

PRESS RELEASE

On August 8th, the voters of Allegan County will have the opportunity to vote for a renewal of the countywide, one-mil tax for Primary Road resurfacing. This five-year tax, first approved by voters in 1982 will expire in 2007 and the Board of County Road Commissioners has gained the approval of the County Commission to place the issue on the August Primary Election ballot. Since 1983, when taxes from the millage were first available, and through 2006, the Allegan County Road Commission will have resurfaced approximately 467.76 Primary Roads within the county with their share of the millage proceeds received over the 24 year period.

The eleven incorporated areas, nine cities and two villages, also share in the distribution of the funds collected with each municipality receiving its pro-rata share of the total amount based on their share of the taxable value of the county.

While the Road Commission will be limited by the ballot wording to using the funds it received only for “the asphalt resurfacing, preservation, and preparation of Primary Roads,” the cities and villages may use their share of the funds for “reconstruction, resurfacing, and maintenance on major or local streets” within their boundaries.

William Nelson, the Managing Director of the Road Commission, pointed out that while this is a renewal of a tax that has been collected since 1982, it is in fact a tax that has been assessed since 1968. In 1968, and for three consecutive five-year periods after that time, the proceeds of the tax were used for bridge replacement. When the bridge replacement program was substantially completed in 1982, the voters approved the change of the use of the millage for resurfacing. “This should in no way be considered a tax increase,” Nelson says, “since the voters are being asked to renew a tax that they have been paying for the last 39 years.”

Contrary to popular belief, except for extra voted millages for road purposes by individual townships for their own local roads and for the countywide millage that has been assessed since 1968, no property taxes collected outside of incorporated areas are used for road purposes. Because of its large number of miles of county roads (1,793.37 miles – the third highest in the state) and relatively low population, Allegan County’s share of the Michigan Transportation Fund (Motor Fuel Tax and Vehicle Registration Fees) simply is not sufficient to keep its roads in adequate condition. Without the aid of the one-mil resurfacing tax for the last 24 years, few, if any, of the 467 miles of roads already resurfaced could have been done.

Nelson is optimistic in feeling that the proposal will be approved since the resurfacing program has been so very well received by the public. He also states that the road board will continue to work with township and county officials to provide for the equitable distribution of the resurfacing funds throughout the county.