

How Howard County Keeps the Public Informed of Highway Department Matters

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We employees of the Howard County taxpayers are trying to operate as efficiently as time and funds will permit. The increase in prices of materials, equipment, labor, and living costs are the controlling factors of anybody's business. It is going to be more difficult for us to make the showing in the future that we have made in the past, since we operate on a fixed income, and there has been no increase in our budget.

We have 672 miles of roads to maintain in Howard County. There are 200 miles of improved roads with bituminous surfaces. We have planned our system so that most people in different parts of the county are able to get to an improved road within two miles' driving distance. We have, through our local newspaper, tried to keep the public informed on all types of changes as planned. This is working satisfactorily, because we have less criticism on our work now than we had in the past.

Some of our roads have a 50 foot right-of-way. We have used road oil (S.C.-3)-aggregate mixture 3 inches thick in our "black top" work. This type of construction has served very well with the conditions we encounter during seasonal changes. During the spring break-ups, we encounter several frost boils which have to be dug out, drained and repaired, especially on small hills that appear on our roads. Just as soon as it is dry enough in the spring we get busy on these places and repair them before they dry and harden. The construction season is short for black top roads; therefore, we plan to get our new construction in operation by the last of June, depending on how much required maintenance there is on the other roads. We publish our plans as soon as we make them up, and let the people know just what is to be built. The board of county commissioners and the supervisor get together and plan this work in order to be sure each one understands where and what the location and the construction is to be. This seems to satisfy most of the public. Of course, there are some people who do not read these articles, and

they ask questions about what is to be built, and if there is any chance to get their road widened and rebuilt. We try to be honest with ourselves and with those people in giving them our answers.

We explain to them the amount of money it takes to keep these roads in good condition, the equipment and materials required, and the number of men on the payroll. We have on several occasions told the people that if all the roads in Howard County were in one straight line, they would reach from Kokomo to Baltimore, Maryland, with only 26 men to work on them. Dividing the \$129,000 received annually by 672 miles, then dividing again by 300 (working days per year) equals 64 cents a mile a day for all Howard County road work. This would not buy one cubic yard of gravel. Most of our people realize that this condition exists.

We have in Howard County 185 bridges, large and small, and some of the small ones are in very bad condition. If there was enough money to repair or rebuild them, there could be a bridge program that would last for several years. But this is not possible, and they will have to be taken care of when failure occurs. We are watching them very carefully to see that they do not fail under present traffic. We have some of them posted "Not Safe for Heavy Loads." This is not going to solve the bridge problem. There must be some long-range planning, and this planning must work.