



SHOVEL-READY PROJECTS AND THE 2009 ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

Decades of unfunded needs came to light after a survey requesting “shovel-ready” projects that could be underway within 180 days. Submitted projects would then be considered for inclusion in President Obama’s Economic Stimulus Plan.

As written, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) estimates that the \$30 billion transportation component would translate into an additional \$870 million dollars for Michigan’s Roads. MDOT expects to distribute these funds using the existing formula for distributing federal aid—75% to MDOT and 25% split between cities/villages and road commissions.

In a January 21, 2009, letter, MDOT approximated that the stimulus package would provide just shy of \$42 million to county road commissions. While this is not a final number, it is clearly only a dent in county road needs. Sixty-four road commissions submitted more than 1,000 “shovel-ready” projects for a combined total of more than \$1.2 billion — more than 28 times the available dollars.

Highways and bridges would receive \$30 billion with no state or local match required. The money would be distributed among the states based on states’ 2008 share of highway and bridge dollars. There are \$800 million in set-asides, including \$300 million for Indian reservation roads and \$250 million

for National Park roads. Of the remaining \$29.2 billion, 55 percent or \$16.1 billion would go to the states, and 45 percent or \$13.1 billion would be distributed within the states using the Surface Transportation Program (STP) formula. Priority will be given to projects on the State Transportation Improvement Program and/or TIP.

In general, this means that the award of \$20.5 billion will be at the discretion of the states, \$7.4 billion will be divided by local areas determined by population, and \$1.3 billion will go for enhancement projects. About half of the \$30 billion needs to be obligated within 120 days or the state will lose funds to other states. The other half must be obligated by Aug. 1, 2010.

For local government, the rules are slightly different. Half of the funds going to localities must be obligated within 90 days and the remainder by July 1, 2010 or the money goes back to the state. The STP formula divides spending among areas of above 200,000 population, under 200,000 to 50,000 population, fewer than 50,000 population, as well as a portion that can be spent anywhere in a state and a set-aside for enhancements. Based on Michigan receiving an estimated \$875 million (MDOT 75% - \$655 m and Locals 25% - \$220 m), the local distribution is as follows :

Urban (TMA)	- \$132.86 million
Small MPO	- \$31.52 million
Rural STP	- \$41.82 million
Small Urban	- \$13.80 million

The process for distributing these funds and selecting federal aid eligible projects will follow existing guidelines which include projects being on, or added to, your Transportation Improvement Plan. All of the federal aid requirements remain intact, including Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) requirements.

COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION ECONOMIC STIMULUS WISH LIST

The list of submitted projects includes:

- More than 3,000 miles of road repair
- More than 70 bridge projects
- More than 40 drainage improvement projects
- Facility updates (*i.e., garages, salt sheds, etc.*)
- Equipment updates

SPEAKING OPPORTUNITY



The League of Michigan Bicyclists (LMB) is seeking a road commissioner or high-level staffer, who is also a cyclist, to present at the 2009 Michigan Bicycle Summit on Saturday, March 28, in Lansing. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Fred Dore, MUP Tour Director, League of Michigan Bicyclists by phone at 248.302.5823.

You can learn more about the LMB and the Summit by visiting [www.http://www.lmb.org](http://www.lmb.org).

SEEKING INTERNSHIPS

Ferris State University may be able to assist your county road commission with your employment needs. Students in either the Associates Degree Program in Civil Engineering Technology, or the Bachelors Degree Program in Construction Management are looking for either summer or permanent employment opportunities.

Most students in these programs are already certified by MDOT in Density Control, Aggregates, and Bituminous Level 1. Many students wish to work in northern Michigan or the Upper Peninsula areas. If you would like to send a job description to be distributed to students, please contact Kelly Seitter, P.E., Associate Professor at seitterk@ferris.edu or 231.591.2659.

MIS/CRAM

With fiscal year 2009 under way, it is time to remind everyone of the need to add your county's data to the MIS/CRAM system. A few road commissions have yet to enter data for 2007 and 2006. Please do so at your earliest convenience. Those counties with 2008 data outstanding will be listed in April's *CRAM News*. Thank you to those who have entered your data in a timely manner.

ST. CLAIR STANDS OUT

For the ninth year in a row, the St. Clair County Road Commission has received the Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the national Government Financial Officers Association for its 2007 reports.



