

# **Mendocino County Department of Transportation Unpaved Road Report**

## ***Summary***

There are 1020 miles of roads in Mendocino County under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation (DOT). This report deals primarily with the 360 miles of unsurfaced (unpaved) roads.

## ***Background***

The DOT is responsible for Roads and Bridges, Business Services, the County Surveyor, Land Improvement, Solid Waste, and Engineering. In accordance with the mission statement "The Road Division has a key role in accommodating the statutory functions of the County Road Commissioner in accordance with requirements of the California Streets and Highways Code and restricted Road Fund provisions. In order to address these responsibilities, road maintenance forces operate out of seven Road Maintenance Yards throughout the County."

## ***Methodology***

The Grand Jury interviewed various members of the DOT and reviewed agency documents to gather information needed for this report.

## ***Findings***

1. The DOT top priority is safe roads and safe driving conditions.
2. The local yard Senior Road Crew Supervisors are the public's primary contact for local maintenance work and are available by phone.
3. Applications of fresh water are required prior to any grading of unsurfaced roads.
4. If water must be applied, it may have to be purchased by the DOT and hauled to the work sites.
5. A consistent supply of water is required for efficient roadwork; thus progress may be slowed when water must be hauled from a distance.
6. The California Department of Fish and Game sets stringent requirements for the taking of water from waterways, which can affect both the cost and efficiency of road maintenance.
7. Motorists have a tendency to increase speed after grading has been completed. This driving pattern causes the road to return to its prior condition of disrepair within a short time.
8. Very few unsurfaced roads are posted for speed limits.
9. Vegetation growth along roadways impedes maintenance work and creates hazardous driving conditions, decreasing visibility and narrowing the usable road surface.

10. Magnesium chloride, a bonding agent, is used to improve unpaved roads, control dust, and create a longer lasting surface.
11. The DOT Engineering Division has recently acquired four new pneumatic traffic-counting devices.
12. Some of the maintenance yards lack adequate surveillance and security features, leading to serious theft and vandalism.
13. For the past three years, funding for road maintenance has been so inadequate as to create an impending transportation crisis and a threat to public safety.

### ***Recommendations***

1. The Grand Jury recommends that the DOT make every effort to contact local reservoir/pond owners to assist in supplying adequate water in close proximity to road grading work. (Findings 3,4,5,6)
2. The Grand Jury recommends that the DOT increase the number of speed limit signs on unsurfaced roads. (Finding 8)
3. The Grand Jury recommends that DOT increase the use of magnesium chloride for unpaved road maintenance. (Finding 10)
4. The Grand Jury recommends that the Engineering Department use the newly acquired traffic counting devices to develop a maintenance plan for unsurfaced roads consistent with the increased use of such roads in rapidly developing areas. (Finding 11)
5. The Grand Jury recommends that security be increased at problem maintenance yards. (Finding 12)
6. The Grand Jury recommends that the DOT, in cooperation with the Board of Supervisors, act to ensure public awareness of this rapid decline in the infrastructure caused by lack of appropriate funding. (Finding 13)

### ***Comments***

The Grand Jury believes that the DOT is doing an acceptable job just to maintain our present road system with the amount of dollars and manpower available, even though many roads are falling behind on maintenance and improvements.

### ***Response Required***

Board of Supervisors

### ***Response Requested***

Mendocino County DOT Director