

# Otter Tail County's Preservation Campaign

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## Background

Otter Tail County used an innovative public outreach campaign to educate citizens on its system preservation needs and strategies and sought input and support for their implementation. The County undertook this preservation campaign as part of its County Transportation Plan. Additionally, upon completion of the plan, the County is committed to an ongoing preservation monitoring and public information program to maintain good communications in the future.

## Effectiveness of the Brand

The brand “Better Roads for a Better Otter Tail County sent a clear message that the purpose of preserving roads is to improve Otter Tail County. It also leaves room for the County to discuss with its residents and businesses how to preserve its highway system. The brand is suggestive without being prescriptive, and therefore worked well during the public outreach campaign which was intended to talk with the public about how the County Board should set transportation priorities.

## Effectiveness of the Public Outreach Campaign

The two-year public outreach campaign supported a data driven, inclusive deliberation process and resulted in the Otter Tail County Board reaching consensus on next steps. The outreach campaign was also cost-effective, and the County was able to execute most of it using existing resources.

## Effectiveness of the Communication Methods Used

Key communication tools used during each phase of the preservation program include:

### Phase 1: Inform and Seek Input on Preservation Issues

- Public Meetings – Beginning in January 2014 and again April 2014, Otter Tail County hosted eight well-attended public meetings throughout the County to present information concerning the current state of the County highway system (i.e., the “State of the Otter Tail County Highway System”). With this information, participants discussed their transportation priorities and potential strategies that the County should investigate to meet preservation goals. County staff led the presentations, while County Commissioners actively participated in the ensuing discussions with citizens.

- Public Comment Forms – Public meeting participants were encouraged to share their ideas through comment forms that could be completed during the meeting, or mailed back to the County afterwards.
- Sign-in Sheets and Distribution Lists – Sign-in sheets were used to collect new names of interested persons for future distribution of new information.
- Presentation Materials – Each public meeting was supported by a graphics-rich PowerPoint presentation with supporting handouts. An example of one of these presentations is attached in G-1.
- Based on the input of well over 150 citizens, the County Board unanimously agreed to move forward in an effort to address the critical preservation needs of Otter Tail County. The method used to accomplish the next phase was a comprehensive Transportation Plan.

## **Phase 2: Analyze and Prepare a Preservation Plan**

- Project Management Team – A Project Management Team (PMT) was established to actively guide the development of the Plan. The team was composed of three County Highway staff and two County Commissioners. Nine PMT meetings were held at strategic intervals throughout the planning process to review technical analyses and provide input on the Plan contents.
- Project Steering Committee – A Project Steering Committee (PSC) was comprised of 27 citizen representatives appointed by the County Board. These meetings were used to solicit guidance on preliminary findings, recommendations, and proposed priorities identified during the planning process. In-depth contributions by PSC members aided in the decision-making process for Otter Tail County. Five PSC meetings were held during the planning process and information packets were emailed out approximately one week before each meeting.
- Focus Group Sessions – Midway through the planning process, two focus group sessions were held representing specific geographic areas of the County and with major local stakeholders. The purpose of these focus group meetings was to establish a clear understanding of community and economic issues and opportunities related to the transportation system.
- Township Meetings – County Highway staff attended two annual township meetings to appraise these officials of plan activities and seek input.
- Open Houses – Six public open house meetings were held during the planning process. These meetings were conducted to provide stakeholders' information on the Transportation Plan and to seek input on planning or programming concepts. Display boards, presentations, and comment forms were used to engage the public at these meetings. Importantly, the open house format offered an informal venue for citizens, agency staff, and community leaders to ask

questions, and give their thoughts on the Plan findings and recommendations. Over 100 individuals participated in these public meetings. Similar communication tools were used as in Phase 1 Public Meetings (sign-up sheets, comment forms, PowerPoint, handout materials, etc.).