The group promotes reflecting finances in an easy-to-read manner.

"It is an award that just makes sure everything is reported properly," said Greg Owens, the road commission's director of internal affairs. "We do everything we can to project a professional image and attitude."

St. Clair is the only road commission in Michigan to earn this recognition.

FROST LAW WEB PAGE

Again this Spring, CRAM will be maintaining a Seasonal Weight Restrictions page at:

www.micountyroads.org

The page includes a map, contact information and links to M.C.L. sections, as well as information on the Public Utility Vehicle exemption. The page should be on line by the end of the month.

Legislation enacted at the end of 2008 now requires that road commissions post lists of roads affected by the restrictions on their Web site. If you provide your county's list in a .PDF format, or provide a URL for the location of that list, we will link that information to that which is already on our page.

Lists, links and frost law status information should be e-mailed to teldred@localroads.net with as much advance notice as possible.

Please remember to keep the CRAM Office informed of the status of weight restrictions in your county. Thank you.

TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS RATE ROAD COMMISSIONS

For the third consecutive year, CRAM participated in the Michigan Townships Association (MTA) Expo at the MTA Educational Conference. This provided a great opportunity for CRAM to educate township officials on issues important to our organization.

Over the years we have heard both positive and negative feedback from township officials on their individual road commissions. This year CRAM's Township Relations Committee prepared a survey to help measure the relationship between road commissions and their townships. More than 200 local officials took the time to complete the short survey. Responses from 55 of Michigan's 83 counties are represented in the following results (ratings were on a scale of one to ten, with ten highest):

Road Commissions scored 7.13 on communication with township officials on the needs of roads and bridges within the township, and 6.98 on communication with township officials on the road commission's budget and expenses.

Road Commissions received a score of only 5.97 on communication with the public. This is significantly below the average rating given to the other questions, and may represent complaints on road issues township officials receive from their constituents.

Road Commissions received a rating of 6.86 on overall service provided by the road commission (given the available level of funding).

Townships officials were also asked for their opinions on three issues of interest to road commissions.

"We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another -- until we speak quietly enough so that our words can be heard as well as our voices."

~ Richard M. Nixon ~

31.5% of respondents support increasing road user fees (gas taxes and vehicle registration fees). Of the remaining respondents, 37.9% were opposed and 30.6% were unsure or needed additional information.

45.8% support allowing local sales taxes or fees as additional options, other than local millages, to match state funding. Only 27.1% were opposed and the remaining 26.1% were unsure or needed additional information.

81.3% oppose allowing the county board of commissioners to take over the duties of the road commission, and 11.2% were unsure or needed additional information. Of the 7.5% who supported abolishing road commissions, many left comments about the lack of communication and accountability of their road commission.

CRAM will continue working to provide road commissions with resources to assist in improving communication with local officials and the public, but it is clear this needs to be a goal set by all road commissions in the year ahead. As one official commented, "I would only support an increase in taxes if communication were improved." Township officials will be more willing to support increased road funding and more likely to trust their local road commissions if the lines of communication are open.

A compilation of the results is included with today's mailing. County specific responses are being sent to those counties under separate cover.

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS

CRAM would like to thank the following people for donating their time to help staff the CRAM exhibit during the MTA Expo: Ken Hulka, Managing Director, Muskegon CRC; Dorothy Pohl, Managing Director-Clerk, Ionia CRC; and Bill Watkins, Hillsdale County Road Commissioner

Survey Says—Inadequate Funding Hurting Motorists

In a follow-up to the November 2007 story in *CRAM News*, we repeated the survey on how road commissions are dealing with the reduction in transportation funding and increases in material and labor costs. The results are ominous. Seventy-four road commissions responded to the December 2, 2008 request for information. Here is how the two years compare:

SNOW AND ICE GAIN GROUND

Fewer plows were on the road this winter and they were dispatched less often. Fifty-eight road commissions reduced or eliminated overtime for winter maintenance activities in 2008. These reductions are in addition to reductions made in 2006 and 2007. Even the Michigan Department of Transportation was forced to reduce winter maintenance on its system.

Even with lower fuel prices and reductions in service levels, the expense of winter maintenance on the county road system increased by more than \$20 million dollars from 2007 to 2008, largely due to heavier snowfall and sharp increases in the price of plow blades and salt.

