

New Road Department Eyed

GRAND BLANC TOWNSHIP
GENESEE COUNTY THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Saturday, July 07, 2007
By Sally York
syork@flintjournal.com
810.766.6322

GRAND BLANC TWP. - Deteriorating roads are residents' top complaint, but are they willing to pay an additional 1.5 mills to create a township road department?

No, said Margaret Martin, a retiree on a fixed income who has lived in the township since 1951.

"We've got a high enough millage rate now," she said of the 33 mills taxpayers currently pay.

But local officials say they are running out of options for fixing the township's 162 miles of roads, now under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Genesee County Road Commission.

The county doesn't have enough money to do the \$6.5 million in repairs desperately needed, officials say. And last year, residents voted not to merge the township with the city of Grand Blanc, a move that would have entitled the community to negotiate with the county to take over local roads and receive road money directly from the state.

Another idea, for the township to become a home-rule city on its own, never got past the discussion stage.

But before officials put a millage proposal on the ballot, they want feedback from residents. A second informational session is set for 6 p.m. July 19 at Township Hall, 5375 S. Saginaw Road.

Only a handful of residents came to the first meeting on June 13.

"They showed some interest," said Roger Buell, director of public services, "but 10 people is not representative."

The plan, subject to tweaking based on residents' input, would accomplish the following:

- Funding, staffing and equipping a road department to perform maintenance of streets, patching, guard rails, ditching, etc.

The township would take over maintenance of local roads from the Road Commission through a contract, though the county would remain legally responsible. State law requires the deal to include a road tax of at least 1 mill to ensure that the township has sufficient money to cover repair costs.

- Repaving subdivision roads would still be done through special assessment districts, in which benefiting residents pay for a portion of the work. In the past, the township has picked up 25 percent of the tab, but officials say there aren't sufficient funds to continue the practice. If a road millage is approved, the township would use proceeds to pay 50 percent of costs.
- Building more sidewalks and pathways. To date, the township's pathway plan has produced one short path on Grand Blanc Road, from the city limits to Creasey Bicentennial Park.
- Accelerating projects - funded by federal and county dollars - to improve such primary roads as Hill, Saginaw, Holly, Porter and Perry. The township would use millage funds to pay half of the county's share, pushing local projects up on the priority list.

A township flier spells out consequences if the proposal is rejected: Roads would continue to crumble, township snow plowing could stop, the township would pay for no new sidewalks or pathways, residents would be billed directly for sidewalk repair and installation, and special assessment districts would be funded solely by property owners.

But resident Ed Erdt, who has served on the township's pathway committee, remains opposed to a road millage. He said he doesn't want to pay more taxes and that the county has always been responsive to his requests for road maintenance.

"If we create a big department, we'll be sorry in the future," he said.

©2007 Flint Journal

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

This article was originally posted on Mlive.com. [Read it here](#)