- Project Website – A plan website was established to communicate the project schedule, convey plan opportunities for public involvement, provide meetings materials, highlight project milestones, and present study products. The website provided an additional resource for citizens, agency staff, and community leaders so they could monitor ongoing progress throughout the planning process.
- County Newsletter – The Transportation Plan and its focus on system preservation were prominently highlighted in the County’s annual newsletter mailed to all residents and property owners in January 2015.
- Public Notices and News Releases – Public notices and news releases for the various local newspapers in the County were provided prior to all sets of Open House meetings, as well as before the County Commission deliberations on the Plan’s adoption.
- Consultation with Technical Staff – Consultations with local and MnDOT staff occurred periodically throughout the planning process. Communication with local administrators, engineers and planners and with MnDOT District 4 staff provided opportunities to gather data, seek input, and coordinate/discuss technical alternatives and possible recommendations.
- County Commission Meetings and a Public Hearing – The key components of the Transportation Plan and its preservation recommendation were presented to the County Board on two occasions to ensure their understanding of planning activities and week policy direction or feedback. See County Board Transportation Plan PPT presentation (6/9/15) in Appendix G-2. Further, a legally advertised public hearing with the Board was held at the end of the planning process to seek comments on the draft Transportation Plan, prior to the Commissioners’ adoption of the Plan (Please refer to: <http://www.co.otter-tail.mn.us/1126/Transportation-Plan> for an electronic copy of the Transportation Plan. The plan was unanimously adopted on July 21, 2015).

### **Phase 3: Implement, Monitor and Report on the Preservation Program**

- Pavement Management System – The County has updated its pavement condition data, inputted this information into its PMS model, and is committed to maintaining the PMS model into the future to evaluate progress on the preservation programs.
- Capital Improvement Plan – Using its PMS and GIS software, the County Board presented to the public, a map of potential preservation project priorities and the method of arriving at these priorities. The Board also held a public hearing on

funding options to implement these priorities. After considering public input, it adopted both a county wheelage tax and a county sales tax (approximately \$5 million/year increase in revenue and programmed these projects over the next ten years. As part of this preservation prioritization and programming process, periodic financial scenario analyses and forecasting will also be shared with the public, and annual updates of project priorities considered.

- Annual Preservation Progress Report – An annual report documenting preservation progress will be prepared, a four-page summary brochure will be published and distributed at four public meetings to be held around the County, and all tracking data will be presented on the website to communicate the ongoing results of the preservation program.

## Better Roads for a Better Otter Tail

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### Today's Agenda

- Introductions
- State of our Roads Report
- Discuss Transportation Priorities
- Review Potential Options
- Share Your Ideas
- Next Steps

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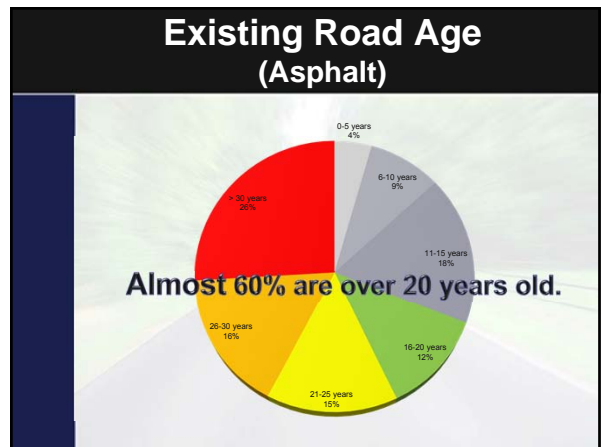
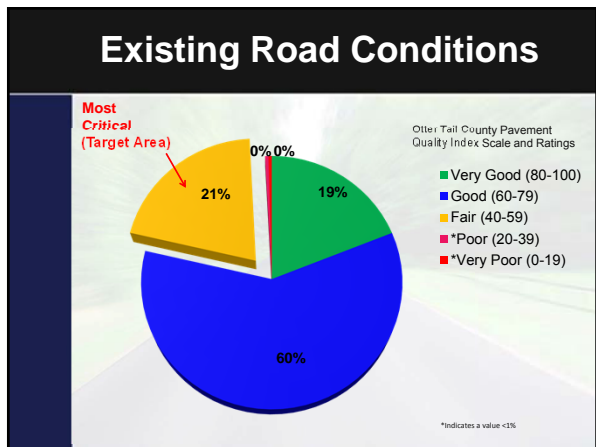
### STATE OF OUR ROADS REPORT

