

Road Maintenance

SACRAMENTO REGION

MTP2030
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN
THE NEXT STEP IN BLUEPRINT

ISSUE BRIEF

OCTOBER 2005

Preventive maintenance and rehabilitation for deteriorated roads are crucial for our transportation system. The MTP2030 must face several key questions, including how to address chronic road maintenance funding shortfalls (especially in more rural areas), the consequences of continuing to defer maintenance, and tradeoffs between road maintenance and road expansion and improvements.

This brief highlights the road maintenance issues being studied for the MTP2030. For the complete Road Maintenance Issue Paper and a list of MTP2030 Community Workshops visit www.sacog.org/mtp

Cost of Road Maintenance

Local governments in the Sacramento region should spend an estimated \$350 million annually to keep all streets and roads in a good state of repair. Only \$250 million is currently spent per year to maintain, repair, rehabilitate and reconstruct the region's 10,000 miles of local roads, streets, bridges and sidewalks. Thus, cities and counties are deferring about \$100 million, or 30 percent, of critical road maintenance.

For the first time in 2005, Caltrans used all of the state's share of gas taxes and federal funds for state highway maintenance and rehabilitation and its own operations costs, leaving nothing for state highway improvements.

Paying for Road Maintenance

Road maintenance is a local funding responsibility. The only available funds are the local share of the gas tax, sales taxes and local general funds. State or federal transportation funds are reserved for capital improvements or major rehabilitation, and cannot be used for general road maintenance. Many sources of local funding, including developer fees, assessments and bonds, also cannot be used for regular road maintenance.

The inadequacy of the state gas tax is widely misunderstood; today it covers only 25 percent of actual local road maintenance and rehabilitation



costs, with nothing left over for road improvements. The state gas tax rate has not kept up with inflation: to cover 75 percent of maintenance costs, which the seven cents per gallon rate did in 1965, today would require 42 cents per gallon, compared to the actual rate of 18 cents per gallon. In 2003, only two of 16 sampled local agencies covered actual road maintenance costs with

their local share of the gas tax.

Taking up the slack for the gas tax are Proposition 42 sales tax revenues, Sacramento County's Measure A sales tax, and Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds in rural areas, which now provide about 50 percent of local road maintenance and rehabilitation for the region's cities and counties. Proposition 42 directs the sales tax on gasoline to transportation purposes, with 20 percent to cities and 20 percent to counties for local road maintenance, supplementing the local gas tax share by about 25 percent. Cities and counties once used local general funds for up to 40 percent of road maintenance costs, but since Proposition 13 in 1978 that has dropped to less than 10 percent.

Factors Affecting Road Maintenance & Rehabilitation

Preventive maintenance is key to controlling long-term costs. It costs less in the long run to have good roads than bad roads—if you keep up with preventive maintenance continuously. This region is not doing that. Deferred maintenance drives up long-term costs by shortening the cycle for rehabilitation, which often leads to pavement failure and eventually complete reconstruction at ten times the cost.

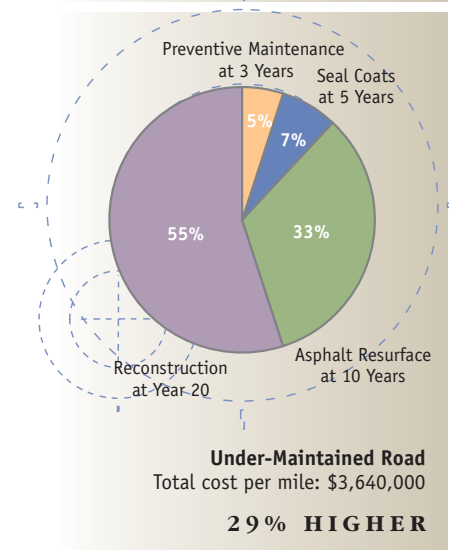
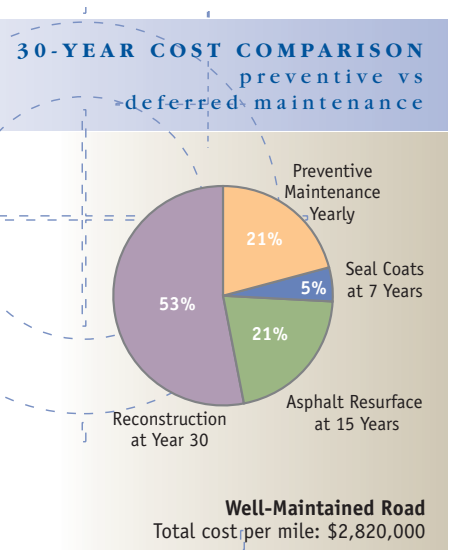
Heavy-truck traffic and wet weather comprise the two most critical factors in pavement deterioration. In simple terms, one fully loaded 80,000-pound truck causes as much pavement wear as 10,000 automobiles. Since 1990, heavy-truck travel has grown at a 50 percent greater rate than automobile travel. Many local agencies have identified wear and tear damage from heavy trucks on arterial streets as a rising factor in poor pavement condition. In Sacramento, trucks commonly use arterial roads due to the lack of cross-suburban freeways.

Road System Condition & Performance

Given funding shortfalls, local agencies do a creditable job of keeping roads functional. Still, deferred maintenance continues to be the Achilles' heel of the whole system, forcing costlier future repairs. The real damage of deferred maintenance is elusive, as local agencies report it in different ways and the damage occurs out of sight beneath the surface pavement. It affects jurisdictions unevenly, depending on such factors as age and design of roads and truck traffic.

Comparisons

Since the 1980s, California has gained a reputation of poor quality roads—a startling reversal from the 1960s when California's road system was envied throughout the nation. California's six metropolitan areas with greater than 1 million population ranked first, second, third, fourth, sixth and tenth worst on a national list of 52 such metropolitan areas (Sacramento was sixth). As a result, the average motorist in Sacramento faces \$609 in annual vehicle damage from rough roads, 50 percent higher than the national average.





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