



Washington State Association of County Engineers

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November 1, 2010

Merrill Ott, President

Eric Johnson, Executive Director

Washington State Association of Counties

206 Tenth Ave. S.E.

Olympia, WA 98501-1311

Re: County Road Preservation Needs Analysis

Dear Commissioner Ott and Mr. Johnson,

Counties own and maintain nearly 40,000 miles of road and over 3,300 bridges in Washington. The county road system in Washington has long benefited from having dedicated property tax revenues coupled with state and federal funding. These revenue sources no longer provide the level of funding needed to maintain and preserve the county road system.

In 2003 and again 2005 the Washington State Legislature increased gas tax and other fees and allocated the majority of the additional funding to WSDOT for state projects. The bulk of the additional revenue has been earmarked to pay for bonds for state projects. Transportation interests around the state are again looking at future transportation revenues to meet WSDOT and local needs.

WSACE wants to make sure the maintenance and preservation needs of county roads are addressed in any future revenue package. Attached is a report prepared by WSACE that summarizes the maintenance and preservation needs of the county road system. The gap between available resources and needs is estimated to be at least \$400 million per year.

WSACE is recommending that a portion of this gap be funded with an increase in state gas tax distributions to counties to address these needs. This report outlines how additional revenue, if passed by the legislature, could be distributed.

WSACE recommends that any new funding supplement existing programs first and where possible modify grant processes to give counties the most flexibility in use of grant funds. Additional funding should also be provided to establish a bridge preservation program to address deficient and obsolete county bridges and to address fish passage barriers on county roads.

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Without new funding, the county road system will continue to be impacted. Each year counties are faced with staff reductions in road maintenance and engineering. Over time road surfaces, structures, and roadway conditions will continue to deteriorate.

It's important to note that this report does not address other transportation needs important to counties. Transit-related needs and non-motorized needs are not addressed in the report. Funding to address roadway capacity is not addressed as well. Regional transportation planning organizations are helping to identify these needs as part of an effort underway by the Washington Transportation Commission. As other needs become known, they can be integrated with the recommendations in our report.

WSACE would be happy to discuss this report with WSAC and to bring our recommendations to the WSAC Legislative Steering Committee for consideration. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mark Storey, President

WSACE

Cc: WSACE Board
Gary Rowe, WSACE