### Most Roads in Good Condition



### Some in Excellent to Very Good Condition





### Our Transportation System, By the Numbers

<b>Number of Vehicle Bridges</b>	<b>= 77</b>
Functionally Obsolete	= 0
Structurally Deficient	= 10
Adequate	= 77
<b>Miles of Asphalt Roads</b>	<b>= 1,062</b>
County State Highways	= 927 *
County Roads	= 135

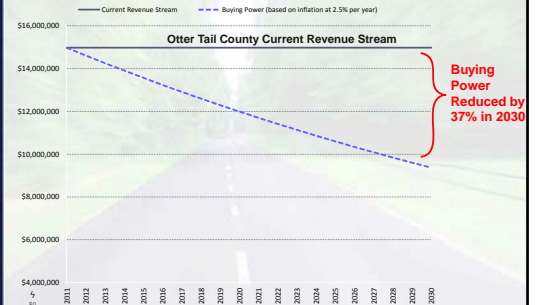
\* Change caused by TH 235 Turnback (12-2-13) - 10 miles  
Photos: MSU Photo by Elizabeth A. Armour (Wikimedia Commons)



## Otter Tail County Local Road & Bridge Levy Example

- Typical Property Owner pays **\$X,XXX** in County Property Taxes.
- The Highway Department received 13% of this amount.
  - 10% for highway operations and 3% for capital improvement fund.
- 2 inch Overlay requires 1,550 tons of asphalt per mile at \$50 per ton.
  - \$100 of local Road & Bridge levy purchases 2 tons of asphalt.
  - 2 inch overlay 24 feet wide requires 0.3 tons per foot.
  - 2 tons covers 6.6 feet of roadway length.

## Buying Power



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## WHAT DOES OTTER TAIL COUNTY WANT?

## Common Transportation Priorities

- Safety on the road
- Smooth road surfaces
- Roads cleared of ice and snow
- Easy access to all places
- Efficient freight movement
- Financial responsibility and stewardship
- Transparency and accountability in long-term planning

## Possible Impacts of Declining Road Conditions

- Loss of competitiveness and economic development opportunities
- Increased safety risks
- Increased travel times
- Increasing costs, as repair options move from “rehabilitation” to “reconstruction”
- Increasing costs for general maintenance
- Public dissatisfaction

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## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: POTENTIAL OPTIONS

## Road Preservation Concepts

1. Roads have a finite life
2. Traffic + Weight + Weather + Time = Wear and Tear
3. Proper maintenance can extend useful life
4. Maintenance has its limits
5. Eventually all roads must be replaced



## Potential Options

- Adopt New Planning Strategies
- Change Size of Road System
- Consider Different Sources of Revenue
- Consider New Maintenance Methods

## Planning and Programming Strategies

### Strategy #1- Transportation Plans

- The objective of transportation plans is to help identify long-term transportation needs and their relationship to other planning activities, while respecting community values and assets.

## Planning and Programming Strategies

### Strategy #2 – Performance Standards

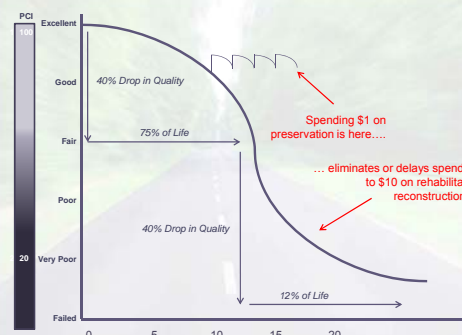
- Developing goals, objectives and standards are a critical step in the planning process, because to a large extent they define the “course of community” over time. Performance measures are designed to serve as a benchmark to evaluate and quantify progress.

## Planning and Programming Strategies

### Strategy #3 - Project Prioritization

- Prioritize preservation strategies over more expensive construction fixes.
- This approach would focus on preventing “fair condition” roads from falling into “poor condition.”
- Otter Tail County has invested in a Pavement Management System and will continue to invest in data acquisition and management.

## A Penny Saved Is A Dollar Earned





## System Adjustments Strategies

### Strategy #4 - Interjurisdictional Transfers (Turnbacks)

- The jurisdiction of roads is an important element to County budgets, because it affects who is responsible for paying for maintenance, construction, etc.
- A turnback means transferring control of a road to another entity, such as the city or the township.
- Otter Tail County has approximately 25 miles of potential turnbacks.
- Each potential turnback will require cooperative negotiations with local agencies.

