

Township seeks input on whether to levy for roads

BY DANIELLE PORTEUS
danielle@bedfordnow.com

It will be up to the residents to decide if a road tax will be placed on an upcoming ballot.

A series of town hall meetings and public input will determine if the township will charge a tax for the maintenance and improvement of its roadways.

Bedford Township's road committee has been working for more than a year on ways to solve problems with roadways. It is no secret that Michigan roads are suffering and that state and county governments are broke. Coupled with a lack of funding from grants and the Monroe County Road Commission, a plan needed to be created to help decide the future of the township's roadways.

Ralph Lange, a road consultant for the township, introduced a proposal during the March 16 board of trustees meeting.

TOWN HALLS SET

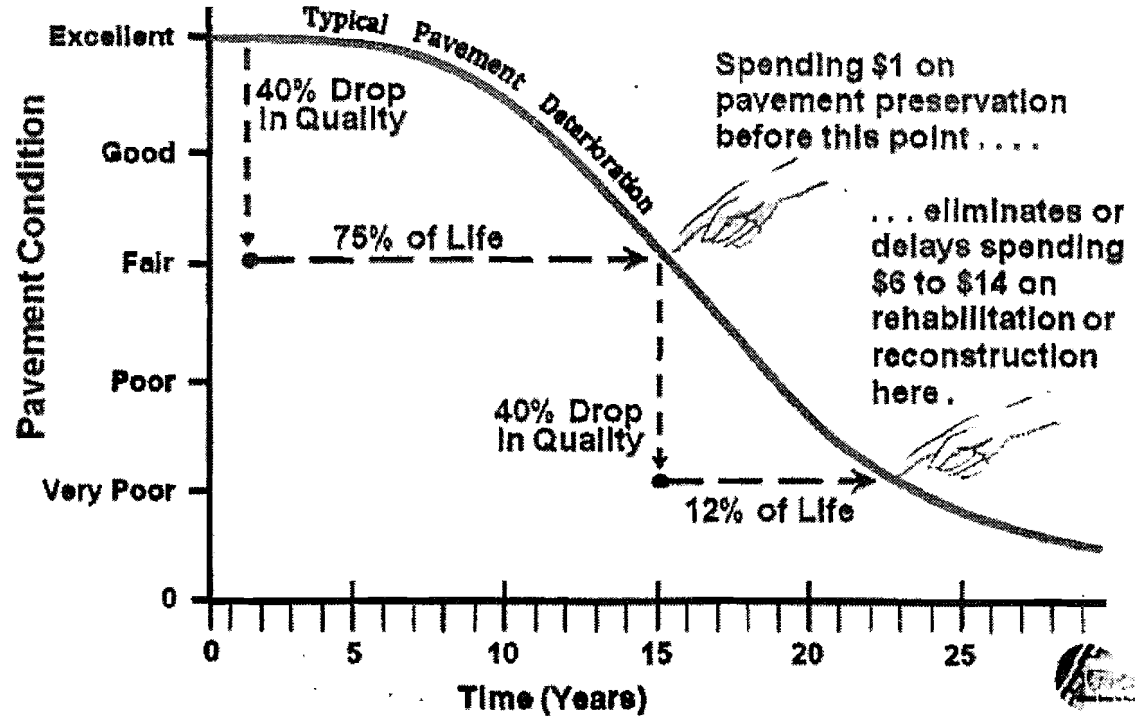
Bedford Township will host five town hall meetings to discuss the future of funding for township roadways:

- 1:30 p.m. April 9 at Bedford Government Center, 8100 Jackman Rd.
- 10 a.m. April 17, Bedford Branch Library, 8575 Jackman Rd.
- 1:30 p.m. April 23, Bedford Government Center
- 10 a.m. May 8, Bedford Government Center
- 6:30 p.m. May 20, Bedford Government Center

After calling the townships roadways a "critical challenge," Mr. Lange, the former managing director for the

See LEVY, Page 14

COST EFFECTIVENESS OF ROAD REPAIRS



— Graphic courtesy of Bedford Township

From Page 4

Levy (cont.)

county road commission, discussed previous road repair funding and the possibility of requesting a tax to maintain and improve township roadways.

Township Supervisor Walt Wilburn said town hall meetings will be held to discuss the future of the township's roadways before a tax would be added to an election ballot.

The road committee, which includes Mr. Wilburn, Mr. Lange and board trustees Larry O'Dell and Paul Francis, are proposing a 1-mill road tax for 10 years. If citizens agree to place the tax up for a vote and it's approved, the tax could generate \$900,000 a year. The cost to a homeowner of a \$200,000 home with a \$100,000 taxable value would be about \$100 a year.

"We are not committed yet to putting this on the ballot," Mr. Francis said. "No one wants a tax increase, but certain

things have to be done to protect our roads."

The road committee created a 10- to 20-year master plan that would maintain the roadways in the best condition before addressing more costly projects that might require complete restructuring.

From 2004 to 2008, \$11.4 million was spent on capital projects for Bedford Township roads, Mr. Lange said. The funding for such projects came from a variety of sources: federal and state grant money, the county road commission, the now defunct self-help money and the township's budget.

In that time, about \$2.2 million of work was spent on special assessment districts. The township's general fund contributed about \$1.7 million to road projects during that five-year period.

Approximately \$9.2 million of the \$11.4 million of the township work was not paid for directly by the citizens, Mr. Lange said.

"It seems the money was spent wisely," Mr. Lange said of the previous road repairs.

Bedford Township spent \$60,000 to \$80,000 a year on roadway maintenance from 2005 to 2008, Mr. Lange said in his report. That money went for dust control, ditch mowing, grading and other miscellaneous work.

In 2010, the township has four major road repairs scheduled: the culvert at Sterns Rd. at the Springbrook Drain; Sterns from Telegraph Rd. to Dixie Hwy.; overlay work on Lewis Ave. from the railroad crossing to Pickard Rd., and mill and overlay work at Jackman Rd. at the intersection of Smith Rd. Those four projects will cost \$11,500 for the township with the rest of the money coming from previously awarded federal stimulus dollars.

Those who wish to express their ideas or concerns about a road tax are encouraged to call Mr. Wilburn at 847-6731, ext. 121.