



# GENESEE COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

*AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER*

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BOARD MEETINGS - TUESDAYS @ 10 A.M.

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May 21, 2009

The Hon. Deb Cherry  
Senator, 26<sup>th</sup> District  
910 Farnum Building  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator Cherry:

I am writing to ask for your support for the c

How was the 1982 legislature able to raise the gas and diesel tax back when unemployment was even worse than it is today? It is clear the How was the 1982 legislators at that time recognized that road construction meant jobs, and that it would not be possible to attract new employers and jobs to Michigan with bad roads. A two-cent increase in the gas tax funded many more road improvements in 1983 and 1984 than it would now.

▶ Transportation Funding Task Force Report (TF2)

"The one choice we cannot afford is to do nothing." The Transportation Funding Task Force, which included four legislators issued a report last November that represented the first comprehensive transportation needs study in Michigan in decades. It revealed the magnitude of Michigan's transportation funding problem, and the need to increase funding dramatically in order to address the needs.

▶ Michigan Asset Management Council Report

Analysis of data collected by the Michigan Asset Management Council demonstrates that:

1. Since 2004, one in five miles of the federal aid system has deteriorated to poor condition. Now, almost one-third of the system is in poor condition while less than 20 percent is in good condition. Roads rated fair continue to fail at an alarming rate. Yearly, almost twice as many miles of road in fair condition will fall to poor condition, than will be improved.
2. Despite the investments made in the road system over the past five years, the cost to repair roads that have fallen into poor condition has increased by over \$4.0 billion since 2004.

3. Roads not eligible for federal aid show similar signs of failure with 43 percent of that system in poor condition and only 14 percent in good condition.

▶ Deteriorating Roads and Services Due to Lack of Funding

According to results of a survey by the County Road Association of Michigan in February of this year, 23 county road commissions have torn up paved roads and returned them to gravel because the cost of patching was becoming excessive and the road commissions did not have the funds to resurface the pavement. In addition, road agencies across the state are laying off workers or not filling vacant positions, resulting in lower levels of service, including winter maintenance.

▶ Michigan's Loss of Federal Funds to Other States

By October 1, 2010, MDOT will be unable to match all the federal funds that will be available to it. Those unmatched funds would return to the Federal Highway Administration, to be distributed to other states that will

use them. Some road commissions in Michigan have already turned back federal funds due to an inability to provide the required local match, and many more are expected to be forced to do the same in the coming two years.

▶ Roads Will Not Get Fixed

If the proposed tax increase is not passed, how will the State's roads be fixed? The answer is that they will not get fixed and will continue to deteriorate.

MDOT and county road commissions are responsible for 83 percent of all the public road miles in Michigan, including the heaviest traveled roads. Neither MDOT nor road commissions have taxing authority, and cannot raise funds themselves to maintain and improve their roads. We are totally dependent on you, the State Legislature, to provide the needed funding.

▶ Two Choices

There appear to be only two real choices facing Michigan's Governor and members of the legislature:

1. Provide more funding to fix Michigan's deteriorating roads, or
2. Our citizens and businesses are forced to endure bad roads while we send money back to Washington to be used by other states.

▶ Impacts on the Level of Services Provided to Your Constituents and the Motoring Public

One indicator of the condition of the road system is the number of citizen calls received complaining about the roads. In 2008 we received a record number of calls and e-mails. Almost 47 percent of the calls were related to pavement repair and gravel road issues. Because of continued decreasing revenues, we cannot afford to fill vacant positions, replace needed equipment, or resurface pothole-riddled roads. To date, we have 37 personnel vacancies across the agency, but many of them are in our Maintenance Department, and this has negatively affected our ability to respond to citizen calls. These 37 vacancies represent 19 percent of our workforce, and leave us with 48 fewer employees than we had in 1974. Consider how much Genesee County has grown in 35 years and the increase in number of roads, population, and congestion that we have to deal with today versus in 1974!

In addition, in 2008 our insurance carrier received 583 claims from citizens who stated their cars sustained damage from potholes or bad road conditions. For 2009, so far we have received 211 claims. In 2007, we had 87 claims.

I have completed my annual visits to the 17 townships in Genesee County, and I am hearing the same road concerns from these elected officials.

Senator Cherry  
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I hope I have given you a broad overview of the road-funding crisis in Michigan, and how it is affecting our level of service to our mutual constituents, not only in Genesee County but throughout the State. We recognize that legislators are faced with extremely hard funding decisions because of the economic environment, but raising the gas tax can not only positively affect the greatest number of citizens by giving them smoother roads and a better level of service, but will increase the number of jobs.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Cherry". The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line. Below the signature, there is a faint, illegible printed name.