## System Adjustments Strategies

### Strategy #5 – Set Different Maintenance Standards and Schedules

- Review and re-prioritize maintenance standards and schedules.
- High demand routes receive more budget resources.
- Less significant routes receive less funds.

## System Adjustments Strategies

### Strategy #6 – Alternative Surfacing/ “Unpave” Low Volume Roads

- Consider alternative surfacing for low volume paved roads
- “Unpaving” low volume roads can reduce capital costs and to shift dollars to higher volume routes that are in need of repair.

## Revenue Enhancements Strategies

### Strategy #7 – Explore New Revenue Sources

- Wheelage Tax: \$568,650 (2014 est.)
- Local Option Sales Tax: \$4,250,850 (2014 est.)
- Bonding
- Increased local road and bridge levy
- Gas tax and/or registration fees

## Maintenance Methods Strategies

### Strategy #8 - New Maintenance Techniques

- New technologies, products and techniques can either lower preservation costs or extend the life of improvement, or both.
- More sustainable approach in long-term, but could have increased costs up front.

## Research and Development Spending

Company/Agency	Percent of Revenue
Microsoft	21%
Pfizer	15%
Motorola	10%
3M	7%
Boeing/IBM/Honda (each)	5%
Ford/Toyota	4%
Caterpillar	2%
FHWA	~0.5%
State DOTs	~0.1 – 0.2%*

\* - varies but most funds from federal sources

## System Preservation Strategies

### Strategy #9 – “Do Nothing”



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**SHARE YOUR IDEAS**

## Next Steps

### Otter Tail County's Public Outreach Activities

- January 8, 2014
  - Fergus Falls
- January 9, 2014
  - Pelican Rapids
- January 28, 2014
  - Perham
- January 30, 2014
  - Henning
- April 2014 Meetings
  - Same locations

### Decision Points

- April 2014:
  - County considers input, adopts new strategies
- Summer – Fall 2014
  - Begin new strategies



## Better Roads for a Better Otter Tail

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**QUESTIONS?**



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June 9, 2015

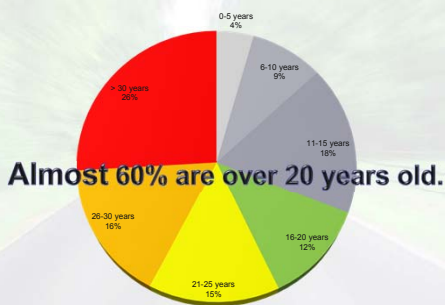
County Commissioner Meeting



# County Commission Briefing June 9, 2015

- Introductions
  - Brian Shorten, SRF Project Manager
  - Amy Grothaus, PE, Braun Intertec
- County Transportation Plan Analysis & Findings
- Review Next Steps
  - 4 Open House Meetings (June 17, 18, 24, 25)
  - Draft Plan (early July)
  - Plan Hearing (July 21)
- Share Your Ideas

## Existing Road Age (Asphalt)



## Shrinking Resources

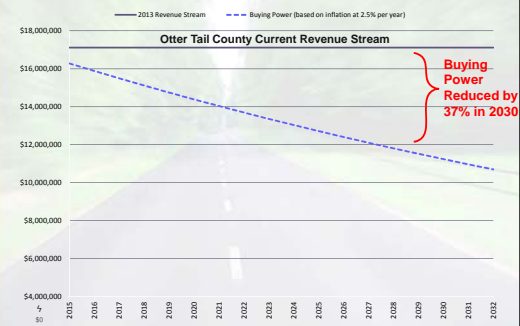
**Annual Cost to Maintain Current Roads**  
\$15.2 million/yr.

**Current Pavement Budget**  
\$3.4 million/yr.

**Annual Funding Gap**  
\$11.8 million/yr.

Note: This GAP Analysis is for pavement preservation and does not include reconstruction.

## Buying Power

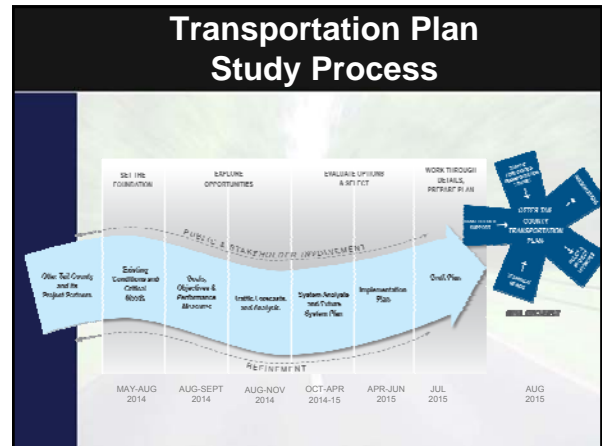


## Possible Impacts of Declining Road Conditions

- Loss of competitiveness and economic development opportunities
- Increased safety risks
- Increased travel times
- Increasing costs, as repair options move from “rehabilitation” to “reconstruction”
- Increasing costs for general maintenance
- Public dissatisfaction

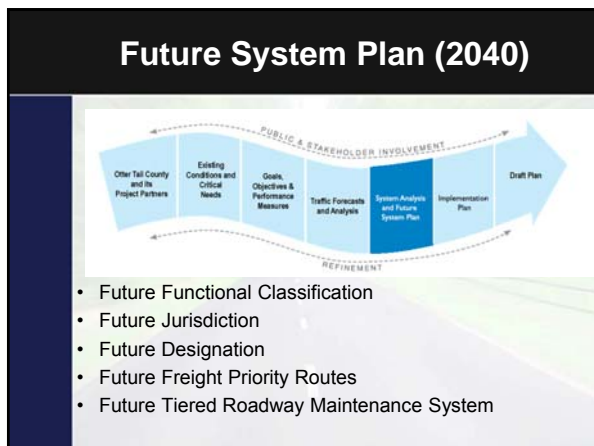
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# COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PLAN & PRESERVATION STRATEGIES



- ## Preservation Strategies Evaluated in Plan
- Reducing System Size
  - Developing a Tiered Roadway Maintenance Program
  - Developing Performance Measures & Schedules
  - Identifying New Funding Sources
  - Establishing a Transparent Project Prioritization Process
  - Promoting Expanded Public Engagement

- ## Transportation Plan's Extensive Public Engagement Process
- Planning process has/will include stakeholder involvement:
    - Open Houses (6 mtgs)
    - Focus Group Sessions (2 mtgs)
    - Consultations with Other Interests (cities, major businesses, townships, MnDOT D-4, WCI, etc.)
    - Project Management Team (8 mtgs)
    - Project Steering Committee (5 mtgs)
    - County Board Sessions (2 mtgs)
    - Study Website
    - Public Hearing (1 mtg)



- ## Future Functional Classification (2040)
- Objectives:
    - Eliminate inconsistencies
    - Protect CSAH eligibility
    - Make more miles eligible for state/federal dollars
  - Rationale for Recommendations Documented
  - Results:
    - Increased FC'd county mileage by 17.5% (added 66 miles major collector, 125 miles minor collectors) over next 25 years
    - Maintained compliance with State/Federal guidelines

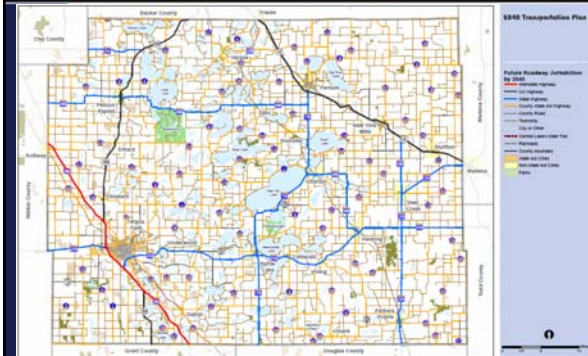
## Future Functional Classification (2040)



## Future Roadway Jurisdiction (2040)

- **Objectives:**
  - Establish jurisdictionally – appropriate (align with function and agency best-suited to maintain)
  - Eliminate misaligned routes
- **Rationale for Recommendations Documented**
- **Results**
  - Reduced county system by 10% (93 miles) over next 25 years

## Future Roadway Jurisdiction (2040)



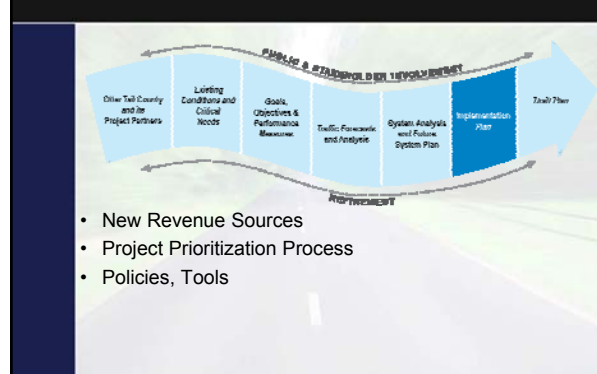
## Tiered Roadway Maintenance System w/ Performance Targets

Tiered System Criteria	Refinement and Verification	Tiered Maintenance Description	Tiered Maintenance
Average Daily Traffic > 800	< 9 Ton Routes	<b>PLATINUM:</b> This tier is the backbone of the County's network. Critical links of these routes include heavily used freight corridors, and are on the arterial or principal freight network, and provide connectivity to the 10-Ton network, and connect to major centers throughout the County. Network priority routes, totaling 571.28 miles (20%), would be assigned to the highest maintenance standards and schedules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st road cost applied at 0.5 years after any major repair</li> <li>• 2nd road cost applied 7 years after 1st road cost</li> <li>• 3rdly major road before PD number 65</li> <li>• Annual average PD cannot be lower than 60</li> </ul>
400 - 800	< 9 Ton Routes	<b>GOLD:</b> This tier is a set of routes, totaling 285.42 miles (20%), that are not on the arterial, principal freight network, and connectivity throughout the County to bring to the freight network. These routes would generally function as a main distribution that, in some instances, they are regionally significant due to the volume of traffic. These routes would have higher maintenance standards and schedules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st road cost applied at 0.5 years after any major repair</li> <li>• 2nd road cost applied 7 years after 1st road cost</li> <li>• 3rdly major road before PD number 60</li> <li>• Annual average PD cannot be lower than 50</li> </ul>
200 - 400	< 9 Ton Routes	<b>SILVER:</b> This tier is a set of routes, totaling 281.22 miles (20%) of the roadway network, which have lower traffic, increased freight movements, and provide regional connectivity. These routes would function as a main distribution that, in some instances, they are regionally significant due to the volume of traffic. These routes would have higher maintenance standards and longer schedules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st road cost applied at 0.5 years after any major repair</li> <li>• 2nd road cost applied 10 years after 1st road cost</li> <li>• 3rdly major road before PD number 55</li> <li>• Annual average PD cannot be lower than 50</li> </ul>
< 200	< 9 Ton Routes	<b>BRONZE:</b> These routes totaling 284.25 miles (20%) have the lowest traffic volume, increased weight loads, and low functional classification. These routes would receive the lowest maintenance and use the least resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st road cost applied at 0.5 years after any major repair</li> <li>• 2nd road cost applied 10 years after 1st road cost</li> <li>• 3rdly major road before PD number 50</li> <li>• Annual average PD cannot be lower than 50</li> </ul>

## Tiered Roadway Maintenance System



## Implementation Plan




## New Revenue Sources

- **Potential Program Screening**
  - External
  - Internal
- **Funding Analysis & Matrix**
  - (see handout)

## Suggested Revenue Enhancements

- Wheelage Tax (\$10/vehicle): \$568,650/yr. (2014 est.)
- Local Option ½ cent Sales Tax \$4,384,00/yr. (2014 est.)
- Bonding
- Increased local road and bridge levy
- State gas tax and/or registration fees (legislative proposal): \$2,280,000/yr. (2015 est.)
- Gravel Tax



## Project Prioritization


- Prevent “fair condition” roads from falling into “poor condition;” avoid worst first approach
- Use County Pavement Management System to evaluate priorities, based on good data, new management policies, and performance measures
- Prioritize preservation strategies over more expensive reconstruction fixes.
- Develop scope and cost
- Establish program of projects (short-term)

## Special Preservation Analysis

- **Braun’s Work:**
  - Updated ICON Data
  - Incorporated FWD & Soils Data
  - Completed Linkage b/w ICON/GIS
  - Evaluated Maintenance Performance
  - Completed Financial Scenarios & Analyzed Impact to System

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QUESTIONS?