

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mark A. Craft, P.E., Engineer-Manager, Gratiot County Road Commission, MI

It's hard to believe that Fall is already here. This month I want to discuss an issue that will continue to worsen unless something is done in the near future. That issue is the funding of roads and what will it cost to maintain our roads and bridges going into the future. In Michigan, like many other states, our overall road system is heading towards poor shape. And, unless additional funding becomes available to maintain our roads, they are projected to get much worse.

It really is a twofold problem: Transportation revenues have been declining due to the heavy reliance on the gas tax and it is compounded by the inflation on our costs which are heavily dependent on the cost of energy. All federal aid eligible roads in Michigan are rated annually using a Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating system (called PASER) for measuring statewide pavement condition. It is a visual survey method used to evaluate the condition of roads. The method was developed by the University of Wisconsin Transportation Information Center to provide a simple, efficient and consistent method for evaluating road condition. PASER uses a 10 scale rating to evaluate the surface distress of the pavement.

Ratings of 8-10 are "Good" and require little or no maintenance; Ratings of 5-7 are "Fair", and need Capital preventative maintenance – cost effective treatments to protect the pave-

ment structure, to slow the rate of deterioration and to correct pavement surface distress, before the structural integrity of the pavement has been severely impacted.; Ratings of 1-4 are "Poor" meaning that some type of repair such as major rehabilitation or reconstruction is needed to improve the structural integrity of the pavement.

So, where do we stand? Based on the 2010 Annual Report of the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council - 35 percent of all federal aid eligible lanes miles in Michigan are rated in Poor Condition. 47 percent were in fair condition and 18 percent were in good condition.

The trend each year has been that the percentage of good and fair roads keeps declining while the roads rated in poor condition continues to increase. In 2004, 14 percent were in poor condition. Six years later, it is now 35 percent. This is really alarming. Our roads are deteriorating faster than they can be maintained. Why? We know the needs. County road managers understand an asset management strategy. It is the application of the right fix, at the right place, at the right time, which minimizes the cost of maintaining the road system by performing the lower cost preventative maintenance instead of allowing the roads to deteriorate to the point of needing a higher cost fix.

The answer to the why, is the lack of proper

funding. If additional investments are not made to our road systems, two things are going to start happening; the deferred costs of maintaining our roads will be much higher and we are choosing to accept lower quality roads. As you may probably know, SAFETEA-LU is on its eighth short term extension. Congress has not acted on a new six-year highway plan during the past two years because of differences on funding levels and how to pay for a comprehensive investment program. Legislature needs to understand the looming problem with our infrastructure. No one likes to pay higher taxes, but has the public really figured out what they spend in gas taxes to drive the roads in our nation. It isn't much considering the importance of our transportation system in this country.

You as a county engineer or road manager can only do the best with what you have. You continue to do more with less. You continue to make your operations more and more efficient. The bottom line is that we are at the point that we can't fix the problem without proper funding. Counties maintain over 1.74 million miles of roads and 231,000 Bridges. Relay the message. The conditions of the roads relate directly to the safety of our citizens. Good roads save lives. Let your Legislators know the conditions and the trend that is occurring in your community.

TIME TO NOMINATE OFFICERS FOR 2012-2013 BALLOT

The NACE Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for 2012-2013 NACE officers. The positions of President-elect, Secretary-Treasurer, and Regional Vice Presidents for the South Central and Northeast regions will be on the ballot next year. You may nominate yourself. Nominations should be sent to the Nominations Committee Chair, Phil Demery **by November 30, 2011**. A short biography (Word/text) and photograph (jpg file) should be included. Nominations and/or questions should be directed to Phil Demery at (707) 565-3584 or pdemery@sonoma-county.org.

