



Washtenaw County Road Commission

Roads in Review

Summer/Fall 2015

wcroads.org



P.A. 283: Our Progress

How we've used the 0.5-mill to fix local roads

Last year, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners used Public Act 283 (P.A. 283) to levy a one-year, 0.5-mill property tax to help address the county's failing road system at the local level.

This was the first road millage levied by Washtenaw County since the early 1970's. The P.A. 283 0.5-mill generated \$7.2 million dollars for road improvements in 2015. Cities and villages in Washtenaw County received \$3 million for road maintenance projects (proportional to the amount raised within their borders). The Road Commission received \$4 million to fund projects outside city and village limits.

P.A. 283 millage funds have allowed the Road Commission to plan an additional 32 road projects in 2015, improving an additional 75 miles of road. Many of our P.A. 283 projects were preventative seal coats which will lengthen the lifespan of roads and save taxpayer dollars. We were also able to pulverize and repave some of the worse pavements in the county, including sections of: Scio Church Road, North Territorial Road, Willis Road, Superior Road and Golfside Road.

What comes next?

P.A. 283 is a yearly millage, meaning without action from the County Board of Commissioners we will not receive this funding again next year (2016).

This Issue:



Hewitt Rd. & Huron River Drive "Road Diet" Projects



North Territorial Road Repaving Goal Achieved



Record Breaking Summer Chip Seal Program



Highlights from the 2015 Construction Season

75mi

EXTRA MILES OF IMPROVEMENTS

Total miles of additional road work that P.A. 283 funded in townships and throughout the county.

267k

IMPROVED ROADS FOR 267K DRIVERS

Roads improved through P.A. 283 are seen by 267,000 daily drivers based on daily traffic counts.

41mi

PREVENTATIVE SEAL COATING

A road treatment that increases the life expectancy of a road.

While counties across Michigan await a comprehensive plan for road funding from lawmakers in Lansing, we are left with an urgent need to fix roads in 2016 with few resources to do so. If Washtenaw County does not fix roads the conditions will worsen, costs will increase and public safety will be at risk.

Due to the success of this year's P.A. 283 projects, the Road Commission has made the same request for a 0.5 P.A. 283 millage to our County Board of Commissioners to ensure that we have the funding needed for necessary road maintenance in 2016. If approved by the Board of County Commissioners, the P.A. 283 one year millage would be collected in 2015 and fund projects in 2016.

How P.A. 283 is used to maintain Local Roads

The history of Public Act 283 of 1909

Public Act 283 (P.A.283) was passed in 1909 to provide communities local control over their roads. The Act also established Michigan's county road commissions. P.A. 283 had two goals: 1) to create uniformity in road construction and maintenance, and 2) provide cost-efficient and high-quality services for local roads.

In addition to establishing Michigan's road commissions, P.A. 283 also outlines a process for county commissions to approve and levy a one-year road millage without a public vote. Public Act 283 guarantees that millage funds are used exclusively for the maintenance of roads, streets, bridges and culverts in the county.

How P.A. 283 is used to improve roads today

The P.A. 283 millage provides one year of road funding and requires that projects be completed the same year. A one year millage is not an ideal way to fund road work, however, it is one of the only tools that counties have to respond to worsening road conditions and a lack of adequate state funding.

Nearly thirty counties throughout Michigan have adopted county-wide millages, often at a higher rate than Washtenaw County and for more than one year. With a guaranteed stream of local funding, counties with multi-year millages can better plan long term road improvements.

Why was a road millage needed in Washtenaw County?

There is not enough money being generated to maintain the public road system in our county. Road funding in Michigan is based on vehicle registration fees, gas and diesel fuel taxes, some of which have not increased in over 30 years.

The cost to maintain the roads in Washtenaw County exceeds current revenue. In the last 10 years, construction costs have increased over 200%. To get all county roads into "good" condition would require an additional \$50 million.

Michigan ranks last in per capita road funding. The state legislature placed Proposal 1 on the ballot in May 2015 in an attempt to raise more funds. Proposal 1 failed to pass and now the state legislature is considering other road funding options. While we wait for a comprehensive funding plan from Lansing, P.A. 283 is one of the only tools that Washtenaw County has to fund local road improvements.

How does the P.A. 283 millage process work?

