

November 7, 2014

From the Mayor --

Roads and streets continue to dominate the conversation around city hall. The recent discussions about the wheel tax, the decision by the Indiana Department of Transportation to upgrade US 30 sometime into the future, building a new road to access the Warsaw Tech Park, and the Husky Trail and Market Street reconstruction projects are central to the discussions. But most critical is the underfunding of the maintenance of our city streets and alleyways.

In addition to the age of our roads, the harsh winters with large temperature swings accentuate their degradation. I am not a road expert but our city is blessed with experts that can plan, engineer, construct, drain, and solve the aging problems of our 124 miles of our roads and alleyways. We also utilize project design and engineering firms, when necessary, to help us with more complex road reconstruction issues.

What I can tell you is this. "Mill and fill" resurfacing is the most commonly utilized method to improve appearance and smoothness of the road while also sealing off and protecting the road base, which can deteriorate rapidly if exposed. It typically involves the top 2 inches of road surface. It is also expensive. As petroleum costs have skyrocketed, the cost of the petroleum based asphalt has also skyrocketed. This summer, the city resurfaced a long section of North Lake Street, Hickory Street, Frontage Road, Ranch Road, one more project if the weather cooperates, and set aside a portion for 2015 Market Street. We spent our entire road maintenance budget to do those projects with revenue from the state gasoline tax.

If the price of petroleum continues to edge down, asphalt prices may follow suit and allow us to resurface more roadways next summer. It may also stimulate more gasoline tax revenues through increased sales. The major local resurfacing project in 2015 will be Market Street from Argonne Road to east of Bronson Street. We will also add more "mill and fill" projects as wheel tax revenue distributions become available.

Pavement typically needs retreatment every 10 years, depending on traffic volume and weather. The funding necessary to meet the 10-year cycle of "mill and fill" road restoration for all of our roads, is around \$2,000,000 a year. Current annual road funding along with the additional revenue of the recently passed county wheel tax won't meet even one-half of that total. A very large gap continues to exist. It becomes a challenge to just to keep up.

As a means of closing that funding gap, the city initiated a pilot program of pavement restoration that was just completed on La Vista Drive. The process involves a course of slurry and fine stone with a topcoat seal that chemically hardens. It fills widespread surface defects and restores the surface coat that protects the road base. It is about 40% of the cost of "mill and fill" and restores a sealed finish to the road. We know the process is not as "gratifying" to the motorists as a smooth new blacktop and the process isn't as "crisp". We will weigh the pros and cons of the process, evaluate the performance of this method and then decide if this particular method will be used in the future. The end goal is to prevent road failure that requires much more expensive reconstruction. Please understand our goal is to do the most with what we have. I much appreciate your patience as we work to protect our roadways.