

## **DIVIDE COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT**

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Divide County has experienced a significant increase in oil field traffic and volume, especially over the last 2 years. This increase resulted in sizable impacts on the county and township roads used to access new and existing well sites, often causing damage to these roads that are also used by members of the public and those in the agricultural field. More and more well sites are being developed and coming online as each month goes by. At one point in 2024, there were 7 active drilling rigs in Divide County. The increased traffic and impact of this spike in oil industry has created a strain on our departmental resources and budget to maintain the roads and keep them safe for all traffic.

As a county, we have doubled our amount of gravel applied to county roads, from 600 tons per mile up to 1200 tons per mile on these roads, sometimes even applying 2000 tons per mile on heavily affected county roads. Townships in the county have also had to increase the tonnage of gravel applied to the roads and have needed to also increase the frequency of graveling their township roads. For the gravel that is used in the county, we currently budget for \$500,000 crushing gravel for both our county and township usage. This is a significant decrease from our previous years of \$1,000,000 crushing budget from height of the oil boom in 2012-2016 years. This decrease is not a result of decreased demand but is due to decreased funds available to Divide County. During the time since this decrease, traffic has maintained levels, if not increased significantly in some areas of the county.

Divide County has also experienced an increase in the number of roads that need constant maintenance as well as increased frequency of maintaining these roads. Some areas and townships that have higher levels of oil activity currently occurring have gone from road blading/maintenance once every 3-4 weeks to now having a need for blading multiple times per week. This has resulted in a reduction in services for less affected county and township roads. Members of the community have suffered from less frequent maintenance of their respective roads due to this increased oil field traffic and numerous complaints and issues have been noted by residents. We feel that our ability to adequately maintain the safety and stability of our roads in Divide County, township and county alike, is hampered by the lack of funding and resources to keep up with the impact that the oil industry has on our roadway infrastructure.

Paved county roads in Divide County also have been impacted by the increase in oilfield traffic in the area. Heavier loads and more frequent loads on these paved roads have resulted in accelerated aging of these heavy use corridors. Some paved roads are over 40 years old and convey some of the heaviest and most numerous traffic in the county. We currently do not have adequate funding to properly and proactively repair or maintain these roads to the level that we feel is appropriate. A recent paving project in the western part of the county involved paving 12 miles of an existing county road that has started to see degradation of the roadbed after establishment of an oil well site on it, with more planned in the near future. We were only able to do this full stretch after

receiving Flex Fund monies from the state, as current funding would not have allowed us to complete that project. Additionally, we have 29 miles of existing graveled county roads that would benefit from becoming paved roads. These two roads would link state highways with already paved county roads in Williams County to the south. Paving these roads would decrease the required maintenance that is necessary on gravel roads in addition to negating the need to shut down roads after significant rainfall events. When significant amounts of rain impact these roads, weight restrictions are put into place to preserve the safety and integrity of the roads. This has the negative side effect of reducing if not shutting down oil production near these areas as most of the well sites in our county are not linked to pipeline infrastructure. The reduction in production then results in fewer tax dollars coming back to the county. Currently, it is not in our budget in the future to pave these roads as we must use our limited dollars to maintain our existing roads.

Bryan Haugenoe  
Divide County Highway Superintendent