

Source:

http://www.waynecounty.com:80/dps_roads/township.htm

Roads in Wayne County Townships

Counties and their townships have a unique relationship on the issue of road construction and maintenance. Unlike incorporated cities and villages, townships do not receive gas tax revenues for roads and therefore must rely on their county to provide nearly all road-related activities.

Wayne County's townships:

Brownstown, Canton, Grosse Ile, Huron, Northville, Plymouth, Redford, Sumpter, and Van Buren

We hope this information will help you understand how Wayne County is working to improve and maintain township roads.



Jurisdiction

Wayne County is responsible for maintenance and construction on all primary roads [so-called "mile roads"] in townships. It also performs daily maintenance on all state freeways, M-routes and US-routes [such as Michigan Avenue, Telegraph, Fort Street and Ford Road]. The State, however, is responsible for the resurfacing and rebuilding of these roads.

Wayne County also maintains township residential streets year-round, but it is not responsible for making major improvement since the county did not build them. Residential streets are built by developers and paid for by homeowners as part of the cost of their home. Therefore, the cost of paving or resurfacing generally is borne by the property owners, usually in the form of a special assessment district.

The County also is not responsible for access streets within condominium developments. Those are private streets, the maintenance of which is paid for out of association fees.

Townships and Road Funding

Why don't townships receive funding for roads as do cities and villages?

State law specifies that cities, villages, counties, and the Michigan Department of Transportation [MDOT] have jurisdiction over roads. These agencies are responsible for constructing and maintaining the roads that fall under their jurisdiction. They also carry the legal liability for the roads. Consequently, funding for roads is provided by the state legislature only to these agencies. State law does, however, provide the option for a township to incorporate as a city or village, which would give it jurisdiction over roads within its boundaries. There is also a provision in state law which allows townships with populations of more than 40,000, to receive from their county road commission, 75 percent of the cost of maintaining the local county roads within their borders, provided they levy at least one mill for road improvement and maintenance.

How are road maintenance and improvement projects funded in Michigan townships?

Most maintenance on roads in townships is funded with dollars allocated to county road agencies by the state legislature. Most major road improvements [bridge replacements, road widening, etc.] are funded with federal monies. In Wayne County, those monies are allocated by the Wayne County Federal Aid Task Force, which is comprised of representatives from Wayne County and each of its 43 communities.

State road funds are distributed according to a formula established by state law. The formula provides 39.1 percent of state road funds to MDOT, 39.1 percent to county road commissions, and 21.8 percent to cities and villages. This formula was amended somewhat as part of the 4-cent gas tax increase in 1997. In that case, 100% of the first penny went directly to MDOT, while the remaining 3 cents are distributed according to the existing formula.

While townships are not included in the formula, the portion going to county road commissions is intended to cover roads in townships. The reality, however, is that state road funding historically has been woefully inadequate, especially in high-population counties such as Wayne. To compensate for that, Wayne County transfers revenue from its primary road fund to its local road fund to supplement its township road maintenance budget.

How are major construction projects funded in townships?

While many projects in townships are paid for with state gas tax revenues, some projects also require Federal Funds or special state grants. The county's Federal Aid Task Force, based on objective criteria selects these projects. The availability of township matching funds is not typically a consideration and would not result in more township projects.

Do townships get back as much in service as they generate in road funds?

Yes. In fact, they usually get back more. Townships, especially less populated ones, do not produce as much gas tax revenue as larger cities, although they might have a considerable number of roads for the county to maintain. To a certain degree, the services in townships are subsidized by larger communities that generate more taxes, including Detroit.

Also, just to pay for the cost of routine maintenance on its secondary roads in townships, the county has to transfer up to \$3 million per year out of its primary road fund. Otherwise, many services, such as gravel road grading, guard rail repair and ditch cleaning would have to be dramatically cut.

Homeowners & businesses in Wayne pay a lot of property taxes. How much of those property taxes go to maintain and improve our roads?

Usually none. Unlike most county services, road-related receive no direct funding from property taxes. Some townships and cities contribute some property tax revenue to the improvement of county roads, but these contributions are provided on a voluntary basis. Our only sources of road funding are the state gas tax and the federal gas tax, the amount and distribution of which are decided in Lansing and Washington, D.C.

Wouldn't townships be better off if they received state funding directly?

The same level of service would probably cost townships more. Economies of scale allow Wayne County to provide more service for the same dollars than an individual township could. That's because the county is able to buy supplies, equipment, vehicles, salt, etc., in bulk, and so, gets a better price than could an individual township.

Direct funding also could cost townships other funding. Wayne County participates in road improvement projects only on roads under its jurisdiction. If townships took over jurisdiction of local roads within their boundaries, it is unlikely that county funds would be used on those roads, just as they are not used on city or village roads.

Having their own funding would not likely result in any additional major construction projects in townships, or make the projects happen any more quickly.

When Wayne County executes a project in a township, the township benefits from the county's expertise, which results in the best construction work for the conditions. If the township did the work itself, it would have to hire a consultant who may not be familiar with the township's roads needs and design criteria. County staffers, on the other hand, are Wayne County's local road professionals, and work closely with township officials.

Another major factor is that liability would come with the funding. Townships would receive the state road funding only if they also received jurisdiction for their roads. And the jurisdiction would bring with it the legal liability for the roads. It's no secret that, in this age of frequent litigation, liability can be costly, in terms of judgments and legal expenses. Wayne County has the expertise to minimize potential costs.