



My first year as your Grant County District 2 commissioner has officially come and gone. I have seen a lot of everything – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

One of the most difficult issues is that of finances. Just as all of you have experienced in your personal lives, budgets have had to be readjusted. One must remember that not one penny of your property taxes collected are allocated to maintain county roads. The county general funds (for the courthouse) are collected from the ad valorem taxes (or property taxes) while the county road funds are collected from road taxes on gasoline and diesel, special fuel taxes (propane, butane), motor vehicle tax (vehicle tags) and gross production taxes (oil & gas production). These taxes are transferred from OTC based on several formulas that take into account county population, miles of county roads, county bridges, and county land area.

With increased fuel prices people are traveling less (so there is less road taxes collected). As the population of Grant County decreases, the base formula for funding also decreases. District 2 has the most miles and bridges in the county, which is 682 road inventory miles and 164 bridges that are 20 feet and longer on inventory.

With this being said I need to address the issue of the new 2006 Mack trucks that were recently purchased. The decision to trade was a “no-brainer”. Here are the facts, October 2004 purchased 2005 trucks at \$67,800 each with payments of \$913 per month. The county received \$65,000 for these truck in December 2005. Trucks were ran for 14 months, which cost the county \$2800 (or \$200 per month) to own them. The 2006 trucks cost \$72,980 with payments of \$873 per month. **YES, the payments are \$40 per month cheaper** than the last payments. The final balloon payment is a little more, but the increased residual value will cover this cost. Additionally, we have new warranties and an extended 3-year warranty on the transmissions. The old truck’s transmissions were jumping out of gear and causing problems plus they were out of warranty in October 2005. Down time and repairs can become very costly. All things considered, this was a sound financial decision.

In the next few months I will be checking into rotating graders, as the graders have high hours and our repair costs are increasing. At present we are operating 6 graders with the following age and hours, 1985 – 6700, 1994 – 12,000, 1995 – 11,500, 1995 – 12,500, 1995 – 16,700, 1999 – 9,000. Some are going to have to have major work such as overheads. Cost efficient factor must be considered. Previously the 1985 grader was not being used, Bryan and I chose to put it back in service last summer. If you own it – use it! If you don’t need it – sell it.

Bridge inspection reports were received last month on 116 of District 2 bridges, of which 15 needs immediate attention or will be closed, 22 needs attention in the next 6 months or will be closed, 33 needs attention to improve structure life or correct flow

problems. This does NOT count the 20 plus bridges that were closed prior to my taking office. Some of these bridges have been repaired and were opened in 2005. Remember, these numbers include only those structures that are 20 feet and longer. There are numerous culverts and smaller bridges that have also been problems for years.

The STP blacktop project on M & M Road north on Front Street to Sunset Blvd has the first two layers on it. We are in the process of cleaning and shaping the ditches and “shouldering up” to the blacktop. The blacktop is 22 feet wide and the shoulder part on M & M Road will be approximately 3 to 4 feet wide on EACH SIDE, total width approximately 30 feet. This will accommodate the farm equipment quite nicely. The right of way total is 80 feet. This spring Evans and Associates Construction will return to put the final layer of blacktop on for a total of 6 inches.

Unfortunately, we have not been mowing the ditches as I originally planned. With the “burn ban” on I was concerned that bearing might get hot or sparks from the mowers would start a fire. As soon as we get enough moisture I plan to start some mowing and possible burning the ditches where green wheat borders the ditches.

All three districts put in for a “rock” grant through NODA last February. In May we received notification that it was granted for a total of \$200,000. Since that time, we have been waiting on paperwork to be finalized. The last hold up was with the DEQ for an environmental assessment. We have now received it and if all goes as planned the work could begin as soon as February. District 2 will be putting rock on the “Numa Road” beginning at U.S. Highway 11 going north 8 miles to the “Renfrow Road”. District 2 will then extend the rock up to the state line with county funds as my budget allows. This will give the northern citizens a much needed all weather route from Caldwell through the country to Numa.

In addition to repairing and rebuilding bridges, replacing culverts, grading ditches and roads, and repairing equipment, District 2 has been very busy laying shale on roads to citizens homes in the country. Some people have lived on their “home” place for over 50 years but never had a road that was adequate to use during bad weather. We are not putting a “band aide” on these roads but rather doing it right the first time. The road is being prepared (ditches graded when needed) and making them wide to accommodate vehicles and farm equipment, the shale is put on thick enough to be maintained for years to come, then it is packed with a packer. Now I must admit some of these roads are still rough and they will be until we get a good rain on them, once again we need rain. These will be great roads and people can get out and/or ambulances can get in! Remember there are 682 miles and not everyone has this type of road YET, but we are making progress and YES, we will get to you eventually.

Remember that the roads and bridges did not deteriorate over night and thus they can not all be fixed over night. District 2 employees are working hard to make improvements and they are being done **correctly** (not always as fast as we would like but they are correct). As you see work being done down the road or in the next township that means we are that much closer to getting to you to help your roads and bridges. Be patient and give us some time. As always our doors and lines of communication are open to everyone. Give us a call here at the office 395-2859 or stop in to see us, whether you have concerns or just want to visit. For your information my cell number is 541-8950 and Bryan Brown, District Foreman, is 541-8951.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cindy Bobbitt  
Grant County District 2 Commissioner