



Director of Public Works

RE: Roads – Where does the money come from and where does it go?

Dear Teton County,

I often hear the questions “Why is my road so bad?” and “Where do property taxes go?” The answers to these questions are something everyone should know. The following information will shed some light on the subject.

THEN

Prior to voters passing the Special Road Levy in 2010, no property tax dollars were spent on our roads. Our Road & Bridge budget was funded through vehicle registrations and revenue generated by the state fuel tax. The State of Idaho distributes this money to the county based on our total mileage of improved roads. Teton County has approximately 300 miles of improved roads and receives \$3000 per mile from the State, giving us a budget of \$900K. Remember, not one penny of property tax money was included in the budget prior to 2010.

That may seem like a lot of money, but this must pay for snowplowing, grading, fuel, equipment, employees, materials, and more. About \$500K is spent on our valuable employees, with another \$350K spent on fuel and equipment. This leaves us with only \$50K of State money each year to repair potholes, purchase gravel, buy culverts, chip seal roads, apply dust control, rebuild bridges, and rebuild roads. As a comparison we spent \$290K last year from the Special Road Levy to chip seal 9 miles of road. We have another 63 miles of road to be chip sealed in order to maintain and extend their life. At the current funding level this will take about 7 years. Additionally, each road should be chip sealed every 5-10 years to extend its life.

NOW

In 2010 the voters approved a Special Road Levy of one million dollars per year for two years. The allocation of this money is determined by the property value within each municipality; Victor and Driggs will each receive \$100K per year while Tetonia will receive \$8K;. This leaves \$790K for the county to spend on roads each year. However we only collect about 90% of our taxes each year, leaving \$711K dedicated to improving our roads.

This gives us a total budget of \$900K without the levy funds, or \$1.6 Million including the levy funds to maintain and improve 300 miles of roads. The chart below shows how Teton County’s funding compares to similar counties in Idaho.

COUNTY	ROAD MILES	BUDGET
Teton County	300 Miles	\$900K w/out Levy (\$1.6 Million w/Levy)
Clearwater County	336 Miles	\$1.6 Million
Lemhi County	370 Miles	\$1.9 Million
Madison County	475 Miles	\$3.2 Million
Fremont County	702 Miles	\$4.3 Million

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LOOKING AHEAD

The 2010 Special Road Levy will expire this year and a new 2-year Road Levy is on the May 15 ballot. This is the same levy as approved in 2010, no increase in funding is proposed. Without this levy the R&B budget will return to the pre-2010 levels and we will be back to performing emergency maintenance only. Without the levy, funds will not be available to apply dust abatement, chip seal, replace gravel, culverts or bridges and our roads will continue to deteriorate. A road is no different than a house, car, or body: preventative maintenance is critical to extending its usable life.

The Levy will not instantly fix all of our roads; it will continue us on the right track and begin to make up for decades of underfunding. I urge everyone to exercise your right and vote on May 15.

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