

Important Funding Information for Tazewell County Highways

Our County Highways in Tazewell County have been hot-mix asphalt for at least a couple generations and Tazewell County should be proud to have such an elite system of county highways. The surface maintenance program has therefore consisted of milling off the aging and compromised hot-mix asphalt surface and placing a new one. The new surface used to last as much as 15 years but now barely serves for 12 years before the operation needs to be repeated. This operation has historically been funded by the County's share of MFT (Motor Fuel Tax) revenue collected by the state. The county highway funding collected from real estate tax generally covered the operational costs of the highway department as well as remaining maintenance necessary to ensure a safe and efficient system of county highways including such items as mowing roadsides, painting pavement markings, repairing and installing traffic control signs and lighting, fixing potholes, restoring shoulders, cleaning ditches, etc.

The highway user fee MFT which the state collects and shares with local road authorities (counties, townships/road districts, and municipalities) has been 19¢/gallon since 1989. There is an additional 2.5¢/gallon on diesel fuel that the state keeps for IDOT (Illinois Department of Transportation). The state also collects but does not share with local road authorities, with the exception of some very small programs, fees collected by the Secretary of State. These are the fees highway users pay for vehicle registrations, driver's licenses and vehicle titles among others. All of these fees are collected by the state from highway users operating on all roads, including county highways. Unfortunately, the portion of these revenues the state shares with local highway authorities continues to decline. Local road authorities are responsible for over 89% of the non-toll road mileage in the state carrying over 40% of the non-toll traffic yet they currently receive back only about 20% of these highway user fee revenues.

The last increase in the local road share of this revenue was in 2000. Unfortunately, our cost per mile to continue to mill and resurface our hot-mix asphalt roads this year was 3.2 times our cost in 2000. Worse yet, our MFT revenue this year was 17.3% below what we received in 2000 after the local road share of that revenue was increased. As a result, we've lost 74% of our purchasing power to perform highway surface maintenance since 2000. In other words, this year we could only afford to perform 26% of the county highway surface maintenance that we performed in 2000.

In order to preserve and protect as much pavement as possible, this year we added cape seal treatments and sealcoat treatments to our county highway surface maintenance program. These treatments are less expensive which allow us to treat more needy miles of county highway thereby stretching those precious dollars further. Unfortunately, they will need to be repeated more frequently and have some qualities that are less desirable than a new hot-mix asphalt surface. The cape seal treatment used on Townline Road is less permeable and has a less consistent overlap at the centerline than existing hot-mix asphalt surface. Sealcoat treatment needs to be repeated most frequently, results in a small amount of loose chips (small gravel) on the surface with more along the road shoulders and the sealcoat oil may become active and "bleed" through to the surface in very hot and humid conditions. In essence, these treatments are reverting our county highway system back to an earlier point in time before they were upgraded to hot-mix asphalt.

We would prefer that our county highway infrastructure were properly funded in a manner that would sustain the level of service our traffic has come to expect but unfortunately that is not the case.