

AMADOR COUNTY ROADS

PAVING THE FUTURE



Amador County Civil Grand Jury Final Report 2024-2025

SUMMARY

The 2024/2025 Amador County Civil Grand Jury's decision to conduct an investigation into county roads was largely prompted by numerous newspaper articles and social media postings where citizens complained about poorly maintained and deteriorating roads.

The Grand Jury conducted multiple interviews and extensive research to better understand why many county roads are in poor condition. During the investigation, we found that Amador County and other rural counties in the state suffer from prolonged funding shortfalls. We acknowledge that the County has made recent efforts to increase funding. Through this investigation the Grand Jury identified additional funding opportunities and operational improvements for road maintenance and improvement.

Surveying and documenting road conditions on an ongoing basis while using existing electronic tools will help prioritize needed repairs. We find that short-term and long-term planning is necessary to guide road management decisions.

The Grand Jury finds that direct communication with the public about road conditions can be improved. The information provided on the county website is difficult to locate and navigate. The public is better served by having easy access to more comprehensive information about county roads and the status of road work. We also find that there are additional inexpensive methods of communication that the county can leverage.

Although the Grand Jury largely focused on deteriorating road conditions, we also acknowledge that within the County there are some well-maintained roads.

We extend our gratitude to the many people who contributed to this investigation.

BACKGROUND

Research¹³ has shown that rural counties in particular face challenges in funding road improvements, often resulting in the deterioration of county roads.

During the November 2024 election Amador County voters became acutely aware of road funding shortfalls. As a result, Ballot Measure Q became a central issue that was subject to much public debate. This measure proposed a 3/4-cent (.75%) percent sales tax on retail transactions in the unincorporated area of Amador County for a ten-year period, providing approximately \$3.4 million (M) annually to be used solely for the repair, maintenance and improvement of local county roads. Measure Q failed, with only 42.7% of County citizens voting yes, an insufficient percentage of votes for passage.

The Grand Jury conducted a full investigation focusing on road maintenance operations, the use of available resources, communication to citizens about the status of County roads, planning for current and future road maintenance, and funding road improvements.

¹³California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment April 2023

METHODOLOGY

Interviews

During this investigation, the Grand Jury interviewed 16 people, including elected officials, county employees and citizens.

During the Grand Jury's tenure, the jurors also listened to several Amador County Board of Supervisors (Board of Supervisors) meetings via Zoom or session recordings and reviewed several meeting minutes.

Field Observations

The grand jury conducted a random sampling of County road conditions by driving selected roads. Photographs were taken of several damaged or deteriorating road segments and roads that were in good condition. These roads were identified by road name and specific location.

Documents

The Grand Jury reviewed numerous Amador County public records and internal department documents as well as documents from external sources. A selection of information from these sources was extracted for this report. A list of the documents is detailed in Appendix A of this report.

DISCUSSION

Department of Transportation and Public Works Functions

According to the Amador County website (on 1-19-25):

The Department of Transportation and Public Works [Public Works] is responsible for the construction, maintenance and rehabilitation of county road infrastructure along approximately 410 miles of County-maintained roads. This includes maintenance of the roadway pavement, shoulders, ditches, roadside vegetation, signage, culverts and bridges. The Department is responsible for the development and management of improvements to the county road infrastructure. This includes pavement resurfacing, pavement seal coating, culvert replacement and bridge replacement. The Department is responsible for the procurement of vehicles, equipment, materials and services to support its function.

There are other functions performed by Public Works not directly related to road work that are listed on the website and not addressed in this report.

The Grand Jury's investigation focused on Amador County road maintenance functions, and is summarized in the following categories.

Amador County Road Conditions

Amador County maintains 409.662 miles of county roads, while California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is responsible for maintaining approximately 126 miles of state highways within the County.

1. Public Concerns Regarding Road Conditions

During this investigation, the Grand Jury found that a significant number of Amador County residents have communicated dissatisfaction with the condition of county-maintained roads and were dissatisfied with the county's road maintenance and repair efforts.

