seeks Crackdown on Unsafe Trucks

Monday, April 22, 2002

By Ron Fonger
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Genesee County - The county Road Commission and Mt. Morris Township want to join in the talk about potentially dangerous semitrailers clogging local freeways and other roads.

"We're seeing an increase in truck traffic," said Manager-Director John H. Daly III, who wants to meet with some township police chiefs about the best approach to enforcing weight restrictions, safety regulations and speed limits.

"We have a large volume of vehicles that are transitioning through the county. We want to make sure the trucks are safe."

Mt. Morris Township Police Chief Eric King asked county officials recently to borrow portable scales used by the county weighmaster to check overloaded trucks.

Daly said he won't lend the equipment because it could create controversies among departments with certified motor carrier officers who can ticket big trucks for safety violations.

Daly said what's needed is a meeting to talk about the best way for his office, the sheriff and local police to keep dangerous or overloaded trucks off the road.

Earlier this month, county Commissioner John D. Nickola, D-Davison Twp., said the problem is severe enough that the Michigan National Guard should help cover for a shortage of state police.

Nickola, who wants state rather than local money used to help police highways and state roads, also wants an emergency program to train more state troopers to become motor carrier officers.

King said there is "virtually no enforcement on big trucks" because there are too few specially trained troopers and local police. The two motor carrier officers in Mt. Morris Township may be the only two in the county, he said.

"We have an obligation to the public to police these things," King said. "I think (with more effort) you could start to keep people honest."

Trucks have hit the Mt. Morris Road overpass at I-75 several times because they were hauling too much, King said.

Nickola, who believes many trucks are driving higher than the speed limit and have defective brakes, said the group shouldn't waste time.

"I think a task force is fine," Nickola said, "but I want to do something about it -not talk about it. If the state won't do it, and they have not done it, it falls upon us to do it."

Ron Fonger covers Genesee County government and transportation. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317 or rfonger@flintjournal.com.