



County Road Association
OF MICHIGAN

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County Road Association releases biennial report of county infrastructure needs
2023 Michigan County Road Investment Plan shows
\$2.4 billion added annual revenue need for county roads, bridges

LANSING, MI – Michigan must allocate an additional \$2.4 billion in funding to properly maintain and restore Michigan’s county road and bridge network, according to the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan’s *2023 Michigan County Road Investment Plan* released today.

The biennial report found the additional funding gap grew 28% from two years ago, when the same report identified that \$1.8 billion in additional annual investment was needed on the county road network. Michigan county road agencies have jurisdiction over 90,000 centerline road miles, representing 75% of the state’s road network, and 5,868 bridges.

“This report monetizes the dollars needed to make meaningful progress in restoring county roads to the good/fair condition that our residents and visiting drivers expect,” said Denise Donohue, CRA CEO.

“While we anticipated an inflationary increase in this updated *Plan*, we were a bit surprised to see the gap grow by \$500 million in two years, even as our engineer consultant followed the same survey methodology as the last two *Plans*.”

“We believe this is a result of both road agency inflationary pressures including those unique to the pandemic, and shortfalls in the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) due to significant increases in vehicles’ fuel efficiency and less MTF dollars as a result of more electric vehicles,” Donohue said.

Increased federal aid does not solve, or even address most of the funding challenges for Michigan county road agencies.

“While we’ve heard much about federal road dollars coming to Michigan in large batches, by law 75% of it goes to state highways. The remaining 25% is split between 614 municipal and county road agencies. Two-thirds of county roads don’t qualify for federal funds anyway,” said Ed Noyola, CRA chief deputy and legislative director.

“What’s especially noteworthy in the *2023 Investment Plan* is, that of the six cost categories analyzed, the ‘need gap’ that grew the most was on the local nonfederal aid-eligible roads,” Noyola said. “That need category – which is two-thirds of our centerline miles – jumped by 32%, from \$1.5 billion to just over \$2 billion. This is the heart of the financial need on Michigan roads – we need a state solution for local roads.”

At the same time, counties are no longer seeing major increases in state dollars from the landmark 2015 road package. It was indexed to inflation, capped at 5% and was never expected to make up for the big gaps in road funding across Michigan’s 122,000 total road miles.

“We agree with our peers at MDOT and in the roadbuilding industry that Michigan is facing a ‘fiscal cliff,’ and we call on our legislators and Governor to take action this year,” commented Mark Christensen, CRA president and superintendent-manager of the Road Commission for Montcalm County. “This Plan represents a clear and present danger to the condition of county roads, which are the foundation for our future economic and population growth.”

The 2023 Michigan County Road Investment Plan concluded:

- The statewide target investment for counties’ 90,000-mile, 5,900-bridge local network now stands at **\$4.1 billion annually**. This is up from 2021’s \$3.6 billion figure.
- Of that \$4.1 billion total need, nearly \$1.8 billion in state revenue did go to county roads and bridges in FY 2021, according to the counties’ required MTF (PA 51) reports. Doing the math, an additional **\$2.4 billion annual investment** is needed to improve 15% of the roads per year – the goal set by CRA.

“Our work group – which represents 200 years of road agency and civil engineering experience at the county level – has established 15% as the target goal for road miles to be improved by each county annually,” said Noyola. “This does not mean 15% of the roads will be rebuilt. Rather, it means they will be *improved* perhaps by a chipseal, by resurfacing, adding gravel or occasionally a total reconstruct.”

Michigan has the nation’s fourth-largest local road system. Total road jurisdiction is split between three entities as follows:

Jurisdiction	% of road miles	% of bridges
County road agencies	75%	52%
MDOT	8%	42%
Cities, villages	17%	6%

Regarding level of service, CRA has established the same goals for paved primary county roads as MDOT:

- **90% good/fair on federal aid-eligible roads.** These roads (23,000 miles) currently have an average rating of 65% good/fair across all counties. (*Avg. was 52% in 2021, 45% in the 2019 plan.*)

For the paved local road system CRA has set the following goal:

- **60% good/fair on local, nonfederal aid-eligible roads by 2031.** These Michigan roads (31,000 mi.) currently have an average rating of 44% good/fair. (*Avg. rating 46% in 2021, 36% in 2019.*)

“The *2023 Michigan County Road Investment Plan* is a wake-up call about the significant, but solve-able, funding problem for Michigan county roads,” said Donohue. “The longer we kick the can down the road, the deeper the problem, and our potholes, will get.”

The report studied six areas of need by county road agencies: Bridges; buildings/maintenance facilities; maintenance work; equipment; federal aid-eligible roads; and nonfederal aid-eligible roads. The unmet funding need increased in five categories. Maintenance needs were down slightly from 2019, likely due to different winter weather patterns and fewer maintenance projects during the pandemic years.

A licensed professional engineering consultant was engaged to perform the study for CRA during the third and fourth quarters of 2023, with assistance from a CRA work group of CRA member county agencies representing Allegan, Baraga, Kalamazoo, Mackinac and Oakland counties.

To review the *2023 County Road Investment Plan* visit micountyroads.org/countyroadinvestmentplan or visit CRA’s homepage at micountyroads.org.

The 83 members of the County Road Association of Michigan represent the unified voice for a safe and efficient county transportation infrastructure system in Michigan, including appropriate stewardship of the public’s right-of-way in rural and urban Michigan. In addition, county road agencies are contracted to maintain the state’s highway system in 63 counties.

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