

LOCAL HIGHWAY FINANCING AND USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS TO PROVIDE BETTER RURAL HIGHWAYS

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INTRODUCTION

I am county superintendent of highways in Clark and Cumberland Counties in east central Illinois.

My home is in Marshall, Illinois or 16 miles west of Terre Haute, Indiana.

We are too far north to be free of snow removal and too far south to enjoy just one freeze-thaw cycle a year.

The combined population of my two counties is 25,000 people, with an area of 1000 square miles and 1500 miles of rural roads.

In my counties we have both a county system and a township system of roads thus providing various sources of revenue but with a low total that is totally inadequate to properly construct and maintain our roads.

Illinois statutes require that each county have a superintendent of highways and the term of office is set by law at six years. We are appointed by the county board after approval by the Illinois State Department of Transportation. We must be either a registered professional engineer or a registered land surveyor.

We are by law in direct charge and responsible for the construction and maintenance of all county highways subject to the general supervision of our county boards. We are advisers and assist our various road district commissioners with their plans, maintenance, and construction.

When my men haul gravel they watch for damaged signs. We have a policy: if we know a sign is down, it is replaced before the crew quits work.

When workers grade roads they look for locations of blocked drainage

PR AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Our greatest fault as county engineers is becoming so absorbed and involved in our everyday work that we fail to sell our product or explain our problems.

We must co-operate with other agencies, talk with people, hear what they say, resolve the most important items, establish priorities, and get on with the task.

We must train and trust our county employees. We cannot afford checkers checking checkers nor shall we tolerate managers interfering with engineering judgment and construction experience.

We cannot allow the bureau of the budget to camouflage our needs. Time and funds are both short. We must avoid all lost motion and time.

In dealing with the public we must refrain from caustic remarks and retorts. Now this is hard to do at 11 p.m. or at 5 a.m. and I really have trouble with it. Many years ago a fellow stomped into my office to complain about road conditions. I listened a minute then told him I wasn't worried about him, I had people calling to say "I can't get to town!"

CUT RED TAPE

We at county level have a secret pledge to never speak without taking a crack at red tape.

In 1965 a grain truck from Indiana broke down a perfectly good 80-year-old truss that was rated for three tons.

We had a board meeting, passed the resolution, prepared the plans, bought the right-of-way, advertised for bids, and awarded the contracts for one-half mile of road and a new bridge all in 90 days.

Red tape can still be cut when the county, state, and federal government really want to implement programs. You hear everyone say today that it is impossible to cut red tape.

In May of 1978, Illinois county engineers met with state engineers and the division engineer of FHWA to discuss means of using federal funds to repair and renovate badly damaged roads.

On Wednesday before Decoration Day, federals approved procedures for the use of federal funds for intermittent repair and resurfacing of severely winter damaged roads. We were allowed to use one year's allotment of our regular federal aid secondary funds and each county was offered 70,000 SOS funds to use for this purpose.

In two weeks my paper work was complete, approved by the Illinois State Department of Transportation (DOT), signed by FHWA and the next day I was hauling material. It can be done.

COMMUNICATE

We must keep the lines of communication open and operating. You as county representatives must hold and attend meetings such as this one to find out what you can and cannot do. Be positive in your approach, sell your ideas, and don't fall for the old excuse, "They won't allow it!", you must identify them. At the Mississippi Valley meeting in Indianapolis, people from many states identify their problems and offer each other their solutions to similar problems.

3R's FOR 20 YEARS

In 24 years of directing the county highway program in Clark County, I've only constructed one-half mile of new road on new location. We have reconstructed, widened, and ditched about all of our county highway mileage on existing or widened right-of-way.

We have had 3Rs (resurface, restore, and repair) going for 20 years. Yet the safety experts scream that we are lowering our standards. We must preserve our existing system, 3R allows us to resurface and repair roads that have been improved to a safe standard over the past several years. If traffic patterns have not greatly changed during that time, restoration and resurfacing will continue to serve safely for many years to come. The critics of this program live in highly urbanized areas, have never hauled grain, shoveled corn or manure, and have no idea of what makes rural America tick.

If a road has never been drained or constructed to meet our construction standards, we are the first to say use full standards for improvement.

MUST USE FEDERAL FUNDS—AND ALL OTHERS

There is a statement that rings around the rooms and corridors of meetings such as this; it is, "I can't afford to use federal funds, it costs too much, too much red tape!" Have you ever heard those excuses? I can't afford not to use federal funds. It is all I have for construction. All of my local funds are used for routine maintenance and matching money for federal projects.