1. The Road Commission coordinates with Cities and villages and prepares a plan that includes a list of potential projects that could be funded with a county-wide millage.
2. The Board of County Commissioners votes to levy a millage. Under the law, counties can levy up to 1-mill for road funding. The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners will consider a 0.5 millage rate for 2016.
3. If the millage is approved, the County Commission will levy the tax. Cities and villages get the full amount raised in their borders for their projects. Funds that are raised outside cities and villages are then given to the Road Commission for the county-wide projects.
4. All approved projects will be completed the following calendar year.



Before



After

Pulverize and overlay on Superior Rd. from Huron River Dr. to Geddes



Before



After

Pulverize and overlay on Scio Church Rd. from Wagner to I-94

Hewitt Road and Huron River Drive "Road Diets"

We re-opened Hewitt Road and Huron River Drive in Ypsilanti Township after completing two "road diet" projects designed to alleviate congestion and improve safety. Hewitt Road's road diet went from Ellsworth Road to Packard Road, and Huron River Drive from Hewitt Road to Cornell Road. These sections of Hewitt Road and Huron River Drive were closed to through-traffic in April when crews began the road diet projects.

The road diet modified both roads to include:

- Two 12-foot wide through lanes
- One 12-foot-wide left turn lane
- Two 6-foot-wide bike lanes on either side

What is a Road Diet?

A Road diet converts an undivided four-lane road into a two lane road with a center turning lane. With enough width, a bicycle lane can be included on the outside edge.

How do Road Diets improve safety?

Four-lane roads have more instances of sideswipes and rear-end crashes because drivers often stop in the through-lane and wait for a gap in traffic to cross two lanes of traffic onto a side street or driveway. By providing a dedicated left-turn lane and removing one lane of oncoming traffic, a road diet significantly reduces the risks of an accident during turns. In fact, national data shows road diets typically reduce accidents by 15-40%.

The number of left turns is especially high on Hewitt Road because there are numerous side streets and driveways. Providing a dedicated left turn lane and reducing oncoming traffic by one lane will significantly decrease the risk of an accident when drivers make left turns. Between 2008 and 2012, Hewitt Road had 130 crashes and Huron River Drive had 261.

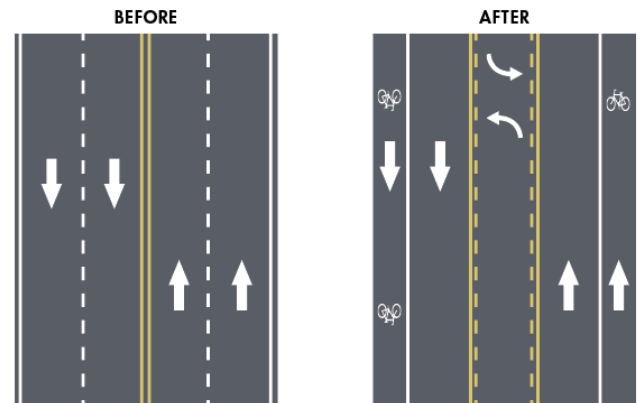
How do Road Diets affect traffic flow and congestion?

The Washtenaw County Road Commission conducts traffic impact studies before each road diet and carefully considers the impact on safety and traffic flow.

Reducing lanes to alleviate congestion may seem counter-intuitive, but the ultimate question is: how effective is the current four-lane road's through-lane? When you have many drivers stopping in order to make left turns, the through-lane becomes less efficient. Reducing through-lanes and adding a turn-lane actually manages traffic more effectively.

How much did it cost?