Amador County residents complain (through local social media postings, newspaper editorials, and public forums) about the condition of county-maintained roads. Some residents also express a lack of understanding of how County budget funds are allocated and spent to maintain County roads. This contributes to some community distrust about how the County is managing their roads.

Below are examples of citizen complaints:

"Our roads are in terrible shape and some are dangerous to drive on." Editorial in *Ledger Dispatch* newspaper.

"So let's discuss the current road conditions ... [sample roads listed] ...some of these roads haven't seen any kind of repair – and I'm not talking about filling holes and letting the traffic flatten it out – in a long time. Most people I talk to agree...So what is being done? I don't see anything." Editorial in *Ledger Dispatch* newspaper.

"I'm tired of having to pay for alignments, and rebalancing of the wheels on both our cars because of the roads up here. Where does our tax money go?" *Facebook* social media post.

"There has never been a comprehensive road maintenance program in our county." *Nextdoor* social media post.

"I want to see a schedule for all the road repairs that are needed and the cost." *Nextdoor* social media post.

"BOS [Board of Supervisors] should be transparent...show where the money's going currently, and what projects have been completed." *Nextdoor* social media post.

"The last time county roads 'seen' any major improvements was back in '97-'98 when we had the 'El Ninos.' FEMA¹⁴ dumped a bunch of money in the county." *Facebook* Amador County Fire Watch social media post.

"Friday, Jan 10, 2025 at 3:30 pm Traffic Hazard – Large pothole. Multiple vehicles on the roadside with flat tires. Latrobe Rd. cross Old Sacramento Rd." Within Amador County line. *Facebook - Neighborhood Watch* social media post.

Interviews conducted by the Grand Jury also revealed an overwhelming concern that County roads were in poor condition, with some citing safety concerns. It was also noted that certain roads are on the verge of complete failure, further highlighting the urgent need for more effective

¹⁴ Federal Emergency Management Agency

maintenance and repair strategies.

2. Road Maintenance and Staffing

Public Works currently has 16 road maintenance positions, ranging from public maintenance workers to the public works superintendent.

With only two road maintenance crews, one serving the eastern region (up-country) and one serving the western region (down-country), Public Works has adopted a reactive approach to road repairs. Much of their work consists of filling potholes, ditch cleaning, culvert maintenance, shoulder work, brush and tree removal, trash cleanup, weed spraying, and sign repairs. More complex tasks, such as heavy paving and striping, are typically contracted out to external contractors.

3. Pavement Management Program (PMP)

Amador County previously utilized the MicroPaver Pavement Management Program (PMP). A PMP is designed to provide objective information and useful data so that managers can make more consistent, cost effective, and defensible decisions related to the preservation of a pavement network. The County did not maintain the MicroPaver database and decided to convert to the StreetSaver PMP, currently in use.

Amador County commissioned a comprehensive study conducted by Nichols Consulting Engineers (NCE) which resulted in a report called *County of Amador Pavement Management Program Update Report* dated October 2015. NCE followed with a presentation entitled *State of the Roads*.

NCE populated StreetSaver with data from NCE's field condition surveys of the County's entire pavement network, completed in May 2015. The county's maintenance and rehabilitation decision tree and unit cost were also updated in StreetSaver. Further, the pavement funding needs were determined, and nine budgetary scenarios were analyzed for the pavement network. The NCE report cited the following ways that this pavement management update could be utilized:

The purpose of this report is to assist decision makers at the County of Amador in utilizing the results of the StreetSaver Pavement Management Program (PMP). Specifically, this report links the PMP recommended repair program costs to the County's current budget and projected budget alternatives to improve overall maintenance and rehabilitation strategies. This report assesses the adequacy of ideal and projected revenues to meet the maintenance needs recommended by the PMP program. It also maximizes the returns from expenditures by:

- 1) Implementing a multi-year road rehabilitation and maintenance program;
- 2) Developing a preventative maintenance program; and
- 3) Selecting the most cost effective repairs.

This report assists the County with identifying maintenance priorities specific to its needs. It examines the overall condition of the road network and highlights options for improving the current network level pavement condition index (PCI). These options were developed through “what-if” analyses. By varying the budget amounts available for pavement maintenance and repair, one can show how different funding strategies affect the County’s roads over the next twenty years.

