

Resolution Spotlight

The Resolutions adopted by the members of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas (CJCAT) at the Annual Conference originate among members of Commissioners Courts and serve as the CJCAT Legislative Platform.

Support for County Road Grant Fund County Judge or Commissioner → CJCAT → Legislature

Over a five-year period, TxDOT data shows a consistent and alarming trend: Nearly 7 percent of all traffic fatalities in Texas occur on county roads each year.

“That’s a significant share of the state’s roadway deaths occurring on roads that counties struggle to maintain with limited and outdated resources,” observed Cass County Judge Travis Ransom. One of those outdated resources is the Lateral Road Fund, which was created to support county roads.

Lateral Road Fund

The State Motor Fuel Tax of 20 cents per gallon generates approximately \$3.8 billion annually, according to the Office of the Texas Comptroller. Fifty percent of the revenue is allocated to the State Highway Fund, and 25 percent is allocated to the Available School Fund. **The first \$7.3 million of the remaining 25 percent is deposited to the County and Road District Highway Fund, referred to by counties as the Lateral Road Fund.**

The Lateral Road Fund is divided between all 254 counties using a weighted formula based on area, rural population, and lateral road mileage. This funding mechanism hasn’t changed since 1954.

The county share – \$7.3 million – is less than two-tenths of 1 percent of total fuel tax revenue, Ransom specified. Meanwhile, counties maintain over half of all public road miles in Texas.

“A funding level set in 1954 cannot meet the demands of 2026,” Ransom emphasized. “County roads carry school buses, emergency vehicles, farmers, ranchers, oil and timber haulers, and everyday commuters. They are the backbone of rural Texas, yet they’re being maintained with revenue levels frozen since the Eisenhower administration.”

Cass County, which spans over 950 square miles and maintains almost 1,000 linear miles of county roads, receives \$37,000 from the Lateral Road Fund.

“That \$37,000 is enough to chip seal one-quarter of a mile of a county road,” Ransom said.

Cass County’s total road and bridge budget is just over \$3 million. Funding sources include the Lateral Road Fund, a \$10 fee imposed on each vehicle registered in the county, and property taxes. In addition, Cass County used federal COVID-related funds to establish a \$4 million “Transportation Trust Fund” to help with expenses.

“If something doesn’t change, Cass County will have to return to dirt roads,” Ransom stated.

Having served as a legislative aide in the Texas State Senate from 2004-2015, Ransom is familiar with the legislative process. In fact, during the 89th Legislative Session, he worked with lawmakers to pass House Bill 1109, effective July 1, 2025, which exempts counties from the State Motor Fuel Tax.

During this interim period, Ransom is researching a proposal to reallocate a penny of the State Motor Fuel Tax to the County Lateral Road Fund and to distribute the same percentage (5 percent) of the electric vehicle registration fees to counties, as well.

“County roads are being ignored by the state,” Ransom summarized. “We are doing as much as we can with the little we have.”

Cherokee County Commissioner Kelly Traylor echoed Ransom’s concerns.

The cost of road materials has increased by 62 percent since 2020, Traylor shared.

Cherokee County encompasses about the same number of county road miles as Cass County.

“We are fighting an uphill battle on our roads because costs are going up, but our revenue source is decreasing because of inflation,” Traylor explained. The road budget must cover materials, labor, equipment, repair, maintenance, and replacement costs for roads, bridges, vehicles, culverts, etc.

Cherokee County has been hit with flooding over the last few years which has further drained budget coffers, with the last flood causing \$300,000 in damages in Traylor’s precinct alone.

Both Ransom and Traylor voted in favor of the following funding-related Resolution, unanimously passed by the CJCAT:

Support for County Road Grant Fund

WHEREAS, constitutional amendments have been approved by the voters to increase dedicated funding for public roadways; and

WHEREAS, these constitutional amendments provide additional funding to be used only for constructing, maintaining, and acquiring right of way for public roadways other than toll roads; and

WHEREAS, these constitutional amendments provide needed support for public highways without increasing taxes; and

WHEREAS, the county road system is eligible for assistance from this funding; and

WHEREAS, county roads are being devastated by overweight trucks to enhance the production of oil and gas; and

WHEREAS, the oil and gas severance tax should be equitably shared with counties to repair this damage; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Stabilization (Rainy Day) Fund has reached record levels through deposits from the oil and gas severance tax; and

WHEREAS, the appropriations from the Rainy Day Fund can be utilized to fund the repair and rehabilitation of county roads;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas does hereby express appreciation for the additional funding appropriated to support the county road grant program and requests continued support for the county road system.