

Washington County Secondary Roads: Comprehensive Improvement Plan

What issues are being faced on the Secondary Roads?

Rising costs and flat revenues, increases in vehicle weights and volumes, and repeated disasters have put the secondary road system in a position from which it cannot recover without additional funding assistance.

Why are there so many problems?

The secondary road system was designed in the early 1900s to carry 19th century traffic, but is now used with 21st century traffic volumes and loads. Additionally, since 2007, weather related disasters have done over \$10 million in damage. With funding both limited and constrained, the system cannot recover without an infusion of financing.

What is the plan?

The plan is fourfold. First, it targets “hot-spot” locations that currently use 2-4 times their allotment of maintenance dollars. Second, it includes wide scale improvements by rebuilding many rural roads. Thirdly, it reduces the long term maintenance cost of the roads allowing needed maintenance to be performed on the paved roads and bridges in the county. Finally, it allows the county to recover from the four recent presidentially declared disasters.

What does the plan include?

5 miles of new paving, re-building of 80 miles of gravel roads, and providing additional rock surfacing for 40 miles of roads. By improving these 125 miles of roadway, maintenance resources will be available to make improvements on the other 800 miles of our county roads.

How will the new gravel roads be better?

They will be 30-50% cheaper to maintain, will trap less drifting snow, will have proper drainage, and will have an appropriate surface course for the traffic they are carrying.

Why is now the right time to do this?

Repeated natural disasters have thrown us into a downward spiral where the roadway conditions are deteriorating faster than repairs can be made. Interest rates are historically low making it a good time to borrow money. Additionally, construction contractors are hungry which generally indicates favorable prices.

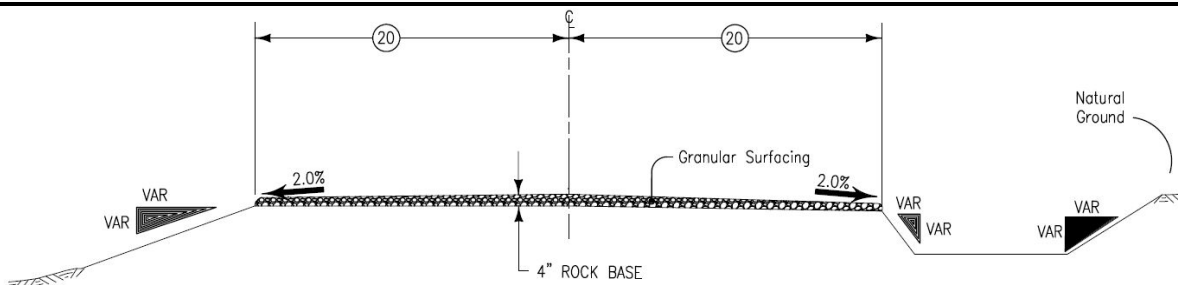
Why build the roads to 26' wide?

Most gravel roads are currently 26' now, but many have 8'-10' grassed shoulders that have built up over the years. The road standards of Washington County, the State of Iowa, and the FHWA all recommend 24-26' roadway surfaces for the traffic type and volumes in Washington County. The proposed roads will be wider than the paved roads which are 22'-24' wide. Importantly, both the construction and maintenance cost for a 26' road is 30% less than a 34' wide roadway. Additionally, wider roads take longer to clear snow and to do maintenance blading.

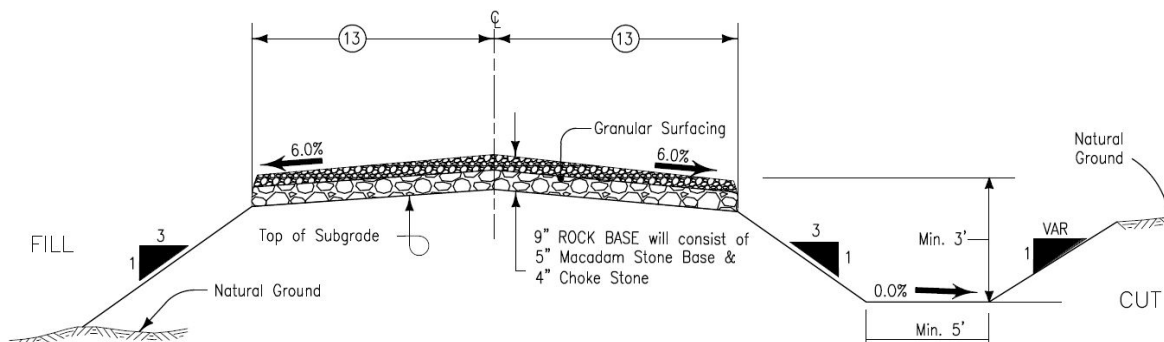
How long will these improvements take?

The plan is scheduled to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

What will the rebuilt roads look like?



Existing Road Cross Section



Proposed Road Cross Section

I live in the city, why do I care about the rural roads?

