

Vehicle Registration Fee to Fund Iowa County Road Improvements

Iowa County has significant road maintenance as well as bridge improvement and replacement backlogs. Iowa County's infrastructure continues to erode while the available funding from state and county dollars declines. While primary resource¹ costs have increased an average of 254%, Iowa County Highway Tax Levy Funding has declined 6% during the past 15 years. The county/state financial partnership does not provide adequate funds to address the numerous needs one finds throughout Iowa County.

Road maintenance and bridge improvement and replacement depend on both state and county funds. The motor fuel tax and state registration fees currently provide the state revenue for roads. With people driving less and vehicles more efficient, these two sources do not meet need.

The State of Wisconsin allocates the limited funds to Counties according to need. Counties **must** provide matching funds in order to receive the state allocations. For the past 15 years, Iowa County has been unable to provide the required matching funds and what could have come to Iowa County is then allocated to other counties in the area that can contribute the match. Iowa County has turned back millions of dollars and other counties have benefited. Meanwhile Iowa County residents continue to pay their fuel tax and registration fees while other Counties upgrade their roads and bridges.

Over the next 4 years, Iowa County has approximately \$7.1 in road improvement projects scheduled for state funding. To receive these funds, Iowa County must come up with a qualifying match of \$2.6 million dollars over the four year period of time or lose this money and watch another county improve their roads and bridges.

To find the qualifying match for the state funds, a County registration fee is proposed. A \$15 to \$20 County registration fee on vehicles will generate between \$345,000 and \$460,000 annually. While a County registration fee will not totally provide all the matching dollars, it will help meet the shortfall and return some of the fuel tax dollars to Iowa County. These dollars will provide jobs for Iowa County as well as upgrade our infrastructure.

If Iowa County wishes to get our "fair share" of the state allocations, two viable means are to either raise property taxes or provide funding through registration fees which are

¹Average based on hourly labor costs up 136%, Gravel up 191%, salt up 218%, Road Oil up 314%, and fuel up 411%.

statutorily required to be used on roads locally. Getting the road and bridge improvements and replacements on track is essential to the economic growth of this county.

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