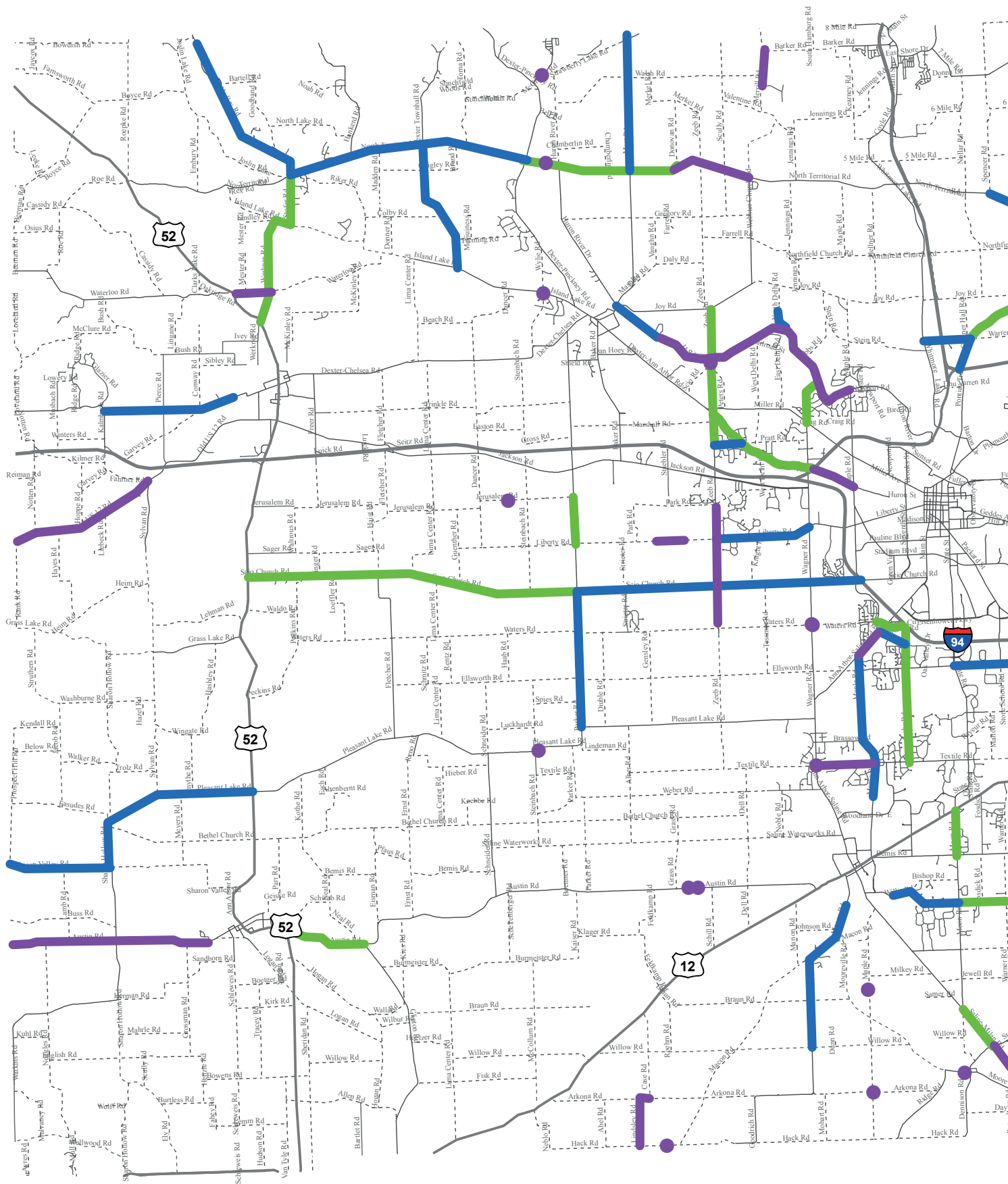
The Hewitt Road project cost \$655,000 and Huron River Drive cost \$525,000, part of which was covered by two safety grants from the Federal Highway Administration. Ypsilanti Township also paid an additional \$35,000 for a mid-block pedestrian crossing at Hewitt Road and Burns Avenue that includes signage, lighting and a pedestrian island. Without the safety grants received from the federal government, the Road Commission would not have had been able to resurface Hewitt Road and Huron River Drive without taking away from another project.



"Road Diet." Diagram. Bury Inc. 2012.



Hewitt Road before and after the road diet.