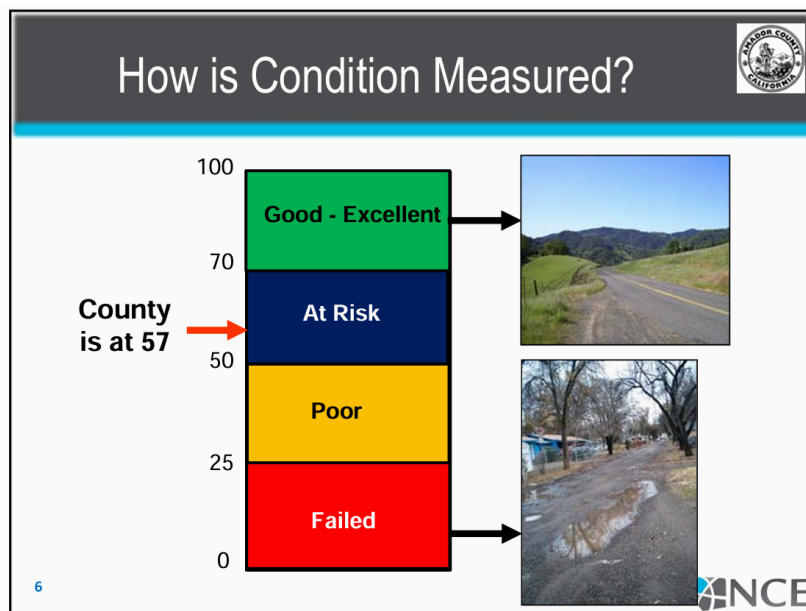
The Grand Jury was unable to determine which recommendations in the NCE report were followed.

4. Pavement Condition Index

The condition of roads is measured using a PCI, which scores road quality on a scale of 0 for failed to 100 for excellent.

The presentation from the 2015 NCE report indicated that Amador County’s roads had a PCI rating of 57 at that time, placing them “At Risk”:

TABLE A



The 2015 report highlighted the following breakdown of road conditions:

- 29.7% of the roads were in good condition.
- 31.5% were in fair condition.
- 31.5% were in poor or very poor condition.
- 7.3% were classified as failed.

Based on the estimates from the 2015 report, Amador County roads were forecast, without

increased funding, to have an estimated PCI rating of 36 by 2025 and 11 by 2034.

A report prepared by NCE in April 2023, based on 2022 data, listed PCI ratings statewide. The report, dated April 2023, is entitled *California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment*. This report indicated that when a PCI rating falls below 25, full road reconstruction is typically required.

Below is a table illustrating the statewide 2022 average PCI.

TABLE B

(Table number is from the statewide report.)

Table 2.3 Average 2022 PCI by Type of Road

Type	Average 2022 PCI	
	Major	Local
Urban Streets	68	67
Rural Roads	63	53

The April 2023 report was based on a 2022 survey of California counties, cities and other local agencies and not an actual assessment of current road conditions.

The table below, which illustrates Amador County's PCI as of the 2022 survey, is a portion of a larger table that includes all California counties.

TABLE C

(Table number is from the statewide report.)

Table 2.4 Summary of PCI Data by County (includes Cities) for 2008–2022											
County (Cities Included)	Centerline Miles	Lane Miles	Area (sy)	Average Weighted PCI*							
				2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022
Alameda	3,596	8,150	73,382,886	66	67	68	66	68	68	68	67
Alpine	151	302	2,139,517	40	45	45	44	44	41	58	58
Amador	477	945	3,598,703	31	34	33	33	56	51	51	50
Butte	1,816	3,644	28,691,159	70	67	65	66	65	60	60	55
Calaveras	831	1,340	8,201,768	55	53	51	51	51	50	52	44
Colusa	761	1,247	13,240,593	61	60	60	62	63	60	61	61
Contra Costa	3,348	7,012	65,788,024	72	70	71	68	69	71	70	68
Del Norte	323	646	4,418,399	70	68	64	63	63	60	60	67

*PCI is weighted by area

Amador County, as shown in Table C, submitted a PCI rating of 50 for county roads as of 2022. However, the Grand Jury is unsure what data was used to calculate the PCI rating of 50.