IT'S TIME TO NOMINATE DESERVING "ENGINEER OF THE YEAR" OR "PROGRAM/PROJECT MANAGER OF THE YEAR"

Each year the NACE Awards Committee requests nominations of individuals for the "Urban Engineer of the Year", "Rural Engineer of the Year" and "Program/Project Manager of the Year" awards. The rules and criterion can be found by visiting the NACE website, www.countyengineers.org, under Programs and Committee. In addition, each NACE Board member has copies of the forms. We encourage each NACE state affiliate organization to submit their nominations (5 copies) **by December 31, 2011** to Ken Stone, Director of Asset Management and Sustainability, 207 4th Avenue, N., Kelso, WA 98626-4189. For more information contact Ken at (360) 577-3011; email: stonek@co.cowlitz.wa.us

Registration is now open: NACE 2012 conference in Lexington, Kentucky April 1-5, 2012
<http://www.countyengineers.org/events/annualconf/Pages/NACE2012.aspx>

UPDATE ON SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

The Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee on October 21 announced that it will consider a bipartisan two-year \$109 billion highway bill on November 9. The bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), according to the committee, “holds spending at current levels plus inflation, greatly increases leveraging of federal dollars, and modernizes and reforms the nation’s transportation systems to help create jobs and builds the foundation for long-term prosperity.” This mark up was not supposed to occur until the Senate Finance Committee identified \$12 billion in new revenue, which is the amount needed in addition to Highway Trust Fund revenue to fully fund a bill for two years. It appears that an agreement on MAP-21 has been reached that will allow it to go forward in the EPW Committee without the \$12 billion being identified. A date for consideration of the transit section of the bill by the Senate Banking Committee has not been announced. Meanwhile in the House, the Republican leadership has now given Chairman Mica of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee permission to try to identify \$90-\$100 billion in additional revenue that could be used to fund a new six-year bill at current levels of funding. Up to now the House bill was going to be funded at around \$230 billion over 6 years that would constitute at least a 30% cut in funding. The surface transportation program is currently in its 8th extension, which expires on March 30, 2012.

STATES RECEIVE MORE IN HIGHWAY FUNDS THAN THEY CONTRIBUTE

From 2005-2009, every state received more funding for the highway program than they contributed to the Highway Trust Fund. This unusual conclusion was reached in a study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) (GAO-11-918) in a report issued this week. This was all due to the \$30 billion in general fund revenue that has been used to shore up the Highway Trust Fund since 2008. Historically, the donor-donee issue, that is how much each state gets back relative to its contribution to the Trust Fund, has been a contentious issue during the debate surrounding reauthorization bills. The GAO report also explains how the “user pays” philosophy of the federal highway program is undermined by general fund contributions. The implications of all these conclusions will be factored into the reauthorization of the highway and transit programs, particularly as Congress looks for sources in addition to the gas tax as a way to provide full funding for these programs. Contact: Bob Fogel, NACo Senior Legislative Director, 202-942-4217 bfogel@naco.org.

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A FOCUSED APPROACH TO SAFETY GUIDEBOOK

The U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has released a guidebook that outlines its focused approach to safety program’s purpose, benefits, and history. The program is designed to help enhance safety through a more targeted delivery of technical assistance and resources to the states. The guidebook summarizes the methodology for how a state becomes eligible to participate in the program, as well as the basic steps for success. It also provides an overview of each of the focus areas—intersections, pedestrians, and roadway departure—with success stories and resources to help fully engage each focus state in developing and implementing proven countermeasures. To view the PDF of the guidebook see: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/fas/docs/fas_guidebook.pdf

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NEW FACE FOR NACE?

By: Tom Stoner, County Engineer, Harrison County, IA and NACE South Central V.P.

One of the most rewarding activities associated with serving as a NACE officer is the opportunity to visit various state association meetings to share the NACE story and see how others are coping with the current gridlock in Washington.

In May of this year I had the pleasure of speaking to the Kansas State association in Hays. (Yes, there really is a Hays, Kansas). I was treated to record breaking heat for a couple of days, but the association made certain that the beer was adequately insulated, so all went well. Rod Meredith, the Kansas State Director, was my gracious host and I appreciated his time.

The “hot” topic in Kansas was the “Federal Funds Exchange Program for Local Agencies”. This program allows local jurisdictions to “trade” federal funds to the state for less encumbered replacement funds on a reimbursable project specific basis. Although the program has had a few minor wrinkles, it seems to be working mostly as planned. The same topic was also addressed at the MINK (Missouri, Indiana, Nebraska, Kansas) conference in St. Joseph, Missouri I attended in late September. The program makes a lot of sense and is being considered by other states as well, including Iowa.