Our local roads matter! Having an adequate system of roads is an essential service for our community. Local roads matter to our school children, our agricultural community, our local businesses, our emergency response teams, our cities and to our residents. No other agency touches more local residents on a daily basis than the Secondary Road system. With more than 900 miles representing 80% of the roads in the entire county, our secondary roads are crucial to transportation. Drivers who don't typically use the gravel roads will also see the resulting benefits on the paved roads (such as G36, Prairie Flower & the Riverside Roads) and bridges throughout the county.

Will this affect any of the currently scheduled secondary roads construction projects?

No, all projects currently on the approved Five Year Secondary Roads Plan will continue as scheduled.

How much is normally spent annually on maintenance by the Roads department?

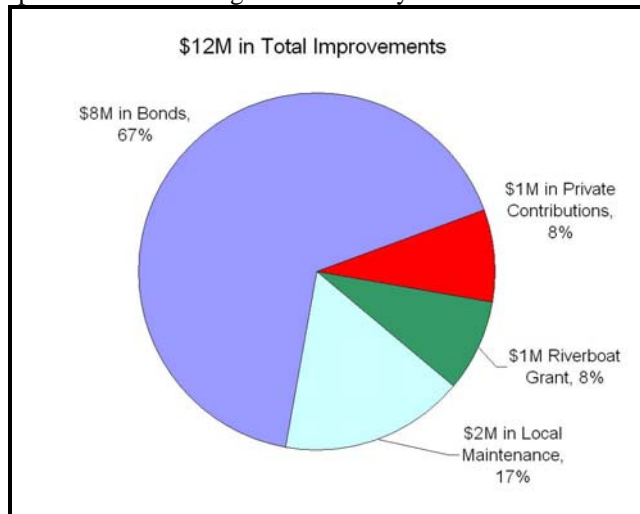
The Secondary Roads Department spends about \$1.3 million each year on gravel road maintenance and \$3-4 million each year on construction.

How much will this plan cost?

The proposed plan includes a total of \$12.0 million in improvements.

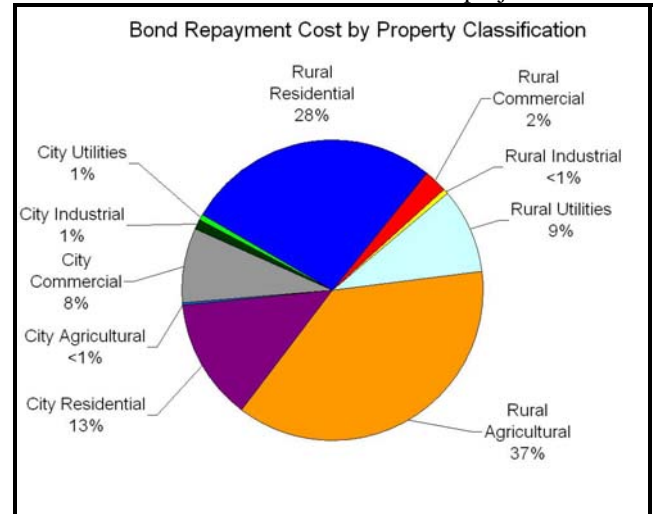
How will the plan be paid for?

The plan is proposed to be paid for with \$8.0 million in general obligation debt, \$2.0 million in maintenance dollars from the next two years secondary roads budgets, \$1.0 million will be requested from the Riverboat Foundation, \$1.0 million will be raised in private contributions towards paving several "hot-spot" locations throughout the county.



I live in a city, how much will I pay?

City residents will pay the debt service levy which currently translates into 13% of the total cost of the project.



Can you explain the \$8.0 million debt?

As a result of Presidential Disaster Declarations in 2007, 2008 and 2010, the Washington County Board of Supervisors is authorized to incur debt for these reconstruction projects. This will be done either through selling bonds or borrowing from a bank. The debt will most likely be financed over 8 to 10 years and will be repaid with property tax revenues. Current interest rates are at historic lows, making this an advantageous time to pursue this project.

What levy will be necessary to repay the debt?

Based on estimated annual payment amounts and the most recent valuation data available, a Countywide debt service levy of about \$0.50 and a rural levy of about \$0.93 would be required.

What would this levy mean for me?

Based on current information a rural home with an assessed value of \$150,000 would see an increase of approximately \$100. For an urban home assessed at \$150,000, the increase would be about \$35. For an average 40-acre tract of farmland (CSR of 85) the increase would be approximately \$38.

Where will the private contributions come from?

Private contributions will come from local land owners or businesses to assist in upgrading a few specific locations. These contributions are strictly voluntary and are restricted to the traffic generating facilities along those specific routes.

Where can I learn more about this plan?

You can visit www.washingtonroads.org
Contact the County Engineer at engineer@co.washington.ia.us or (319) 653-7731