ROUGH ROAD AHEAD

This year's heavy and frequent snowfalls have tapped the funds many road commissions had earmarked for road maintenance. Maintenance and replacement activities on hard-surfaced roads were reduced in fifty-four counties. Fifty road commissions anticipate further reductions in road maintenance activities in 2009.

Additionally, an increasing number of road commissions have had to raise township shares for local road projects. All in all this translates into fewer projects which will continue to result in deterioration of the transportation network.

A 2008 MDOT study found that motorists could see vehicle maintenance costs decrease by \$360, or more, per year if transportation funding was increased to the "good" level.

"Transportation agencies have been relentlessly vigilant in stretching shrinking revenue. Their efforts may go unnoticed, because the cost-cutting measures are designed not to disrupt service or impose on customers.... It is clear that efficiency is the standard operating procedure at agencies across the state."

The Governor's Transportation Funding Task
Force Report, 2008

GRAVEL ON A ROAD NEAR YOU

More than 1/4 of responding road commissions (23) reported returning paved roads to gravel in 2008, due to an inability to fund needed maintenance. This is up from only seven in 2006. Twenty-five road commissions anticipate returning paved roads to gravel in 2009. Additionally, 44 road commissions reported a reduction in gravel road maintenance activities.



This Wexford County Road was returned to gravel in 2008 due to the lack of funds for maintenance.

Survey Says—Inadequate Funding Hurting Motorists

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Fifteen counties were forced to turn away projects/funding due to an inability to fund their match portion. In 2006, only three road commissions reported being unable to draw down money due to a lack of funds.

It is estimated by 2010 Michigan may lose nearly \$1 billion dollars annually due to the inability to provide the matching funds needed to draw down federal aid funds.

AGING EQUIPMENT

Further complicating reduced service levels is a fleet of aging equipment. For the third year, sixty road commissions reported operating at reduced equipment levels or using equipment beyond its scheduled service life. Sixty-one road commissions reduced or eliminated equipment purchases in 2008 and fifty-three expect to delay equipment purchases this year.

STAFFING HOLES

Nearly every road commission continues to operate with unfilled positions. Twenty anticipate further reductions in staffing levels and thirteen indicate that staff reductions are possible or likely for 2009.

For example, in Manistee the duties of office manager, weighmaster, surveying, engineering, foreman and safety coordinator have been transferred to the manager due to the inability to replace staff. The result is a reduction in the manager's ability to seek out grants and opportunities to enhance the county's road system.

In Emmet County staffing reductions mean that the county doesn't have enough drivers to plow existing snow routes. To meet the needs of the motoring public, the county contracted for winter maintenance on 29 miles.

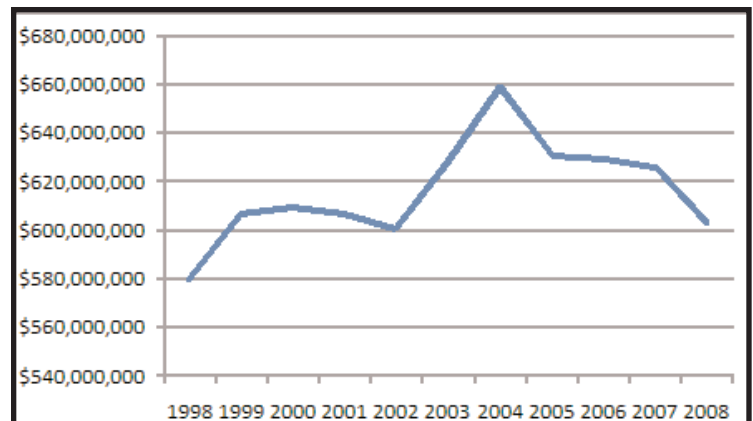
FEWER SERVICES

Across the board road commissions are taking a public beating for reductions in services. Sixty-five road commissions reported discontinuing services to make ends meet in 2008. Fifty-seven anticipate cutting additional services and/or staff in 2009.

Inadequate Funding Hurting Motorists—No Cure in Sight

Michigan motorists have seen road maintenance and related services erode due to the decline in Michigan Transportation Fund revenues. It looks as though the situation will continue to get worse as those revenues are predicted to be another 4% lower for this fiscal year.