In early September, I made a quick trip to visit our Louisiana friends. Although I was banned from that state for nearly a year, (following a very spirited competition for the NACE 2013 annual conference), the ban was lifted just in time for the Louisiana State asso-

ciation meeting in Lafayette. I was given the royal treatment by their State Director, Dennis Woodward and many other members of their group. I especially want to thank their President, Elton Pickering, for his southern hospitality. And I discovered something very interesting about the people from Louisiana. They only eat one meal a day. It starts about 7:00 a.m. and concludes around midnight.

The Louisiana association is working diligently toward hosting NACE 2014 in Baton Rouge and is well ahead of the curve in preparing to make that annual meeting a success. NACE 2014 is in good hands.

As would be expected, the members of the Louisiana association raised the topic as to whether NACE leadership needs to consider a more appropriate title for our organization. As I pointed out to several groups I have addressed, NACE is not national, it is international. (Our friends in Canada can attest to that.) NACE is an association. NACE is not just for counties. It includes parishes and, in fact, many state associations include cities and townships. Finally, NACE isn't just engineers. In fact, a very large percentage of our members are not engineers.

So why do we still call ourselves NACE? My observations have been it's mostly because we've always done it that way.

But beyond that, the appropriate replacement name seems quite elusive. Calling ourselves the International Association of Local Government Elected and Appointed Transportation and Public Works Officials and Professionals, (IALGEATPWOP), seems a bit clumsy. National Association of County Engineers and Road Superintendents,

(NACERS), has been widely suggested, but really doesn't address that pesky “lack of inclusion” concern. Interestingly enough, my County Board had a few suggestions. (It turns out they simply started with a few very unflattering acronyms and added a bunch of words to make it work. They really weren't much help.)

A year or so ago we added the tag line, “The Voice of County Road Officials”, in an attempt to be more explanatory. It was a step in the right direction; but more work is needed. It's probably time to revisit the topic in earnest. (After all, what else does new NACE Executive Director, Brian Roberts have to do?)

So I have a suggestion. Send your ideas to me at jtstoner@harrisoncountytia.org. I will assemble the results into some sort of report for the Executive Committee to review and consider. Remember, the suggested name has to be inclusive of as many of our members as is possible, it has to reflect the diverse backgrounds and qualifications of our members; it has to be short, and it has to be “catchy”. I'll bet somebody out there has an idea that serves our needs perfectly. And if not, we can at least say we tried.

Later this month, I am planning a trip to Kansas City, Missouri where the Missouri Association of County Transportation Officials (MACTO) is holding their annual meeting. That group always makes me feel welcome and Anne and I are looking forward to spending some quality time with a few old friends. I was invited to that meeting by Dan Ratermann, the MACTO Executive Director. Now, for those of you who don't recognize the name, Dan is the father of Duane Ratermann, our new North Central Vice-President. Apparently Dan was also some sort of officer in NACE eons ago, but who remembers that long?

Well, that about wraps up my next-to-last newsletter contribution as your South Central Vice-President. It's hard to believe how quickly the time has gone, and how many changes NACE has gone through in my time here. It simply proves that NACE is a remarkably dynamic and resilient organization. A lot of exciting things are going on right now and I will be proud to say I was a part of it.

I'm already trying to figure out how we are going to say good-bye to all of the friends we have made in the NACE family. Friends literally from California to New York and from Minnesota to Louisiana, and countless points in between. I'll somehow find a way, but for now, I'll just think about that tomorrow.

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WISCONSIN BIENNIAL BUDGET – COUNTY HIGHWAY IMPACTS

By Bruce G. Stelzner, Highway Commissioner, Chippewa County, WI, WCHA President, and NACE State Director

In Wisconsin our State Biennial Budget was recently signed into law which provided for significant increases in additional transportation funding for the state highway system. However, local roads including county trunk highways felt a significant shift away from state funded dollars as those dollars were moved to the state highway system. Additionally, statutory language changes were implemented in the state budget that will cause significant hardship to many county highway operations across the state.

