

Testimony in support of SB 2397

We in Burke County are more than thankful for the Oil money we currently are receiving. But things have changed a lot in the last few years and it is starting to become a financial strain on the county and the townships, especially the townships in and around oil production.

With increased oil activity in Burke our road maintenance crews are spending more and more time graveling, blading and fixing on these roads more and more to the point some of these roads need daily work. As we encounter soft spots or bad spots in roads we have been trying to dig them out and fix them properly and not just fill them in with gravel and hope for these best. We have multiple gravel haulers graveling in the county every day during the summer months.

Townships do not have the funds to keep up with graveling and fixing/repairing township roads caused by oil traffic. The county has helped out where we can and have even taken over maintaining some of these roads. In some townships they are restricting their roads so it takes 2 trucks to haul what one truck would normally haul.

With the potential for further drilling in the county which we are more than happy to see the cost to properly and safely up keep these roads be it county or township is going to continue to increase. With a water depot for fresh water in Powers Lake they have a steady stream of trucks in and around Powers Lake hauling water in the area with a lot of those trucks coming and going to neighboring Mountrail County. This is a great income for Powers Lake, but it is starting to take its toll on the paved county roads going thru and around Powers Lake. It is also taking its toll on other paved county highways in Burke County.

Our bridges are all starting to get gradually degraded and the tonnage is being lowered on some of them. One bridge has been relegated to one lane only. This is causing detours around the bridge and is putting more strain on the township roads. The wait time to get these bridges fixed keeps getting pushed back each year. The last bridge we had degraded we didn't even put in for federal money to fix it. We moved forward ourselves and eliminated the bridge and went to culverts. We cannot afford to do this with too many more but we also cannot wait years to get them fixed.

Culverts in our county are getting old and are needing to be replaced at an alarming rate with most of these being in oil country. Even if these are on township roads we have been doing a majority of these replacements as the townships do not have the means to repair at the rate they are going bad.

As the county oil activity picks up we are going to have more expenses with upkeep trying to keep these roads in safe drivable condition. I believe with the amount of activity in our county and with the activity around us that is also using our county roads Burke County should be removed from the definition of the major oil counties as proposed in SB 2397 and receive more money to help keep the roads safe and in good shape.

Thank you

Shannon Holter

Burke County Commissioner