

Getting 'good' roads in Genesee County would cost \$165 million

by Ron Fonger | The Flint Journal Saturday June 14, 2008, 9:13 PM

GENESEE COUNTY, Michigan -- Just how much would it cost to get the county's worst paved roads back into good driving condition?

Almost \$400 for every man, woman and child from Clio to Fenton. And, the \$165-million total price tag doesn't even cover needed work on expressways, state roads, gravel roads, streets inside cities or subdivisions, bridges, or the cost of engineering.

The bleak assessment from county Road Commission Manager-Director John Daly is being delivered to all township supervisors, road commissioners and members of the county Board of Commissioners in a memorandum issued this week.

And what's worse: Daly said he sees no prospect that the situation will improve in the short term.

"It's no surprise. I've been telling people the last six years that we have about a quarter-billion dollars in deferred (work to do)," he said. "What that tells me is -- it's going to be a long road" to make things better.

The Road Commission assessment is based on the results of an annual rating of major paved roads in the county and estimates for resurfacing or rebuilding them.

Roads had already been rated in 2007 from 1 to 10 with a 1 rating for roads that are unusable and unsafe and a 10 rating for roads that are freshly reconstructed or resurfaced.

The new Road Commission assessment estimates how much it would cost to bring roads in the poorest condition into the top category: those rated 8-10.

The area with the most expensive repairs in front of it is Genesee Township with \$18.6 million in needed work on its major roads, according to the county assessment.

The area with the least expensive repair needs is Clayton Township with \$2.8 million, according to a breakdown of the Road Commission assessment.

Daly isn't alone in not being surprised by the scale of the problem.

In Davison Township, Bristol Road resident Sarah Nelson said even though her poorly rated road isn't in good shape, it's not nearly the worst either.

"I think something needs to be done. It's not good by any means," said Nelson, who lives on Bristol between M-15 and Henderson Road.

"This little stretch isn't too bad but from mile to mile it changes quite a bit," Nelson said.

With exception of the village of Otter Lake and the city of Clio, the number of miles rated in the worst-condition category increased in every other city and all townships collectively during 2007 road ratings.

Daly said the deterioration is tied to declines in year-to-year funding from state gasoline and vehicles registrations and the rising cost of materials and fuel.

The funding shortfalls could cause the Road Commission to return some of the paved roads in the worst condition to gravel as a cost-saving measure.

"I think there's a high probability (something like that) will happen" next year, Daly said. "I'm not asking anybody for money but I think it's fair that people know what the level of need is."