I am sad to report that Wisconsin State General Transportation Aids to Counties were reduced by approximately 10% over the biennium which will mean significant reductions in state dollars for needed repairs and improvements to our local county highway systems. In real dollars this means that the average Wisconsin County will receive about \$140,000 less in state funding annually during the next biennium. Additionally, many Wisconsin Counties operate mass transit systems and funding for those county operations were also reduced by 10%. Further counties that have been considering forming Regional Transit Authorities (RTA's) under previous state statutes are no longer able to consider RTA's under the recently adopted statutory provisions.

For decades Wisconsin Laws included strong language that provided for intergovernmental cooperation between local governments. Under those laws County Highway Departments provided services to local gov-

ernments such as towns, villages, cities, school districts and other tax based entities located within the geographical boundaries of each county. In some instances and under certain circumstances counties also assisted neighboring counties and other local governments with sharing of labor, equipment and materials.

With the recently adopted Wisconsin Budget decades of statutory intergovernmental cooperation provisions were either dismissed or reduced to a point where local relationships developed over decades have now been minimized by the legislature. County Highway Departments are now prohibited from performing improvement projects with their own crews on roads of any city or village with populations exceeding 5,000. Additionally, County Highway Departments may no longer perform cooperative road improvement work with neighboring County Highway Departments.

Additionally, the Wisconsin Budget included significant changes to Wisconsin's Prevailing Wage laws. Provisions to limit public sector work forces from competing with private sector contractors were also inserted into prevailing wage requirements. Work performed by private contractors for a town, city or village with a population of 2,500 or less will have a prevailing wage threshold of \$234,000 if a multiple trade or \$48,000 if a single trade. If a County Highway Department provides the work the threshold is \$100,000. Cities and Villages with populations exceeding 2,500 will also have a threshold of \$100,000 for county performed work. And as indicated above County Highway Departments are prohibited from performing improvement projects for city and villages with populations exceed-

ing 5,000.

One interesting provision within the State Budget was the attempted preservation of the unique relationship that Wisconsin County Highway Departments have with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation by counties providing maintenance services on both the state trunk highway system and interstate system within the State. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation does not employ state employees for routine maintenance on the state system but solely relies upon local county highway departments to provide those maintenance services on state and interstate systems located within each county. The Wisconsin State Legislature included with the State Budget a provision that would have required WisDOT to submit in its budget request funding equal to the amount appropriated in the base year plus an inflationary factor, for maintenance activities performed by counties, if WisDOT determines that funding levels for county maintenance is inadequate. This provision was ultimately vetoed by the Governor. In essence the Governor's veto will require Wisconsin County Highway Departments to rethink the WisDOT and County maintenance relationship given the fact that the Governor vetoed the provision that would have ultimately supported county resources for state highway maintenance.

As County Highway Departments across the nation face funding problems, Wisconsin County Highway Departments must face their own unique challenges, both prohibitive statutory language changes and that of reduced funding, brought about by legislative changes contained within provisions of the new Wisconsin State Biennial Budget.

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THE GREAT MINNESOTA STATE SHUTDOWN OF 2011

By Greg Isakson, County Engineer, Goodhue County, MN and NACE State Director

The Back Ground: Don't you just love Politics? The voters of Minnesota elected a new Democratic Governor in November of 2010 along with a whole bunch of new Republican Representatives and Senators. Many experienced legislators were not reelected by a voter base looking for a change in State Government due to the poor economy, (very similar to what happened in Washington DC). For the first time in many many years, the Republicans controlled both the Minnesota House and the Senate; and many committees were run by Chairs with little state legislative experience.

The Cause: Minnesota runs on a Biennial budget process, therefore an important task of the Legislators in 'odd years' is to pass a budget for the two year period beginning on July 1st. As usual, the important issue of the budget was talked about throughout the session, but there was no 'meeting of the minds' to work out political ideological differences. The Governor insisted on a tax increase on the wealthy and the Republicans insisted on no tax increases of any kind. The Governor wanted to approve the entire budget at one time and the Republicans wanted to handle each of the dozen or so funding bills separately. Late in the session, all the bills were sent to the Governor and he vetoed all but one. It appeared that both sides thought the 'other side' would look bad if State Government shut down (and they were both right). The 'stare down' continued as the calendar

approached July and virtually nothing was accomplished as we watched in horror as the state approached shut down.

