

Commissioner Comments

Hello again from the desk of one Commissioner. All of the Platte County Commissioners attended the spring meeting of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association April 13-15, where we discussed the many topics that affect counties around the state. I would like to touch on a few.

Be aware that beginning July 1st that speed limits on county roads will change. The new law is 65 on paved county roads, 55 on unpaved county roads, and 30 on any road in a subdivision. These are maximum speeds. The new law also allows local authorities to post speed limits that vary from the maximum without approval from WYDOT as previously required. This will not change speed limits on roads that are currently posted at a lower speed.

The director of WYDOT painted a pretty grim picture of the Road and Bridge situation in the State. He thinks that Wyoming can expect 25-40% decrease in federal funding for roads and bridges. I think that means, if the State has less, Counties will have less. WYDOT, by state statute, inspects all bridges in the State of Wyoming. Of the 723 county owned bridges in the state, 173 are in poor condition, with an estimated cost to replace of \$101,000,000. At the current level of funding from the State and Feds, counties can afford to replace 4 bridges a year. At that rate it will take 43 years to replace all bridges that are rated as poor. Platte County has six bridges that are in poor condition with replacement cost of \$2.3 million dollars, all on a \$850,000 Road and Bridge budget.

This last session the State Legislature did approve 6 million dollars for County Roads that are impacted by the Niobrara Oil play. We appreciate the money but the 6 million dollars won't go very far when shared by three to ten counties. In Platte County alone we could spend sixteen million on road reconstruction. As always State Land and Investment Board (SLIB) will take the applications and distribute the money. I can see 50 million in applications with only 6 million to be distributed. When we met with SLIB board on April 7th they made it pretty plain that counties that are committed to their road system will move up on the priority list. In other words help yourselves and we will be more willing to help you. Waste what money you have then don't expect much help. Platte County can show the commitment and we will be applying for funds. Keep your fingers crossed.

Budget time is here so money is on everyone's mind. As always Platte County has no surplus of money. We will take a twelve percent increase in health insurance cost, due mostly to Obama Care. The new census numbers are out and Platte County lost population which means less direct distribution money from the state. These two things alone will cost Platte County \$250,000. All when we are experiencing new impacts and strains on the system that we haven't had in the past. These are very interesting times for Commissioners and the world.

Don't need to make it sound all bad, we still live in God's country, full of good honest people. We have a lot of good County Employees doing a good job and a committed Board of County Commissioners that are willing to take on the challenges that face us.

As always feel free to call us anytime or drop by a meeting. Till next time.

Tim Millikin-Chairman