There are solutions available, but so far the political will has not been there. If we want to see these solutions enacted, then we need to get out there and provide grass roots education to our citizens, leaders, and the legislature. We need to explain the difference between the maintenance needs and current level of funding. Pass along your knowledge and encourage others to become active advocates for Michigan's roads and economy.



Michigan Transportation Funds distributed to county road commissions has fluctuated since the 1997 fuel tax increase, but have steadily declined since 2004.

2009 HIGHWAY CONFERENCE PLANNING UNDERWAY

Join us March 3-5 for the County Road Association Highway Conference at the Lansing West Hotel & Conference Center (formerly known as Holiday Inn Lansing West). Once again it is time for the family of county road professionals to gather in Lansing.

Tuesday is jam-packed with committee meetings and a training session for new commissioners. Meeting announcements will be sent to committee members in the near future. This year's program opens with the President's Reception at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday.

Wednesday opens with information on Benchmarking and continues with reports from the Michigan House and Senate, as well as from the Transportation Funding Task Force. The afternoon offers concurrent sessions on Legal Issues, Health Care Spending, Preserving Our Infrastructure, and more.

We cannot stress to you the importance of you personally inviting your legislators to Wednesday night's Legislative Reception. The reception starts at 5:30 and runs until 7:00 p.m. While you are in Lansing take the time to have lunch, dinner, or even a short meeting with each of your legislators. **They need to hear our issues from you.**

MDOT Director Kirk Stuedle will join us for Thursday morning's Awards Breakfast as we recognize those who have given of themselves to further the county road system. Best Practices and CRAMmy Awards will also be presented.

Following the Awards Breakfast, committee reports will be presented and new board members announced at the Annual Business Meeting. Please make sure that your county is represented. CRAM Board ballots will be mailed soon. **It is very important that CRC ballots be returned in a timely manner.**

Conference registration information is included with this mailing.

Registration deadline is February 23.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact the CRAM Office for more information.

2009 CRASIF SAFETY SEMINARS

The County Road Association Self-Insurance Fund (CRASIF) will be sponsoring eight safety seminars throughout the state. The training is for commissioners, managers, supervisory personnel, foremen and all employees. Please support a safer workplace by sending people to one of these valuable training sessions. Look for registration forms and more information in the weeks ahead. The proposed dates are:

April 14	Baraga Ojibwa Resort	April 22	Grayling Ramada Inn (<i>former Holiday Inn</i>)
April 15	Escanaba Delta CRC	April 28	Kalamazoo Kalamazoo CRC
April 16	Mackinaw City Audies Inn	April 29	Lansing Lansing West Conference Center
April 21	Big Rapids Big Rapids Dept.of Public Services	April 30	Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn

JOB OPENINGS

Applications are now being accepted for the position of Manager of the Cass County Road Commission (CCRC). The person will be directly responsible for all aspects of the management of this 50 person operation entrusted with the maintaining and construction of the roads and bridges within Cass County, Michigan. The ideal candidate will have a Bachelor Degree in a related field and significant managerial experience in the public sector. Experience in a union environment, understanding of budgets and cash flows, working with townships and knowledge of MI. ACT 51 are a plus.

Please submit resume and salary requirements to Ms. Grace Chester at the Cass County Road Commission, P.O. Box 68, Cassopolis MI 49031 or e-mail them to gchester@casscoroad.com. No telephone calls please.

The Cass County Road Commission operates under an Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action Policy and encourages minority response and will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

The Gogebic County Road Commission is accepting applications and resumes for the position of Manager.

Applicants must possess a valid drivers license, must have knowledge of road and bridge construction and maintenance. Applicants must have at least five (5) years of managerial experience, with knowledge of finances and budgeting. Prefer applicants that are registered professional civil engineers licensed in the State of Michigan. For a complete job description, application and additional information, contact the Gogebic County Road Commission office at (906)667-0233. Salary based on experience. Applications and resumes should be addressed to the Gogebic County Road Commission 200 N. Moore St., Bessemer, MI 49911, Attn: Manager, with salary and benefits expected. The Gogebic County Road Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Applications and resumes are due by Monday, February 9, 2009 at 4 pm central time.