Preparation: State employees were faced with an unplanned, unpaid leave from work for an unspecified duration. Even though they faced this unknown future with potential huge personal impacts, our comrades in MNDOT's State Aid Office worked unselfishly during the weeks before the shutdown preparing the City and County Engineers to continue operations during the shutdown. Everything from getting payments processed, advice on working on joint MNDOT projects, rules for working in the State's Right of Way, how to proceed with awarding new contracts or suspending existing contracts was thought through and passed on to our County Engineers Association President, Doug Fischer, who spearheaded the effort to get this critical information to us County Engineers.

The Consequences: The Counties Engineers could walk through a risk analysis to decide to suspend (most of) their projects for the duration of the shutdown. But the MNDOT staff had no choice and buttoned up all their construction projects during this shutdown. Once the budget impasse was rectified, they then had to remobilize their contractors and get back to work. Considering that hundreds of construction projects at the State, County and City level were suspended, one wonders how much of our limited road construction money was unnecessarily spent to close up, pay for demobilization and remobilization (or equipment hours for those machines that sat idle) and then to reopen the projects once the budget was worked out and

the shutdown ended. And, how many projects lost too much valuable summer weather and will need to be carried over the winter before completion next summer?

Since the shutdown occurred in the middle of our short construction season many of us were deep into our road and bridge projects. The area of material inspection became a huge issue since the MNDOT labs process most of our material samples and MNDOT sends their specialized inspectors to production plants (such as precast pipe) and we simply require our contractors to provide MNDOT Certified Materials. Some County Engineers could simply wait out the shutdown to get certified pipe, but many larger projects did not have the float in their schedules to wait for pipe and still finish the field work before the snow flies. Doug continued to coordinate efforts to find consultants to help get our materials certified.

One positive aspect of the State shutdown was the availability of contractors for county work. Many summers we are waiting for paving contractors to mobilize because they are busy on MNDOT projects. During the shutdown our paving contractor showed up with two and sometimes three crews and laid a lot of mix in a short period of time. The County auditor was taken aback by the size of our paving bill for July. And, it sure is nice to be in mid October with time to think about duck hunting and not cold weather paving.

The End: The State shutdown lasted for three weeks. State employees began returning to work on July 21st and our State Aid Engineer, Julie Skallman, had a memo out to the County Engineers that day with advice on how

See "Shutdown" continued page 6.

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2011 PUBLIC RELEASE OF INTERACTIVE HIGHWAY SAFETY DESIGN MODEL

FHWA has released the **2011 Public Release of Interactive Highway Safety Design Model (IHSDM)** to support the AASHTO's Highway Safety Manual (HSM) Part C - Predictive Method and is now available for free downloading at www.ihsdm.org. Please be advised that this 2011 Public Release contains major enhancements focusing on 1) a new Calibration Utility for the Crash Prediction Module; 2) a redesigned Intersection Editor; and 3) improved software features in Evaluation Modules, Graphical User Interface, Data, Help/Documentation and System Administration Tool. See Webinars below.

The IHSDM is a suite of software analysis tools for evaluating safety and operational effects of geometric design decisions. This 2011 Public Release includes six evaluation modules, namely – Crash Prediction, Policy Review, Design Consistency, Intersection Review, Traffic Analysis and Driver/Vehicle Modules. The Crash Prediction Module (CPM) serves as a faithful implementation of HSM's Part C – Predictive Methods for two-lane rural highways (HSM - Chapter 10), multi-lane rural highways (HSM - Chapter 11) and urban and sub-urban arterials (HSM - Chapter 12). The other IHSDM evaluation modules are applicable to rural two-lane highways. For more information on the Highway Safety Manual, please go to: www.highwaysafetymanual.org.

"Shutdown" continued from page 5.

to handle potential claims on suspended contracts.

In hindsight, one silver lining in the State shutdown is that it reminds us all of the critical connection between MNDOT and the Minnesota County Engineers. As with many of our relationships, we don't realize how important they are to our everyday lives until they are gone.

Thank You to Julie Skallman, her Minnesota State Aid staff, and to Doug Fischer for all the help they provided to allow the County Engineers to prepare for, to work through, and to recover from this ordeal with minimal inconvenience.

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