



DATE: August 31, 2020

TO: Rafael Martinez, Director, El Dorado County Department of Transportation

FROM: Taxpayers Association of El Dorado County Transportation Committee

RE: Improving Maintenance Strategy and Selection

The Taxpayers Association of El Dorado County created a Transportation Committee in August 2019. The purpose of the committee is to examine the county's transportation spending to determine current effectiveness and areas for improvement. In particular, the committee is interested in how the county selects road maintenance projects and how technologies and methods are selected.

We chose this topic because road quality is consistently one of the most common complaints from our membership and the public. Additionally, as you have presented many times, the County faces a road maintenance funding gap. Before the Board of Supervisors is placed in the difficult position of either requesting a tax increase from voters or pulling money from other services, it is prudent to examine current practices for any inefficiencies.

Over the last year, the committee has had several meetings to examine data on road maintenance strategies and the county's current practices. We thank you for providing data and information in response to our questions. In addition, you hosted a workshop on your current practices on February 20, 2020 which was very informative and beneficial to us.

Our objective is not to recommend for or against any specific technology or project design. Instead, we want to be sure the El Dorado County Department of Transportation (EDCDOT) is availing itself of the latest Pavement Maintenance Planning software and strategies to achieve the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Accordingly, we recommend process improvements so that elected officials and taxpayers can have confidence that their road maintenance dollars are used as efficiently as possible.

As we provide the process improvement recommendations below, we must also stress the importance of routine maintenance such as drain and culvert cleaning, roadside brush removal, and repair of small cracks. In the committee's opinion, many of the county's road

quality deficiencies are due to lack of routine maintenance. Without these efforts, the road surface quickly deteriorates and no project - no matter the strategy, contractor, or budget - can succeed. As the County implements the recommendations below, we also encourage a renewed focus on and prioritization of routine annual maintenance. We also encourage the Department to work with the Board of Supervisors to create annual goals for routine maintenance and regularly report back to the Board and public on progress.

Additionally, we have been looking at the current use of Job Order Contracting (JOC) by the County for the Facilities Division. We believe this contracting process should be expanded within DOT to the extent possible and consistent with state law. JOC could be particularly helpful for road maintenance projects.

We look forward to continued discussions of these recommendations with you and your staff.

Conduct Life Cycle Cost-Benefit Analysis on Every Project and Report Results During Project Approval

During our workshop and in response to questions, you demonstrated the life cycle cost benefit analysis that you use. As you know this information is essential to determining the maintenance strategy that will provide the best value for taxpayers over time and should be completed for every project. It is critical that the numbers be accurate and defensible.

We recommend that the department's life cycle cost benefit analysis information be transparent and made available to the Board of Supervisors (and thus the public) when seeking project approval. The information should be presented in a form understandable by an educated layperson and readily available on the EDCDOT maintenance website. This will allow the Board to make certain that the best strategies have been selected and allow them to more effectively rely that information to their constituents. It will also give the public an opportunity to flag any errors or omissions before the project strategies are finalized.

Hold Annual Open Meetings with Industry Stakeholders

With maintenance strategies constantly changing, the Department must stay on top of new options: science and research. We recommend that before determining its project list for the year, the Department hold an open meeting with the industry, including independent associations. The meetings will provide an opportunity for the Department to receive feedback on its strategies from voices it may not regularly hear. The meetings should also be open to Supervisors, economic development interests, taxpayers and business groups, and other interested members of the public.

Conduct Retrospective Project Reviews

Reviewing prior work (past projects) is critical to future decisions. We recommend that the department revisit projects on a rotating basis (for instance, five years after completion, ten years, etc.) to evaluate the rate of deterioration compared to the expectations at installation. Over time it will become clear which strategies tend to perform, and which fail to meet expectations. These results should also be shared with the Board of Supervisors and public, perhaps as part of the reporting and annual meeting suggested above.

Relatedly, the Department should conduct regular case studies of project technologies not currently utilized by the county. These can either be done by the Department itself, or via an independent trusted third party.

Taxpayers Association Transportation Committee Leadership

The Taxpayers Association's Transportation Committee is led by two industry experts. Kris Payne serves as Vice President of the Association. He retired from the EDCDOT after a 33-year career. Kris was a project manager, planning and design engineer, and managed at the time the construction unit – both private development and capital improvement projects. He also currently serves as Chair of the El Dorado County Parks and Recreation Commission and is a previous Chair of the County's Community and Economic Development Advisory Committee.

Ray Myers has served as Executive Director of the Asphalt Interlayer Association for 15 years and has been involved in road maintenance for over 30 years. Ray served as co-chair of the Caltrans geosynthetic subgrade specification committee. Ray was on the ISSA committee that wrote the specifications for Slurry Seal and Microsurfacing. Ray wrote the revised specification for interlayers for the Southern Ca GREENBOOK. Ray has lectured to engineering classes at UNR, Cal State Chico, Cal Poly Pomona, and Cal State Long Beach on Pavement Maintenance. Ray has lectured at many Asphalt Maintenance Conferences and written articles on maintenance strategies for the Cal Pavement Preservation Newsletter. He participates in the Taxpayers Association as an individual.