



Save Our Sonoma Roads

POSITION STATEMENT

May 10, 2013

Sonoma County Needs a Long-Term Plan to Address its County Roads Crisis

Save Our Sonoma Roads (SOSroads.org) believes that the Sonoma County board of supervisors should develop a long-term plan in 2013 to address the ongoing crisis concerning the repair and maintenance of county roads.

Sonoma County has 1,382 miles of roads, but only 200 miles are currently funded to maintain the pavement in good condition. The remaining 1,182 miles receive only pothole filling, and many have already begun to fall apart and will eventually deteriorate to gravel or dirt.

SOSroads appreciates that the supervisors included \$8 million in one-time funds for road repair and maintenance in the current budget, \$6.5 million of which will be used to improve about 13 additional road miles (1.1% of the roads that receive minimal maintenance).

There is still no long-term, comprehensive plan to address this problem.

The supervisors are considering a range of measures to expand the number of roads to be maintained in good condition. Among these are:

- Extending the Measure M one-quarter cent sales tax and redirecting its use from U.S. 101 to county road maintenance
- An annual tax on all vehicles registered in Sonoma County
- Increasing the tourist occupancy tax on lodging
- Forming special road maintenance districts where property owners pay additional parcel taxes for road maintenance.

SOSroads may eventually support some of the measures now under consideration by the supervisors. It is unwilling to do so until the supervisors develop a plan that addresses the road crisis in a comprehensive fashion.

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The long-term plan should include the following elements:

- A firm annual commitment of dollars from the General Fund for each year covered by the plan
- A realistic estimate of the additional funds that are expected from adopting one or more of the measures under consideration
- A time period for implementation, not to exceed 10 years, with annual milestones
- Criteria for ranking the priority of roads that will be improved during the years covered by the plan
- The number of miles that will be in good condition at the end of the implementation period
- Establishment of a reserve fund for ongoing pavement preservation efforts
- The number of miles that will not be in good condition at the end of the implementation period and a realistic assessment of the fate of those roads.

SOSroads believes that no plan will be credible without a long-term commitment to devote at least 9% of the unrestricted portion of the General Fund for road repair and maintenance.

For two decades county decision makers starved funding for maintenance of the county road system by a total of \$120 million, which is largely responsible for the current crisis. An additional amount of funds should be allocated to make up for this shortfall (e.g., \$12 million per year for a 10-year plan).

Efforts to raise additional funds will likely fail if the public lacks confidence that the board of supervisors is serious about addressing the roads crisis. SOSroads believes that a long term plan together with a firm commitment to devote substantial general funds to road repair and maintenance will help earn the needed confidence.

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Making roads a priority