

**OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF BLAINE COUNTY
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OCTOBER 2013 SESSION**

ROADS AND BRIDGES NEW FUNDING PROPOSALS

Second Day – Evening

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

Pursuant to Statutory Provisions, the Board of Blaine County Commissioners (BCC) met this day at 6:31 p.m. Present were Chairman Lawrence Schoen; Vice-Chairman Angenie McCleary; Commissioner Jacob Greenberg; County Administrator Derek Voss; County Operations Director Char Nelson; Road and Bridge Manager Tom Duffy; Blaine County Clerk JoLynn Drage; Dale Ewersen; Jeff Smith; Ellen Swenson; and *Idaho Mountain Express* reporter Tony Evans.

Chairman Schoen called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**BLAINE COUNTY ROADS AND BRIDGES
NEW FUNDING PROPOSALS, DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION**

Chairman Schoen stated the purpose of the meeting was to present to the public the funding challenges currently faced by Road and Bridge (R&B); and to understand the public's opinion of and desires for county roads and bridges.

Char Nelson stated that a transportation study was conducted and from that study, the current Blaine County Transportation Plan was created. The plan revealed some potential issues if funding levels are not increased.

Currently R&B is funded by the State from gas tax and from the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) replacement funds, but there is no guarantee that SRS funding will continue. Current funding levels are lower than 2002. Current budget needs are not being met by current revenue.

Blaine County has utilized federal grants for some major projects. An entity must have local match to be eligible to apply for federal grants. Blaine County has been able to use the SRS funding as local match. If SRS is discontinued, we would no longer be eligible to apply for those grants.

Conditions of asphalt roads are currently rated by remaining service life (RSL). All county roads have been rated. Seventy-plus percent of roads are at 9 years or less. The desired RSL for asphalt roads is 10-13 years. The County currently spends \$650,000 per year on paved roads but, according to the Blaine County Transportation Plan, needs to spend \$1,400,000 for 2 years then \$1,000,000 per year to keep roads at 10 RSL.

Gravel roads are rated differently – on a 1-5 scale with 5 being excellent. The desired rating for gravel roads is 3 and above. Most of the county's gravel roads are at 2 now. Gravel roads need 3-4% crown in order to drain – some gravel roads are actually lower than surrounding landscape.

Funding recommendation for gravel roads is \$1,400,000/year (\$1,038,000 for upgrading and \$372,000 for maintenance) and we are currently spending \$372,000 on routine maintenance.

Blaine County also has 54 bridges and an average of 18 are inspected annually by ITD. Of the 18 inspected there are generally 2 or 3 that need major repair, costing from about \$50,000 to \$100,000.

In order to maintain and upgrade the roads, Blaine County will require \$3,740,000 annually. Current revenue is at about \$1,400,000. Possible future funding options include:

1. Current – no new revenue, reduce inventory, reduce service, no federal/state grants
2. Local levy (2 year or permanent)
3. Bond (CIP)
4. Create Highway District, set tax rate accordingly

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Tony Evans asked about mitigation fees vs property tax. Asked what paid for paving Little Wood Reservoir Road initially and if there was a maintenance plan in place that was “dropped”, Commissioner Schoen explained that mitigation fees were paid by developers to use on roads affected by development.
2. Jeff Smith – R&B is a big job. He has noticed more attention paid to south county roads recently and that is appreciated. Would like to see standardization of quality of roads in county – everybody is in this together. Suggests looking toward agriculture-related machinery instead of specialized R&B equipment. Gravel road maintenance could be done with simpler tools that are less expensive. Must protect ability to get grants if SRS goes away. Looks like the county cannot avoid some kind of tax increase. Feels standardization is critical. Good roads are a basic quality of life issue. Don't have to be perfect, but have to be maintained at good level.

3. Dale Ewerson – Concerned about new taxes and new taxing district and responsibility to tax payers. Questioned if mitigation fees were used on impacted area or any place needed. Suggest using mitigation fees to maintain “dedicated” roads over time. Concerned about used equipment costs – doesn’t appear to be enough in the budget to cover needs. Asked if the county was considering contracting out after prioritization. There has been a gap between revenue and expenses since 2006 – what took so long to recognize problem?

Chairman Schoen responded that mitigation fees are used on the road that is impacted by the development. All governments have been challenged by the recent recession. The problem was identified and discussed in prior years, but there is great hesitation to ask tax payers for more money. Blaine County has tried to take items in measure, not all at one time – addressed senior care, then the courthouse, now road and bridge. Road deterioration has taken years, but there has been not significant upkeep and it is now costing us substantially more.

McCleary agreed, and said that the board has had this discussion each year since 2008. The Transportation Plan identified details and potential solutions, and made recommendations. If improvements are delayed, the roads and quality of life deteriorate and the amount of money needed will be greater. There is a finite pool of money and we must be careful of where cuts take place.

Greenberg stated that the current funding model is not sustainable. Subcontracting is about 20% more expensive than the county doing the work.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jeff Smith stated that most of outlying roads are used by recreationists and questioned if money might be available from F&G or some other public entity.

Char Nelson addressed public concerns as follows:

Smith was assured that the County seeks any possible funding, regardless of source. Other sources are drying up as well.

Equity in roads – Tom Duffy has created plan to address that issue and feels strongly that roads are all treated equally. He assesses road conditions and prioritizes accordingly;

Blaine County will explore any options for equipment, including other types than currently used.

Funding issues have been in front of board for four years and the board has looked to staff to bring it forward with a variety of proposed solutions. The Transportation Plan has been the impetus.

ADJOURN

At the hour of 8:02 p.m., the BCC finding no more business before them adjourned.

Attest: _____
JoLynn Drage
County Clerk

Approved _____
Lawrence Schoen
Chairman