To produce accurate PCI measurements in the StreetSaver software, the datasets must be consistently updated to reflect recent repairs and storm damage. The Grand Jury found that these

datasets have not been routinely updated, making it impossible to accurately assess current road conditions. Without updated road condition data in the StreetSaver PMP, the PCI rating of 50 submitted by Amador County for the NCE 2022 statewide survey cannot be corroborated.

During the Grand Jury's investigation, some county employees have stated that the county roads' 2025 average PCI rating produced by StreetSaver was now 38. However, some believe that the county roads have not deteriorated to this degree.

Continuous monitoring of road conditions to update StreetSaver is needed to establish a more accurate rate of pavement deterioration which permits early identification of major rehabilitation needs.

5. Consequences of Deteriorating Roads

A. Damage Claims

Between 2022 and 2025, 17 claims totaling over \$25,000 were filed against Amador County for vehicle damage purported to be caused by County road conditions. Of the 17 claims made, all but one for \$1,485 were denied.

B. Complaints and Service Requests.

Residents can submit road complaints and work requests through an online service request form, calling or visiting the public works department in person, or contacting their County Supervisor.

An analysis of 365 complaints or service requests submitted directly to Public Works between July 2023 and December 2024 revealed that complaints fell into the following categories:

- Potholes: 62
- Signage Issues: 36
- Illegal Trash Dumping: 32
- Fallen Trees: 21
- Miscellaneous: 214

The Grand Jury was informed that not all incoming road requests are formally recorded in Department records. It was observed from this review of complaints and service requests that the road maintenance crews are responsible for many miscellaneous tasks beyond routine road repairs.

Many of the above requests were addressed promptly, and citizens sometimes expressed their appreciation for the work completed by the Department.

6. Positive Recognition for Road Improvement

Despite ongoing challenges, Amador County has received recognition for its work on a recent project. Notably, Amador County was awarded the "Project of the Year" by the Sacramento Chapter of the American Public Works Association for its work on Shenandoah Road in June

2023. The award recognized the quality of the project as well as the County’s timeliness and budget management, as reported by the Ledger Dispatch on August 2, 2024.

Funding & Expenses for Amador County Roads

Within the Voter Information Guide impartial analysis for Measure Q, the *Argument in Favor* section, stated that current road funding “... is not going to be enough to get ahead of our rapidly deteriorating roads...We estimate that an annual investment of about \$8 million per year is needed to perform the proper capital maintenance on all of the roads within the unincorporated County.” Since Measure Q failed to pass, Amador County will not receive the additional funds from this proposed tax measure.

The significant budget shortfall for roads was also consistently cited during the interviews conducted by the Grand Jury.

1. Amador County Roads Budget Overview

The Grand Jury requested and received a copy of the 312-page Amador County 2024-2025 adopted budget. The Grand Jury reviewed the Public Works sections of the budget for the purpose of developing a snapshot of income and expenses.

Below are tables of the Public Works 2024-2025 Adopted Budget Revenues, Expenses, and Net Cost, and included for comparison, actual figures for 2023-2024 expenditures and costs.¹⁵ Some budget line items are consolidated in the tables for brevity and clarity.

SEE TABLE ON NEXT PAGE

¹⁵ These tables were extracted and summarized from the County of Amador Public Works section of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Adopted Budget, Schedule 9 and Schedule 8. Amador County’s Fiscal year begins July 1 of each calendar year and ends June 30 of the following calendar year. Also referenced is the *FY 24-25 Mid-Year Budget Review* presented to the Amador County Board of Supervisors March 11, 2025.