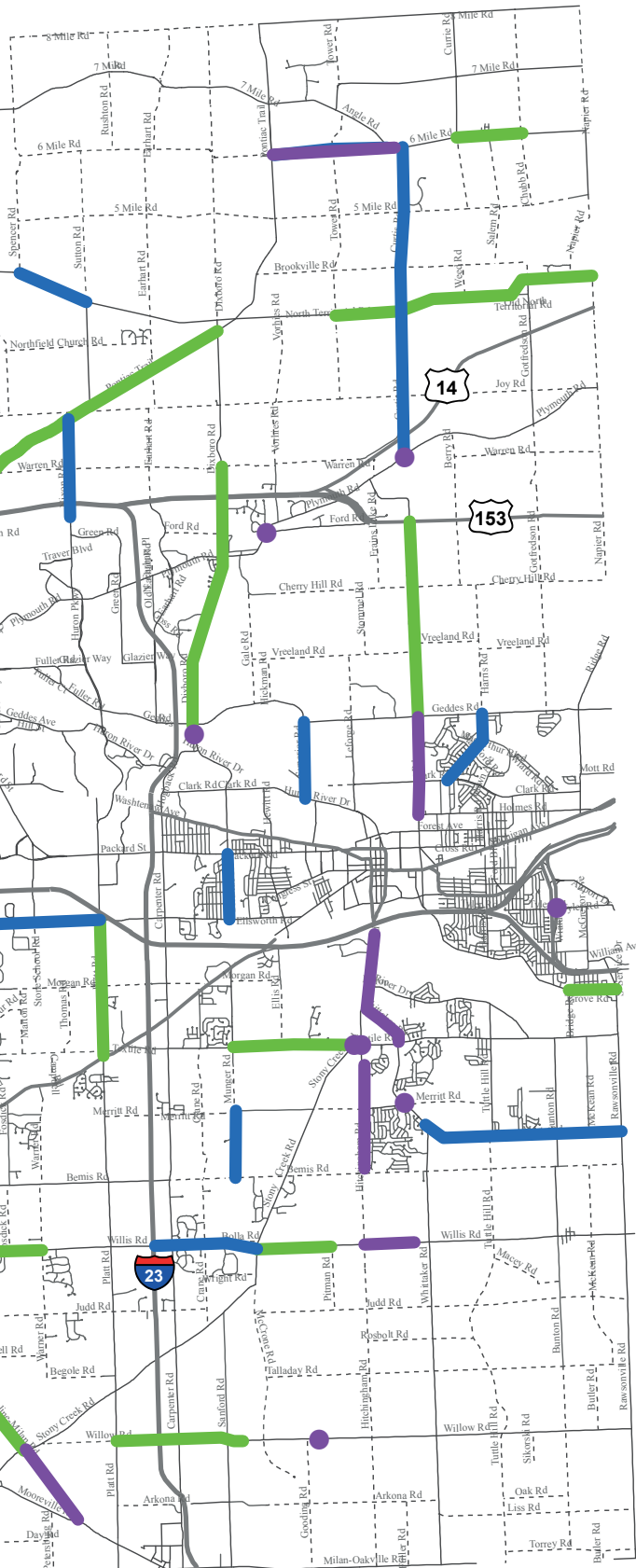


Washtenaw County Projects 2015-2016



Included in this map are all of the Washtenaw County Road Commission's major road work in 2015 and for 2016, as well as the proposed 2016 P.A. 283 projects.

2016 P.A. 283 projects are contingent on approval by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners.



Projects

-  Road Commission & Federal Funds
-  PA283 Projects_2015
-  PA283 Projects_2016 (Proposed)

2015 Construction Season Highlights

We are in the midst of a very busy construction season here at the Road Commission. We have scheduled over 100 projects this season, including several bridge projects. Below are a few highlights of our projects so far.

To view a complete list of our 2015 road projects, visit: <http://wcroads.org/Roads/Projects-Current>



Roundabouts on Textile Rd. at Hitchingham Rd. and Stony Creek Rd. (Ypsilanti Twp.)

We built two compact urban roundabouts on Textile Road at the intersections of Hitchingham Road and Stony Creek Road, two very congested intersections. These new roundabouts will alleviate congestion and make the intersections safer.



Compact urban roundabout at Textile and Stony Creek.



Textile Roundabout ribbon cutting ceremony



Austin Rd. Bridges (Saline Twp.)

We replaced two bridges on Austin Road that were in “poor” condition. We built a conventional bridge on Austin Road over the Saline River. The second bridge was built over the Bauer Drain. Since the Bauer Drain is a smaller stream crossing, we installed a concrete box culvert over the drain.



Before



After

Austin Road Bridge over the Saline River Photos by Rob DuPrie from Hubbell, Roth & Clark.



Zeeb Rd. Bridge over the Huron River (Scio Twp.) Dixboro Rd. Bridge over the Huron River (Ann Arbor Twp.) N. Territorial Rd. Bridge over the Huron River (Dexter Twp.)

All three bridges were in “good” condition and this season’s work focused on protecting the bridges by patching cracks in the concrete, followed by the application of an epoxy overlay to further seal any cracks in the deck pavement and give the concrete a protective coating. We also replaced the bridges’ riprap which will protect the bridge supports from future water damage and erosion.



Huron River Dr. from Ann Arbor City Limits to Dexter-Huron Metropark (Scio Twp.)

