

Almost half of Genesee County Roads deemed 'very bad,' but these are the worst

by Ron Fonger | The Flint Journal

Thursday April 30, 2009, 10:40 AM

Editor's Note: The listing of Genesee County's worst-rated roads should have indicated that South Center Road is a border-line road that separates Burton and Flint.

GENESEE COUNTY, Michigan -- In a county where more roads are bad than good, Juan Garcia lives on the worst of the worst.

The little stretch of South Term Street in Burton, from Iron to Lockhead streets, is riddled with asphalt patches and potholes. It has cracking over more than 25 percent of its surface and severe ruts -- some of which sink down more than 2 inches deep.

Although the county Planning Commission issues a report on the general condition of major roads every year, a Flint Journal review of additional county records shows about three dozen sections of road were identified by evaluators last year as "very poor" --the worst of the worst -- just like the street in front of Garcia's house.

"That's true," the 64-year-old said of the rating for his street. "It's in bad shape, (and) it keeps getting worse."

Road sections in the "very poor" category were rated as a 2 on a numerical scale of zero (worst) to 10 (best). The road sections rated as 2 were as bad as it got for the entire 1,052 miles of federal-aid eligible roads in the county.

Almost 500 miles county's of asphalt and concrete roads were rated in the 0-4 area, meaning nearly half of all roads need structural improvements -- something officials say there isn't enough money to do.

Get the map [Download a .pdf of a map of the worst roads in Genesee County](#)

Another 364 miles was rated from 5 to 7, requiring joint repairs, seal coat or crack filling, and just 189 miles of road are rated 8 to 10, needing little or no maintenance.

"You're like a hamster on a wheel" trying to keep it all fixed, said Flint Transportation Director John Carpenter. "These (worst-condition streets) are the ones that we give the most attention to."

Some streets rated among the county's worst last year were actually repaired late in the 2008

construction season or could be on the drawing board for repairs this year.

That's the case with Burton's Davison Road -- from Center Road to Farner Drive -- which is being repaired with federal stimulus money.

"We have plans to continue to fix all of our roads as they become eligible and funding is available," Burton Mayor Charles Smiley said.

But many other roads with very poor ratings remain an aggravation for those who drive them.

"In general ... our overall system is deteriorating rather than improving," the new report says. "There is an increased need for (maintenance) improvements to help stabilize the (system)."

County Road Commission Manager-Director John Daly said funding remains the biggest obstacle to keeping up with repairs.

Streets under the jurisdiction of the Road Commission are funded based on the rating report, traffic volume and how much time has passed since the last major repair.

Most of the money for repairs of the major roads comes from a federal transportation tax on gasoline that is split between the Michigan Department of Transportation, cities and the Road Commission, which fixes township roads.

Road officials are also balancing the benefit of spending to properly fix problems in the worst roads -- which costs the most -- with maintaining streets that are in better condition but will deteriorate without maintenance.

"They can fall from that middle-category pretty quickly," said Stan Brantley, an associate planner for the county. "There's not enough money to do them all, (and) there's not enough money to do total reconstruction."

The condition of roads all over the county has riled drivers for years, and officials with road agencies have complained that funding has failed to keep pace with needs and the price of materials.

"It seems pretty bad this year -- probably the worst I've seen it," said Kim Harger, 41, who has lived in northern Genesee County for several years. "You can't help but hit potholes."