

REVERSION OF ROADS TO COUNTIES

In 1933 the West Virginia Legislature passed an act that transferred the majority of roads that were under jurisdiction of the counties to the State Road Commission, now the Division of Highways (DOH). The Act was to relieve the Counties of the expenses associated with highway development, construction and maintenance.

Currently the Division has oversight of the following miles of highways:

Interstate	554
Appalachian	435
US Routes	1,807
State Routes	3,642
County Routes	28,877
HARP Routes	891
Total	36,206

Assumption: The State will retain oversight of the Interstate, Appalachian, and US routes a total of 2,796 miles. The State, County and HARP routes are returned to the Counties equating to 33,410 miles.

Standard Maintenance Activities include: Patch Bituminous Pavements, Temp Patch-Cold Mix, Repair of Base Failures, Roadway/Shoulder Stabilization, Skip Patching, Ditching/Blading Unpaved Roadways, Sealing and Surface Treatment, Minor Drainage Structures, Hand Patch/Seal Asphalt & Aggregate, Pull Shoulders/Ditches, Mowing, Brush Control by Hand and by Machine, Hand Mowing and Trimming.

According to the “*Statewide Summary of Annual Plan Maintenance Budget for July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011,*” the following costs will transfer:

MAINTENANCE ACTIVITY	LABOR	EQUIPMENT	MATERIALS	COST
County	\$ 93,325,280	\$32,872,893	\$63,366,849	\$189,565,016
Other Highways	\$ 601,774	\$ 322,202	\$ 531,910	\$ 1,455,886
Sign Maintenance	\$ 2,670,043	\$ 449,788	\$ 2,187,161	\$ 5,306,993
Bridge Maintenance	\$ 6,716,805	\$ 942,221	\$ 2,471,543	\$ 10,130,569
Total	\$116,094,928	\$40,711,785	\$79,515,069	\$236,321,776

Additional non-maintenance procedures that would transfer include:

Snow Removal & Ice Control (SRIC)	
Mechanical Application of SRIC Materials	\$ 45,531,086
Snow Plowing/Blowing	\$ 4,730,082
Snow Fence Maintenance	\$ 30,880
Post Storm Cleanup	\$ 538,757
SRIC Support Operations	\$ 14,354,186
TOTAL	\$ 65,184,991

In addition to the above expenses, the DOH spends more than \$1 million annually to remove litter from state highways. Approximately \$920,000 of litter removal costs would be transferred to the Counties.

The State of West Virginia has 7,027 bridges (vehicular and non-vehicular) and is one of only four states in the Nation that assumed responsibility for the majority of roadways within their respective state. Of this, 3,543 bridges will transfer to the Counties for maintenance, inspection and replacement. Currently, a few cities and towns in the State still own bridges in their jurisdiction but, when required to do major repairs or replacement, they reach out to the DOH for assistance.

Consideration should be given as to what level of Government will oversee the Bridge Inspection Program should the roads revert back to the Counties. The DOH currently conducts inspections on all structures regardless of ownership and, for safety of the traveling public, it is assumed that the State will and should continue to provide this service.

Currently, the traveling public enjoys and expects a certain level of service regarding highway conditions. With the transfer of a majority of the lower class roads to the Counties, citizens will no longer have this expectation. Instead, the wealthier, more populous urban Counties will be able to provide a better highway standard. The poorer, rural and less populated Counties will not be able to fund the needed road and bridge work.

Based on the above figures:

Core Maintenance	\$236,321,776
Non-Maintenance Procedures	65,184,991
Litter Removal	920,000
Total Cost	<u>\$302,426,767</u>
÷ Miles in System	33,410
Annual Cost Per Mile	\$9,051*

*Does not include new road construction, paving, overlay or bridge replacement.