TABLE D
PUBLIC WORKS REVENUES

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC WORKS FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 BUDGET

Figures rounded to nearest dollar

	Actual 2023-2024	Adopted 2024-2025
INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVENUES		
Gas Tax and Highway Users Tax	\$ 2,320,158	\$ 2,120,825
State Funding (1)	4,828,108	9,261,973
Federal Funding (2)	1,850,684	4,017,212
TOTAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVENUES	\$ 8,998,950	\$ 15,400,010
OTHER REVENUE		
Operating Transfers (2024/25 from General Funds)	\$ 822,000	\$ 2,970,260
Miscellaneous Other Revenue line items	192,821	311,500
TOTAL OTHER REVENUE	\$ 1,014,821	\$ 3,281,760
INTERFUND REVENUE (Road Charges)	\$ 1,948,344	\$ 10,900
FUND BALANCE (ROAD CASH FUND)		\$ 3,281,014
TOTAL REVENUE (forced total due to rounding)	\$ 11,962,135	\$ 21,973,684

(1) State Funding: Includes Senate Bill 1 (SB1) funds. SB1 is a legislative package that invests to fix roads, freeways and bridges in communities across California and puts more dollars toward transit and safety; State Funding also includes \$2.3M for a Ridge Road grant in Actual 2023-2024, \$6.8M in the 2024-2025 Adopted Budget for the State Road 88 Corridor Improvement Project and \$104 thousand (K) for Road Improvement Projects.

(2) Federal Funding: Includes \$2.7M for the Carbondale Road & Fiddletown Road Bridges

Public Works' Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budgeted revenues increased by over \$10M from Fiscal Year 2023-2024 actual revenues. As noted in Table D, some budgeted revenue items increased while others decreased. Material changes are explained below.

The County received \$2.7M from federal funds dedicated to the Carbondale Road Bridge Rehab and Fiddletown Road Bridge Replacement.

The State dedicated \$6.8M to the State Road 88 Corridor Improvement project (Pine Grove). In March 2025, the California Transportation Commission approved an extension for the construction award deadline to August 31, 2025. This deadline is for receiving construction bids, awarding a contract, and entering into a contract. On April 8, 2025, the Board of Supervisors approved the Public Works' request to advertise the project and receive bids. If bids exceed budget, the County can decline the project after reviewing the bids. The project funds are specifically only assigned to this project and cannot be used for any other road repair in the county.

The County increased the revenue budget for Public Works with a \$2.9M Operating Transfer from the General Fund budget and added an additional \$3.3M as a Fund Balance - Cash Account.

TABLE E
PUBLIC WORKS EXPENDITURES/APPROPRIATIONS

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC WORKS FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 BUDGET

Figures rounded to nearest dollar

	Actual 2023-2024	Adopted 2024-2025
SALARIES AND BENEFITS	\$ 2,741,973	\$ 3,103,628
SERVICES AND SUPPLIES	\$ 971,657	\$ 1,708,478.00
OTHER CHARGES		
Buena Vista Community Fund	0	255,000
FEMA Storm Damage Repair	595,865	0
Road Maintenance and Rehab	661,294	4,444,237
Public Works Improvement Projects - TBD	0	2,148,260
State Road 88 Corridor Improvement Project	86,433	6,800,000
Shenandoah Road Repair	2,649,930	0
Upper Ridge Road Repair	506	0
TOTAL OTHER CHARGES	\$ 3,994,028	\$ 13,647,497
CAPITAL FIXED ASSETS	\$ 410,686	\$ 596,957
SPECIAL FUNDED (REIMBURSABLE) PROJECTS		
Carbondale Road Bridge Rehab	102,550	2,700,000
Old Amador Road Bridge Replacement	311	0
Fiddletown Road Bridge Replacement	15,850	25,000
TOTAL SPECIAL FUNDED PROJECTS	118,711	2,725,000
COUNTYWIDE COST ALLOCATION PLAN	197,062	192,124
TOTAL EXPENDITURES/APPROPRIATIONS	8,434,117	21,973,684

The Public Works Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budgeted expenditures increased by \$13.5M from Fiscal Year 2023-2024 actual expenditures. As noted in Table E, some budgeted expenditure items increased while others decreased. Expenditures with notable budget differences are explained below.

The Services and Supplies budget category, which includes road materials, was \$971K for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. This increased to \$1.7M for the 2024-2025 budget, indicating that more funding for supplies or services that could support road work were allocated.