Between 2010 and 2014, we pulverized and repaved sections of Huron River Drive between Ann Arbor city limits and Dexter-Huron Metropark. This road work was been funded by the Washtenaw County Road Commission and the Ann Arbor Bicycle Touring Society (AABTS). Over four years, AABTS raised \$90,000 to repave Huron River Drive and the Road Commission matched those funds. This year, we applied a preventative seal coat and fog seal on Huron River Drive to protect the investments made in this road. Seal coating and fog sealing increase the life expectancy of the road by an additional 5-7 years.

Icons made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

N. Territorial Road Repaving Goal Completed

North Territorial Road is one of the Road Commissions top priorities because it is the main east-west primary road in the northern half of Washtenaw County. North Territorial Road stretches across Washtenaw County for 26 miles, from M-52 to the Wayne County line.

In 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), also known as the Economic Stimulus program, which provided an additional transportation funding for roads that were in need of improvement and were “shovel ready”.

Using stimulus funding, we were able to resurface or repave 9 miles of North Territorial Road, but our ultimate goal was to address all 26 miles of North Territorial Road. Between 2010 and 2014, the Road Commission utilized other federal funding, as well as funds from the Road Commission and Salem Township to repave an additional 13 miles of road. By 2015, only 4 miles of North Territorial Road remained to be resurfaced or repaved.

In 2014, the County Board of Commissioners approved P.A. 283 which funded 2 miles of improvements in Northfield Township. The Road Commission Board funded the remaining 2 miles located in Webster Township which we completed in late August 2015.

The Road Commission is proud to say that we have resurfaced all 26 miles of N. Territorial Road, and the road is likely in best shape it has ever been in. Moving forward, our goal is to seal coat five miles of North Territorial Road every year, which we have done for the past two years. Seal coating will keep the road's pavement in good condition for the next 20 years.



N. Territorial Road looking east from Spencer Road



N. Territorial Road getting a new layer of asphalt looking west from Webster Church



Recap of Lansing's Road Funding Talks

This summer, Michigan's House and Senate passed two different road funding plans. In order to become law, the two chambers will have to come to agreement on one version of a road funding bill. In late August, the House and Senate tried to negotiate differences between both funding bills, but were unsuccessful. The legislature appointed a House-Senate conference committee to craft a compromise which will be reviewed after Labor Day.

While the state legislature and Governor Rick Snyder have continued to prioritize road funding, lawmakers continue to struggle to reach a long term fundraising compromise. The sticking point has been on the ratio between new revenue (via motor fuel taxes and/or vehicle registration fees) and existing revenue (which could take away from other budgets).

In addition to the two proposed bills in the state legislature, an organization called “Citizens for Fair Taxes” announced that they will be collecting signatures for a citizen initiative to raise taxes on businesses in order to provide an additional \$900 million a year for Michigan roads. They will need to collect 252,523 signatures to get the issue in front of the legislature. If the legislature does not act on road funding, the initiative may go on the November 2016 ballot.



Washtenaw County Road Commission
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Record Breaking Summer Chip Seal Program



Chip seal on Liberty Road

WCRC has had a record year for our seal coat program, finishing 26 projects that covered 64 miles of county roads. this summer. Most of this year's seal coating projects were funded by last year's P.A. 283 county-wide millage. The one year, 0.5-mill funded 47 miles of seal coating throughout the county.

Seal coats are preventative maintenance surface treatments that extend the life of roads by sealing small cracks in the pavement and preventing water from seeping into the road, thereby deterring the formation of potholes.

While seal coating can preserve roadways, it is only a surface treatment and does not fill existing bumps, holes or other irregularities and therefore does not improve ride quality. For this reason, it is important to apply seal coat to roads *before* the deterioration happens. For this reason, we seal coat roads that are in "good" and "fair" condition, rather than waiting for a road to deteriorate to the point that extensive patching is necessary.

Seal coating is a relatively low-cost method of preserving roads with low to medium traffic volume. Seal coating costs approximately \$25,000 per mile of a two-lane road. On average, a chip seal coat can increase the life of a road by 5-7 years. By comparison, it costs \$300,000 per mile of a two-lane road to pulverize and place a 3-inch overlay of asphalt on a failing pavement. A pulverize and overlay improvement gives a road a life expectancy of 15-20 years.

We estimate that for every \$1 of seal coating applied, the county saves \$6-12. This year's seal coat projects cost \$1,050,000. Therefore, we estimate that we will save \$6 - \$12 million in road maintenance costs over the next 5-7 years.