

Opinion: El Dorado County defends its roads

By Creighton Avila

California road funding has been in the news lately with state funding for local roads (i.e. which is a dedicated allocation that funds El Dorado County roads) projected to be cut due to plummeting gasoline tax revenue.

Per the *Los Angeles Times*: "The last month, the California Transportation Commission said the state would cut transportation funding by \$754 million – a 38 percent decrease. Why? Because revenue from the state's levies on gasoline sales, which provide much of that funding, plummeted as gas prices dropped and more fuel-efficient vehicles proliferated. Those falling prices cut the state's gas excise tax revenue from 18 cents a gallon two years ago to 12 cents last year, and revenue is expected to sink to 10 cents in July. Every penny in revenue lost per gallon means a \$140-million drop in transportation funding."

Due to the cuts, for the first time in a decade the state has been asking counties to terminate some of the 200-plus projects previously offered funding according to Susan Bransen, chief deputy director of the California Transportation Commission.

El Dorado County has seen its gas tax dollars decrease, and the county will continue to see a decrease according to state projections. For example, in 2014, El Dorado County received \$10.1 million and it is projected to receive just \$6.5 million in 2017. It is difficult for the county to maintain current roads and plan for future road infrastructure when its state allocated road funds are continuing to decrease and there is no action at the state level to alleviate the problem.

The following are facts about the funding, resources, and assets that maintain the roads that are overseen by the El Dorado County Community Development Agency:

Funding

A large majority of funding for El Dorado County roads comes from state allocated gas tax funds and local Road District Tax funds (a small portion of property taxes).

At times in the past, the Board of Supervisors has allocated discretionary funds to roads. These funds are better known as "General Fund dollars." General Fund dollars largely go to fund law and justice functions (e.g. Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, etc.) while also funding some land use and development functions (e.g. planning and building development), and general government functions (e.g. Assessor's Office, Veterans Department, Elections, etc.). When the Board of Supervisors has had savings, in the past, it has funded some transportation projects and road maintenance with General Fund dollars; approximately \$6.6 million since 2010.

The county has allocated \$3.75 million in local tribal funds since 2014 for road work. These funds must be spent within a designated area per an agreement as mitigation funding for impacts associated with the casino.

Staffing

Due to uncertainties in state road funding with the current state budget, the County's Community Development Agency is holding several road maintenance and operation staff positions open until adequate state funding has been identified.

Quality of county roads and bridges

The Pavement Condition Index, or PCI, is a national measurement standard for the quality of roads. The index is measured from 1 to 100, with 100 being the highest score.

Since 2009, El Dorado County's PCI has increased from 53 to the current 64. Below is a table which compares El Dorado County's PCI to surrounding California counties from a 2014 report completed by the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities:

2014 Pavement Condition Index	
County	PCI Rating
Alpine	44
Amador	33
Placer	69
Sacramento	62
El Dorado	63
Median	62

As stated above, the 2016 PCI for El Dorado County is 64. The county continues to find methods to improve its roads, which has helped to increase the PCI. However, continued inaction at the state level could put the county's road quality in jeopardy.

The county's average bridge sufficiency rating has improved from 65 in 2012 to 68.3 in 2016. Bridge maintenance and construction funding is generally separate from funding utilized for road maintenance activities.

Accidents in the county, recorded in the Annual Accident Location Study, decreased from 1,271 in 2004 to 919 in 2015.

Examples of major road maintenance projects completed 2011-2015

Surface Treatment (crack seal, grind/pave, chip seal, slurry seal)

- Ridgeview (2013, 2014), Park Village (2015), Crown

- Village (2011) – subdivisions in El Dorado Hills
- Grizzly Flat Road (2013)
 - Deer Valley Road and Kanaka Valley Road in Rescue (2011)
 - Rattlesnake Bar Road in Pilot Hill (2011)
 - Cold Creek subdivision in South Lake Tahoe (2013)
 - Green Valley Road (2013)
 - Old French Town Road and French Creek Road (2015)

Brushing projects

- Omo Ranch Road in Mt. Aukum (2013)
- Snows Road in Camino (2014)
- Rock Creek Road in Placerville/Swansboro (2012)

Ditching projects

- Governor Drive in El Dorado Hills (2013)
- Fairplay Road in Fair Play (2012)
- North Canyon Road in Camino (2012)
- Luneman Road in Lotus (2011)

Culvert replacement projects

- Deer Valley Road in Rescue (2015)
- Cambridge Road in Cameron Park (2014)
- Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe (2014)
- Newtown Road in Placerville (2011)

Sign retro reflectivity program throughout the county 2013-2015

- 7,830 signs out of 15,172 signs have been updated (51.6 percent complete).

Annual Maintenance of Mosquito Bridge (2011-2014); major maintenance (2015)

Curb, gutter and sidewalk repairs in El Dorado Hills (2011-2015)

Road maintenance completed with tribal funding, 2014-2015

Asphalt Overlay – Gold Hill Road

Slurry Seal – Longview Subdivision and Emerald Meadows subdivision

Sign Retro-Reflectivity Program – signs completed throughout the tribal area

Minor and major rehabilitation – in the tribal area

Salida Way

Wilkinson Drive

Estepa Drive

El Tejon Road

Granada Drive

Greenstone Road

Springvale Road

Forni Road

Meder Road

Sunset Lane

Gold Hill Road

Sections of French Creek Road

Sections of Old French Town Road

Sections of South Shingle Road

Mother Lode Drive

Life Way

Longview Subdivision

Emerald Meadows Subdivision

Highland Subdivision

Cameron Woods Subdivision.

Examples of transportation related assets that need to be continually maintained

- 1,080 centerline miles of roadway
- 76 bridges
- 100+ box culverts
- 17,000 feet of guardrail
- 1,600 feet of timber wall
- 464 miles of double yellow centerline
- 302 miles of white edge line

- 14,822 warning, guide, regulatory and informational signs
- 137.6 miles of raised pavement markers (RPMs)
- 48 signalized intersections
- 131 pieces of heavy equipment.

The county is dedicated to continuing to maintain its roads even with continued lowered funds from the state, as shown above with the increased PCI. The state funding issues are ongoing and one-time state funding will not be a solution to this problem with the reoccurring maintenance needs that are required to maintain roadway infrastructure in the county. The County encourages the state to find a solution to the ongoing road funding issue, so El Dorado County can continue to provide a safe and effective road system for its citizens and visitors. To that end, the Board of Supervisors, through a resolution adopted at the April 5 board meeting, urged the state to provide sustainable funding for local transportation infrastructure.

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