I have the following sources of revenue:

State M.F.T.	\$140,000 per year
Local highway tax	80,000
Local bridge tax	40,000
FAS matching tax	40,000
1% of sales tax	150,000
Federal revenue sharing	50,000
State help to match FA	60,000

The counties in Illinois receive 90% of Illinois allocation of FAS funds. This is allocated to the various counties and provides me about \$100,000 yearly.

We had been using an allocation system for SOS funds that were providing \$50,000 per year. Over the years there have been many special categories of funds. We have always opposed categories, and prefer one lump sum that would allow us to plan and address our most pressing needs. Congress, in its wisdom, has continued to provide funding for various categories. This left us the choice of not using funds or attempting to find ways of working those special funds into our program. We have combined our funds to provide an improvement program for our highway system.

My secretary gave me the following list of special projects that we have used in Clark County.

FAS special bridge replacement	\$103,000
FAS special bridge replacement	54,000
FAS special bridge replacement	126,000
Safer off-system bridge	95,000
Safer off-system bridge	75,000
SOS guard rail project	200,000
SOS bridge inspection	18,000
SOS centerline striping	10,000
Railroad crossing protection	50,000
Signing projects	52,000
Regular FAS projects	455,000
Regular FAS projects	360,000
Intermittent resurfacing	314,000

By utilizing all sources of funding we in Clark County have had over \$2,200,000 in new roads and bridges in the last two years. We have a local bridge program with state and local funds only.

This program is supposed to provide \$15,000,000 state funds to be matched 50-50 with local funds to reconstruct substandard bridges

on school bus routes, mail routes, and routes that carry high volume of farm products to market. We have a battle each year to get this money in the DOT appropriation bill; however, we do have commitments from DOT and key legislators that out of the next increase in highway user revenues this local bridge program will be funded on a permanent basis.

Out of the first year's allocation three bridges were constructed, costing \$42,000, \$29,000, and \$56,000. The second year of the program I authorized three more bridges and prepared plans for several more bridges.

This year FHWA put on pressure to expend all SOS funds. Illinois opened the door on a first come, first served basis for projects. In my two counties I had ten sets of bridge plans ready. I took them to Springfield. They were approved and are under contract at this time.

Being ready has provided my counties an extra $\$3\frac{3}{4}$ million in funds for bridges.

COUNTY ACTS AS PRIME CONTRACTOR

Two years ago when we completed the bridge inspection and rating in my two counties, we had about 90 bridges that would not safely carry a school bus. Since that time we have replaced decks and built new bridges in more than 40 locations.

In my counties we do many FAS projects by using our own forces and equipment. My crews are not union; however, we have a good working relationship with the unions. My crews work side by side with the contractor's men to complete jobs.

On an FAS job we will utilize all of our own equipment, then let contracts for supplemental hauling of aggregate and for the spreading of asphalt. The county merely acts as a prime contractor with sub-contractors filling in. Once we have our subcontracts let, we enter an agreement to do the jobs for an agreed price with county, state, and federal funding. This gives us a completed job for about 70% of the cost of a contract job.

In defense of the contractors' higher prices, we do not have down time with our men and equipment. Whenever weather is adverse we just move on to other work with both men and equipment.

BE ACTIVE IN VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Gentlemen you must get ready. Prepare your plans, stay in touch with federal and state programs, build your bridges, and repair your roads.

We superintendents of highways in Illinois work very closely with the state DOT and the legislature. We attend regional meetings with FHWA twice a year. We maintain an executive office in Springfield for special liaison with our legislators and their committees. We belong to NACE and ARTBA (TOD) in order to have a voice at Washington level. We receive weekly mailing on the latest developments from both Springfield and Washington. We serve on technical committees with our Transportation Study Commission to see that our needs are presented in proper perspective and that proposed funding provides an equitable distribution to local agencies.

BE POSITIVE AND KEEP IT SIMPLE

You must maintain a positive attitude on projects. Sell your ideas; don't buy ideas because they are cheap, buy them because they give good service and value for the dollar spent.

I don't have a staff. I have one secretary in each county and a fine maintenance and construction crew. I use a consultant to prepare bridge plans. My FAS plans use typical X-sections that I developed ten years ago. I keep plans simple and easy to document.

At this time I have 25 more bridges under design in the two counties that include five on-system and 20 off-systems.

CLOSURE

My father was a one-room school teacher for many years. Along with the board of applied physiology he taught me an old adage for use in dealing with people that I have never forgotten.

"There is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us that it ill behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us." Another old adage from my grade school day was "The more you know—the more you know that you don't know."