

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Hearing Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Frank Antenori, Chairman; Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman; Kathleen L. Gomez, Supervisor

Staff Present: Sharon Gilman, County Administrator
Joe Casey, Deputy County Administrator
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Jason Faccio, Public Works Director
Jackie Watkins, Engineering and Natural Resources Director
Fred Nixon, Operations Superintendent

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding the process, criteria, and potential updates to the level of maintenance and list of roads maintained by Cochise County, including the addition of new roads and the removal of roads from the County's maintenance system.

Mr. Casey outlined the upcoming quarterly public works plan and explained the criteria for adding or removing roads from the county maintenance system due to budget limitations.

Jason Faccio, Public Works Director, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Faccio reviewed the previous fiscal year's roadwork, noting that 107.97 miles were completed, exceeding the 70-mile goal. He stated ongoing maintenance activities include blading, mowing, and striping, with crews working actively across multiple districts. He stated several culverts were repaired and replaced, and seasonal striping continues with new equipment improving efficiency. He noted chip sealing faces supply challenges, limiting some projects to single layers this year, with plans to catch up next year.

In response to the Board, Mr. Faccio stated that while some veteran blade operators have retired, most current staff are skilled, with experienced workers mentoring newer employees. He stated road blading varies by topography and drainage, so some roads are intentionally bladed flat rather than crowned, and specific concerns can be investigated further.

Mr. Faccio explained that the distance bladed per day varies with road condition, width, and damage, and operators are often pulled to address washouts, especially during

monsoon season.

Jackie Watkins, Engineering and Natural Resources Director, explained that the 18.5 cents per gallon gas tax is distributed to the state, counties and cities based mostly on population, with counties receiving 19% and cities 31%. She noted state statutes limit county construction to avoid competing with private contractors, and highlighted the cost difference between chip seal and asphalt, with asphalt requiring far more material and equipment, making it several times more expensive than chip sealing.

Ms. Watkins explained that roads fall into several categories, including county-maintained roads, county highways, subdivision and non-subdivision roads, primitive roads, and private roads. She stated the Board can declare any road a county highway, allowing the use of public funds for acquisition, construction, maintenance, and improvement, with abandonment requiring majority approval of affected landowners or based on historic use.

Ms. Watkins explained that the Board can declare a road a county-maintained or county highway based on engineer recommendations or resident petitions, but the county is not obligated to accept it. She stated public roads can be maintained with county funds but not improved, primitive roads predate 1990 and have minimal oversight, and subdivision roads built to county standards are added to maintenance once constructed, regardless of whether lots are sold or houses built.

In response to the Board, Ms. Watkins explained that road construction follows national standards, with materials and thickness based on strength requirements, which chip seal serves only as a wearing surface without structural support. She stated asphalt provides structural strength, with thickness determined by traffic load, especially from semis.

Ms. Watkins explained that non-subdivision roads built after 1990 can be added to county maintenance with Board approval, while primitive roads built before 1990 are generally eligible, though about 40% lack perfected right-of-way. She stated non-county-maintained public roads can be abandoned by the Board, and private roads are not maintained by the county, as improving them could create liability for the county.

The Board and staff discussed that the county's public works website provides detailed information on which roads are maintained and why, including Q&A resources for primitive and non-maintained roads.

The Board and staff discussed Mr. Kern's road, noting it serves about 30 people but lacks fully perfected right-of-way along its length, with portions on state land that would need to be purchased. Ms. Watkins stated that when compared to other county road requests, the road's lower density and longer length make it less cost-effective for maintenance, so higher-density roads generally receive priority for resources.

Mr. Casey stated that three scenarios were considered: adding non-county-maintained roads to maintenance, removing certain county-maintained roads from maintenance, and paving some county-maintained dirt roads.

The Board and staff discussed the county's road maintenance schedule, noting 680 miles of paved and 761 miles of unpaved roads, with primitive roads typically graded twice a year, except for a few that receive more frequent attention due to heavy traffic or difficult conditions. Mr. Faccio stated maintenance challenges include limited right-of-way, private property boundaries, and spot patching with materials like AB to address washboard and rough areas. He stated chip sealing, fog sealing, and crack filling are done on a set schedule or as needed, with goals of covering all roads every ten years for

chip seal and about 100 miles per year for fog seal. Mr. Faccio emphasized that primitive roads receive limited upgrades and costs are carefully managed, and the public must understand which roads are maintained and why.

The Board and staff reviewed roads for maintenance based on age, right-of-way, travel width, addresses served, and connectivity, finding 5 roads in District 1 and 16 in District 2 that met the criteria. Ms. Watkins stated that limited funds, past road drops, and city annexations influence which roads can be added to the county maintenance.

The Board and staff discussed using a public-private partnership to address private property improvements while demonstrating a public benefit which could comply with the state's gift clause. The Board noted that showing a net public good, such as mitigating flooding that affects the community, might be a legal path forward.

Mr. Casey explained that in District 3, only 10 out of 1,793 roads met the criteria for addition, totaling 2.47 miles. The Board reviewed mileage, number of homes served, and rough cost estimates for dirt roads versus chip seal over 20 years to help prioritize which roads to add. Mr. Casey noted these figures are preliminary, as detailed engineering assessments and drainage considerations have not yet been completed.

Chairman Antenori explained that public hearings will be held, and residents adjacent to the affected roads will be notified by letter to ensure transparency and avoid any perception of secrecy. Not all roads under review will ultimately be added or removed, but the process will inform those directly impacted.

The Board and staff reviewed criteria for chip-sealing unpaved roads, focusing on population density, traffic circulation, and connections to existing paved roads. The Board and staff discussed the costs of completing all eligible roads with district estimates ranging from \$2.5 to \$3 million and a potential total approaching \$20 million.

The Board and staff reviewed county-wide priorities for converting dirt roads to chip seal, identifying Winchester Heights off Fort Grant Road and 24th Street in Douglas as top candidates due to subdivision density. The Board and staff discussed dropping certain low-traffic roads from maintenance, noting that this does not transfer ownership but relieves the county of upkeep responsibilities.

The Board and staff discussed sending letters to residents about roads under consideration for maintenance grading, chip sealing, or removal, allowing public feedback before decisions are finalized. Separate letters would go to those affected by potential road removals, specifying the date of the public hearing.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 2:40 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board