



**LUZERNE COUNTY
COUNTY MANAGER
Randy E. Robertson**

COUNTY of LUZERNE
P E N N S Y L V A N I A
E S T A B L I S H E D 1 7 8 6

A Letter to the Citizens of Luzerne County

SUBJECT: Road and Bridge Repairs

DATE: 26 September 2022

FROM: Randy Robertson, County Manager & Larry Plesh, County Engineer

Greetings!

I have been Luzerne's County Manager for a little over three months, and during that time I don't recall more than a day passing without a call or email complaining about a Luzerne County road or bridge. In that time, our Information Technology Department has advised that we (me, the County Engineer and the County Council) have received seven hundred emails about the roads, more than we could ever answer. I've been able to meet with most of our State representatives and even with Congressman Cartwright, and all profess that the most frequent concern they have from a Luzerne County resident is about a road or bridge. Mr. Plesh, our County Engineer and I will be one of the first to affirm, several of our County roads and bridges are in need of repair.

In accordance with State and generally accepted business practices, the County has performed roadway assessments every other year. The current condition assessment of all County owned roads is 3.23 (1 – Good, 5 - Bad), so we know there are roads that need work. However, the element missing in every phone call and email is the discussion of money and resources . . . it takes both to repair and replace roads. That is the purpose of this letter.

Here are a few facts that merit consideration.

- Luzerne County owns approximately 120 miles of roadways and has 297 bridges.
- Eight years ago, Luzerne County's Road & Bridge Department had a total of 21 workers; today we have 11. The starting salary for a Luzerne County Equipment Operator is \$31,500 and a commercial driver's license (CDL) is required. Our information indicates both Lackawanna and Schuylkill Counties pay close to \$40,000. Commercial positions with CDL's have starting salaries ranging from \$45,000 to \$55,000 or more depending on the working hours and location.
- The County has only three direct funding sources for roadway repair/maintenance, which include the Liquid Fuels, State of Pennsylvania "K-Routes" and the County's General Fund. While the funds from the Liquid Fuels are used for all roadway maintenance needs, "K-Route" money can only be used for PennDOT specific roadways.
- For several years, Luzerne County participated in a Local Use \$5 Car Registration Fee. Between car registrations and matching state funds, this funding source generated approximately \$1,400,000 per year that was used for roadway repair/maintenance. That program was terminated at the end of 2021. To offset the loss of those funds the then Council earmarked \$200,000 from the 2022 General Fund.

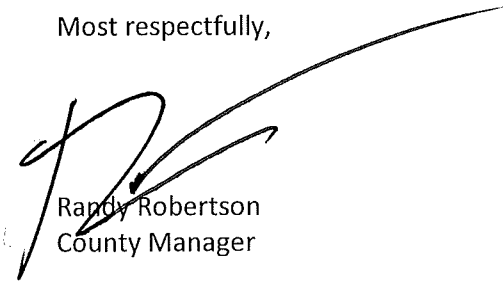
- Between 2018 and 2022, Luzerne County's "all in" Road and Bridge budgets averaged \$961,000 per year, plus whatever the annual license fee fund generated. In 2022, without the license fund the County's "all in" roads and bridges funds stood at \$956,000. There was no "Local Use \$5.00 Car Registration" money available in 2022. Considering this the overall Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Road and Bridge funds available were less than half those of FY20 and FY21.

As a concluding note, it is our intent to fully appropriate all available FY22 road and bridge funds prior to the end of this year. This will extend to some of the projects below:

- West County Road (section) – Multimodal grant for resurfacing and installation of bike lanes, currently in final design, 2023 construction
- Hillside Road – MPO funds for resurfacing, currently in final design, 2023 construction
- Kirby Ave – ARP funds for resurfacing, currently under construction, completed this year
- Sweet Valley Road – ARP funds for resurfacing, currently in design, 2023 construction
- Broadway Road (section) – Multimodal grant for resurfacing and installation of bike lanes, currently in design, 2023 construction
- St John's Road (sections) – Liquid Fuels/Local Use Fee/General Fund for base repair, construction to be completed this year
- St Mary's Road (sections) – Liquid Fuels/Local Use Fee/General Fund for base repair, construction to be completed this year.
- Hobbie Road (sections) – Liquid Fuels/Local Use Fee/General Fund for base repair, construction to be completed this year.

The repair and maintenance of our County roads and bridges are a priority. However, our truly dedicated and professional men and women are not postured to "make up" for the overall fund availability there was there just a few years ago. We feel it is imperative you know as much about the current situation as we do.

Most respectfully,



Randy Robertson
County Manager



Lawrence Plesh
County Engineer