The Ingham County Road Commission has a full time opening for a Director of Operations located at its Austin E. Cavanaugh Administration Building, 301 N. Bush Street, Mason, Michigan. Requirements for the position include possession of a Bachelor's degree in an area related to Construction Management, or equivalent work experience and/or education. Four years of progressively more responsible supervisory experience as a Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor in construction management, preferably road construction and/or maintenance. Possession of a valid Michigan driver's license.

The Ingham County Road Commission offers a comprehensive salary and benefit package. Salary range for this position is \$70,359 to \$90,931. Please send resume to Ingham County Road Commission, P.O. Box 38, Mason, Michigan 48854, or fax to 517-676-2085, or email to roads@inghamrc.org. A more detailed job description and application forms can be found on the Road Commission's web site at www.inghamrc.org. Application deadline is February 27, 2009. EOE M/F.

The Oceana County Road Commission is seeking candidates for Road Commission General Manager.

General duties: Reports to the Board of County Road Commissioners. As Chief Administrative Officer, the Manager shall direct day-to-day operations, instruct staff, assign tasks, and work with Federal/State/Regional/Local agencies as well as the public to address their needs and problems. Ten years experience in the work-related field is desired. Oceana County Road Commission; P.O. Box 112; Hart MI 49420. Phone: 231.873.7123.

The Oceana County Road Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

The St. Joseph County Road Commission is seeking candidates for the position of Superintendent of Operations. Under the direction of the engineer-manager, directs and coordinates road and bridge projects, building and grounds maintenance and equipment and repair activities. Also oversees personnel management and assists in the preparation of budgets and monitors budget compliance.

Qualified candidates must possess a high school diploma/GED, preferred minimum associates degree in related field. A comprehensive knowledge of modern methods and techniques, materials, and equipment used in road and bridge maintenance preferred. Experience in road construction/maintenance operations and supervisory experience preferred. Experience in heavy equipment operations and/or project planning in a construction related field preferred. Strong organizational, planning and communication skills. Computer skills including Microsoft Office.

The St. Joseph County Road Commission is located in Centreville, in rural southwestern Michigan. The Road Commission has jurisdiction of 1,022 miles of primary and local roads and employs 43, with an annual operating budget of \$7.5 million.

The position offers a competitive salary with excellent benefits. Please send resume and salary requirements to the St. Joseph County Road Commission, 20914 M-86, Centreville, MI 49032, or email to adm@sjcsrc.com. Full job description can be requested by email; no phone calls please. Application Deadline is March 15, 2009 by 3:30 p.m. or until position is filled. *An Equal Opportunity Employer*



THE ROAD AHEAD



February

- 9 Southwestern Council
Cass County Road Commission,
Cassopolis
- 11 Southern MI Road Comm. Finance &
Human Resources Assn.
Eaton County Road Commission,
Charlotte
- 12-13 UPRBA Winter Meeting
Holiday Inn of Marquette
- 17-19 County Engineers' Workshop
Soaring Eagle, Mt. Pleasant
- 19 General Policy Committee
Soaring Eagle, Mt. Pleasant
- 26 Paul Bunyan Council
Bear Claw Brewery and Grille, Lake City
- 26 Vacationland Council
Midland Center for the Arts–Garden
Room, Midland

March

- 3 New Commissioners' Workshop
Lansing West Hotel & Conference Center
- 3-5 CRAM Annual Highway Conference
Lansing West Hotel & Conference Center

April

- 19-21 Commissioners' Seminar **CORRECTED**
Grayling Ramada Inn
- 19-23 National Assn. of County Engineers
Hotel Pere Marquette, Peoria IL

May

- 5-6 Finance and HR Business Seminar
DoubleTree Hotel, Bay City

June

- 10 Southwest Golf Outing
L.E. Kaufman Golf Course, Wyoming
- 17-19 UPRBA Summer Meeting
Kewadin Hotel & Conv. Ctr.
Sault Ste. Marie

July

- 31 Southern Mid-MI Golf Outing
Cascades Golf Course, Jackson

August

- 7 Southeast Golf Outing
Selfridge AFB Golf Course, Harrison Twp.

September

- 8 Northern Golf Outing
Black Bear Golf Club, Vanderbilt
- 9-11 NMARC Annual Conference
Boyne Mountain Resort, Boyne Falls
- 30-Oct 2 Superintendents' Seminar
Kewadin Hotel & Conv. Ctr.
Sault Ste. Marie

December

- 7-9 ASMRC Annual Conference
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth