

WILL CONGRESS GET SERIOUS ABOUT FIXING THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND?

Just as states around the country are seeing the impact of increased fuel economy on fuel taxes, so is the federal Highway Trust Fund. For the first time in 2008, Congress had to supplement the Highway Trust Fund with an \$8 billion General Fund transfer. By the end of 2014, when Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) expires, it is estimated that Congress will have transferred \$54 billion from the General Fund to the Highway Trust Fund to maintain its solvency.

Recently, the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, chaired by Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI), met to discuss the impact this insolvency is having on surface transportation programs. The opening statement delivered by the chairman made it clear that without changes in spending levels or additional revenues, the Trust Fund will continue to be unable to meet its obligations over the next decade.

This hearing was intended to bring all committee members up-to-speed on the manner in which previous shortfalls have been addressed and help them to understand the fiscal reality facing our nation's transportation infrastructure. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA), chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, also held a press conference this week to draw attention to the consequences of the trust fund's pending crisis.

While it is not yet clear if Congress will finally act to address the revenue shortfall, it is a very positive sign that they are addressing the problem early. December 2014 and the expiration of the current highway bill will come very soon, and as history has shown, extensions are often easier than solutions. *Governing Magazine*
Article: <http://www.governing.com/blogs/fedwatch/gov-what-depleted-highway-trust-fund-means-states.html>

Managing Director's Message

After a recent MLive/Gazette editorial, I thought the following is worth another Managing Director's message. While state revenues available for road and bridge repairs have fallen to decade lows, the Kalamazoo County Road Commission (KCRC) is committed to focusing available revenues on preserving our county roads and bridges.

KCRC has prioritized pavement preservation as a way to preserve the county road network. By conducting preventative maintenance tasks while the pavement is still in good condition rather than letting it deteriorate into poor condition, KCRC saves revenue over the long term, allowing more projects to be completed. Every one dollar invested in preventative maintenance today, prevents spending six to fourteen dollars later as pavements deteriorate and become more costly to repair.

It is hard for many residents to understand why we are working on roads that appear to be in good condition when many roads are in worse condition. Over the long term this approach is how we can get the best bang for the limited amount of money we have to maintain our roads. It is much like changing the oil in your car – pay me now, or pay me much more later.

There are many different kinds of preventative maintenance or pavement preservation treatments. The trick is to apply the right fix at the right time to the right road. This is part of a larger strategy called "asset management" which is designed to maintain the value of our significant investment in our roads and bridges. (Please visit our Road Data page of our website)

KCRC has performed a number of preventative maintenance treatments this summer including chip seal. A chip seal is a surface treatment in which the pavement is sprayed with asphalt emulsion and then immediately covered with aggregate and rolled; the average life cycle of a chip seal is five to seven years. Although the general public doesn't always view this treatment in a positive light *initially*, it is important to understand the vast majority of roads in the county have been chip sealed over time; today you are driving on chip sealed roads and don't even realize it since the initial application.

Roads throughout the state have been deteriorating, to the point that 33.5 percent of the federal-aid roads in the state were rated in "poor" condition according to the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council (a council I hope to be appointed to beginning October 1) – and the federal-aid roads, including state trunklines and major county primaries, are reported to be in better shape than the nonfederal-aid and local roads. This makes getting the best value for the money paid for road maintenance preservation vitally important.

Our road network is vital to families, schools, emergency response, businesses, agriculture, tourism, and economic revitalization. The State Legislature has not increased road funding, state gas taxes or vehicle registration fees since 1997. Despite our best efforts, our roads and bridges will continue to deteriorate without adequate funding from the state or locally. We are doing the best we can with the revenues available to preserve our future with the right fix at the right time. Preserving those roads in good condition... *for now*.

Joanna I. Johnson,
Managing Director

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Federal Highway Trust Fund – MAP-21
- 1 Managing Director's Message
- 2 Healthier Lakes/Watershed Management
- 3 Trees, Trees, Trees
- 4 Staff Highlights/Educational Opportunities

Less Lawns = Healthier Lakes

One simple and effective way to help improve the health of your lake is to just *quit mowing so much*. That sounds easy, doesn't it?

The US EPA's recently-released National Lakes Assessment findings showed that of the lake stressors examined in this multi-year study, poor lakeshore habitat is the factor most impacting the biological health of the nation's lakes. Those lakes with poor lakeshore habitat are 3 times more likely to have poor biological health than those with natural lakeshore conditions (http://www.epa.gov/owow/LAKES/lakessurvey/pdf/nla_report_low_res.pdf).

All that lawn comes at a cost—to both you and the lake. Unlike closely-mown turf grass, natural vegetation at the shoreline slows runoff during storm events. This allows water to infiltrate and sediment particles to settle out prior to reaching the lake. Native vegetation can also minimize pollutant additions to the lake. Deep-rooted shoreline vegetation minimizes erosion at the water's edge by protecting it from wave action. Taller vegetation discourages geese and nuisance waterfowl from messing up your yard. This revegetation also provides habitat for more desirable shoreline animals—like birds, insects, reptiles and amphibians. Plus, you'll spend less time mowing, more time enjoying the lake—and less money on gas! **But I like my lawn!** It's okay to start slowly. You can still have a lawn and access to the water while providing a buffer of vegetation to protect your lake. Take a look at your lakeshore and ask yourself: can I experiment with a portion of my lawn—five feet, 10 feet, 30 feet? Just remember, a little bit of native shoreline is still better than all lawn. And if everyone did a little, your lake would benefit. **How do I get started?** You can start by simply not mowing a portion of the lakeshore. The seed bank in the shoreline soils likely contains native plants that will re-establish when left alone. There are also easy ways to add some attractive native plants that are commercially available from native plant growers. Think of it as you would any other landscaping project—just using native Michigan plants adapted to the lakeshore conditions. A beautiful lakeshore and a healthier lake—what could be better?

Watershed Management for Holistic, Longer-Lasting Solutions to Lake Water Quality

The most effective, long-term lake management strategy involves going beyond the lakeshore and addressing the larger-scale issues impacting the quality of a lake. Although addressing activities along the lakeshore are important, in most cases, lake water quality can only be partially improved or protected by lake-centric projects. These projects do not take into account pollution entering the lake from more distant sources. These “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” sources, if left unchecked, will continue to foil in-lake treatment approaches when money is spent addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes of water quality problems. To address these sources, increasing emphasis is being placed on management beyond the lakeshore at the watershed scale.

Watershed Basics

A watershed is defined by the land that drains into a particular water body. Watershed-based management can generate more successful, longer-lasting improvements to water quality by addressing sources of pollutants from these lands. Considering the entire watershed allows for managing pollutant runoff from the multiple sources contributing to a lake, including urban and agricultural areas. Most often during storm events, pollutants (fertilizers, sediment, pet waste, bacteria, chemicals, etc.) from these areas are washed into rivers and lakes. Best Management Practices (BMPs) can reduce the amount of pollution originating from these sources. Incorporating a combination of BMPs within a watershed provides the best approach for improving surface waters. Protecting the natural landscape in a watershed before these pollution-inducing disturbances occur is the best measure of protection for lakes and streams. But how do all of these practices come together to create these longer-lasting improvements?

Watershed Management Plans (WMPs)

WMPs provide the tools to assess sources of pollution and propose potential solutions. These plans serve as a roadmap for communities to protect and improve their water resources.

BMPs can include a variety of managerial, operational, and structural measures, including:

- Street sweeping
- Stormwater catch basins
- Stormwater treatment policies for new development
- Rain gardens
- Conservation farming practices
- Streamside buffers

Development and execution of a WMP builds coalitions of partners with the common goal of improving and protecting water quality. These partners can drive activities within the watershed to address sources of pollution to the lake. For example, a WMP can identify options for BMPs that would reduce runoff from developed areas and farm fields. Watershed stakeholders then can work with municipalities, government agencies and landowners to implement these BMPs. As part of implementation, quantifying the potential benefits and associated costs can be used to prioritize these efforts. This approach allows for better-informed decisions and more efficient allocation of resources.

State agencies often provide funding for developing WMPs. Within Michigan, more than 150 WMPs have been developed at the local level, funded by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Nonpoint Source grant program (http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313_3682_3714_4012-95955--,00.html). These WMPs then must be approved by the US EPA. **Communities with approved WMPs are eligible for both state and federal funding to implement BMPs in their watersheds.**

(Source: Kieser & Associates, LLC)

**The KCRC participates in Storm Water Pollution Preventative Initiatives
in partnership with the Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner and Kalamazoo County.**



TREES, TREES, TREES

Various areas in the State, including Kalamazoo are experiencing many dead trees along our roadsides. This can be due to disease and their age. These trees are not aestically pleasing to see and also may, along with other trees, cause a lot of work for our field operations. Healthy trees are a precious natural resource – dead or dying trees can create road hazards and are not aestically pleasing to see.

We continuously try to find the balance of maintaining our county road system that is reasonably safe and convenient for public travel while also being mindful of our roadside management, natural resource and clear-zone areas which allow for safety, should a vehicle stray from the traveled portion of the road surface.

When trees interfere with the proper construction, maintenance of the roadway and the ability to maintain the roadway in reasonable repair for safe and convenient travel, the trees are subject to removal. When a tree falls in the road, our staff first emergency responders work hard to open the roads for safe travel.

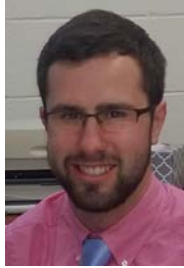
The challenge with trees, as we have seen with recent storms, is that when a tree is left along the roadside after a road is cleared, the patience of our citizens to have the roadsides completely cleared becomes increasingly difficult. Another challenge is the amount of service requests we receive from citizens wanting trees along the roadside removed for reasons including safety, they are dead, etc. Not to mention tree trimming for low hanging limbs, etc.!

It is very clear, as we work with our contractors and staff, we could potentially utilize all our limited transportation funding in roadside vegetation management. KCRC has a long history related to trees and as we review our Roadside Vegetation Management Policy we must consider the expectations/perceptions of the general public that when the tree is dead, dying and/or moved to the roadside the tree is ours and needs to be cleared asap. When the tree must be removed for construction/maintenance the tree is the property owners and they often prefer it not be removed.

The issue of trees will need to be a team effort with property owners assisting in maintaining the dead, dying and proper location of trees in order to save all our limited transportation funding. This kind of joint effort benefits the KCRC and the property owners, so we can provide funds to the traveled portion of the roadways.

Please assist us in communicating with property owners that at this time, **patience is needed**. It will be sometime before the roadsides are cleared of tree debris. We kindly request the assistance of property owners to assist in clearing these areas.

Staff Highlights



We welcome **Adam Mitchell, May 28th** as our **Engineering Technician**. Adam comes to us as a recent graduate of the University of Michigan with a BSE in Civil Engineering. His telephone extension is 226.



We welcome **Ryan Minkus, June 10th** as our **additional Project Engineer**. Ryan comes to us from Progressive AE. He has 14 year's experience in the civil engineering field with the focus on traffic and transportation projects for both public and private areas. He is a graduate of Michigan State University with a BSE in Civil Engineering. He is a licensed Professional Engineer and Professional Traffic Operations Engineer. His telephone extension is 275.

Visit our Website

- **Board Meeting Information**
- **Construction Guidelines**
- **2013 Chip Seal Schedule**
- **2013 Budget**
- **2013 – 2017 Primary Road Capital Improvement Plan**
- **2013 Projects**
- **Brochures**
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- **Maps – *view our new interactive map***
- **Purchasing**
- **Road Data**

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www.kalamazocountyroads.com or email us at info@kerc-roads.com



Road Commissioners of Kalamazoo County

To better serve our County and local officials, each Road Commissioner has also been assigned as a liaison to various townships we serve as follows:

Daniel J. Moyle – 2013 Chairman;

Alamo, Oshtemo, Richland

Kenneth R. Oscarson – 2013 Vice Chairman;

Brady, Prairie Ronde, Wakeshma

Dennis J. Berkebile – Charleston, Schoolcraft, Texas

Jeffrie M. Maddox – Comstock, Cooper, Ross

David Q. Worthams – Kalamazoo, Climax, Pavilion

Educational Opportunities

Building of the Kalamazoo County Map

October 10, 2013 10:00 – 11:30AM

Please Mark Your Calendars!

All sessions will be held at KCRC at no cost

The goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Kalamazoo County is using our expertise, energy and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and high quality of life throughout the county.

We are committed to providing a safe and convenient road system for our county motorists. As our customers and as residents of Kalamazoo County you are also entitled to excellent service from us at all times.

We aim to provide answers to your service requests. We encourage our residents and the motoring public to report road conditions that need attention. To make sure our service to you is prompt and courteous we strive to continually improve our methods of contact.

Office hours 7:30am – 4pm, Monday through Friday
269-381-3171 or info@kerc-roads.com
Call 911 for road related emergencies.