The category Road Maintenance and Rehab for actual work expenses were \$661k in Fiscal Year 2023-2024, compared to a budget for 2024-2025 of \$4.4M, an increase of \$3.8M. This line item does not include Salary and Benefits expenses for road work performed by Public Works staff, which are included in another section of the budget. This budget increase can be utilized for outside contractor road work, or an increase in staff and the associated costs. Public Works did not provide the Grand Jury with a documented plan of how the funds were intended to be spent in the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year.

The line item for Public Works Improvement Projects-TBD was zero for Fiscal Year 2023-2024, and is \$2.1M for the 2024-2025 budget, indicating that Public Works Improvement Projects not previously budgeted for could be undertaken. Public Works did not have a documented plan for the use of these funds.

The State Road 88 Corridor Improvement Project was projected as an expenditure, as covered in the Revenue section of this report. The Carbondale Road Bridge Rehab was budgeted as an expenditure of \$2.7M in Fiscal Year 2024-25.

The above observations about expenditures indicate that significantly more road work was anticipated for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 compared to the prior year.

TABLE F PUBLIC WORKS NET COST

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC WORKS FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 BUDGET

Figures rounded to nearest dollar

	Actual 2023-2024	Adopted 2024-2025
NET COST (Revenues less Expenditures/Appropriations)	\$ (3,528,018)	0

In Fiscal Year 2023-2024, Public Works had a \$3.5M budget surplus, meaning that the actual revenues were greater than the actual expenditures. This indicates that the department did not expend all revenues that were budgeted. The timing of major road projects could account for the variance.

The Grand Jury also notes that in Schedule 8 of the County of Amador Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 there was a \$2.6M reserve designated for roads.

2. Statewide Road Funding Sources

The 2023 *California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment Final Report* (2023 Local Streets and Roads Report) included 338 agencies reporting on their revenue source and pavement expenditures for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The report stated: “Cities and counties identified a myriad of federal, state and local sources of funds for their pavement expenditures. More than a hundred different local funding sources were identified...Traditionally, cities and some counties have been able to rely on the General Fund for pavement funding. However, ...the number of agencies that receive General Funds has decreased in the last two years and is expected to continue in the future. The gas tax is the single largest funding source for cities and counties.”

Page 50 of the 2023 Local Streets and Roads Report includes tables with the statewide percent of total funding for pavements from the following sources:

GAS TAX:	45%
GENERAL FUNDS:	18%
LOCAL SALES TAX:	18%
OTHER:	19%

This illustrates that less than half of statewide counties' funding for roads came from the Gas Tax at the time of this report. Additionally, some counties in the state had successfully passed local sales tax measures. Within Amador County, the city of Sutter Creek passed Measure P in 2024, to establish a 1% city sales tax, some of which was planned to be expended for roads. Amador City passed Measure K in 2024 to establish a 1/4-cent (.25%) city sales tax for transportation improvements. This also allows Amador City to apply for matching funds from the California Department of Transportation's Local Partnership Formulaic Program.

3. Other Budget Observations

A. Grants for Roads

The Grand Jury's observation is that Amador County continues to make some efforts to increase funding for roads, whether through the ballot measure process, budget increases from the General Fund, or grants.

Recently, Amador County obtained a \$2.3M grant funded through State Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil for Upper Ridge Road improvements.

Additionally, a Keep Amador Roads Safe grant for \$800K with \$200K in-kind match¹⁶ was awarded, and requests for proposals have been released¹⁷. The grant provides funding to study safety improvements for county roads. Although this study is not specific to road maintenance and repair, the results of the study may generate information useful for future road improvement grant applications.

The Grand Jury found that only a small portion of the General Services Administration Grant Writer's time was devoted to seeking road grants. Given the significant road maintenance budget shortfall, additional resource time for seeking grants would be beneficial.

When the Grant Writer presented an update on numerous grants to the Board of Supervisors in February 2025, including those mentioned above for roads, the Supervisors gave the Grant Writer direction to make road grants a top priority.

B. Mid-Year Budget Review

In an Amador County Board of Supervisors meeting held March 11, 2025, a Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Mid-Year Budget Review was presented. The County was beginning the budget process for 2025-2026 that will not be concluded until after this Grand Jury's tenure is complete. The Mid-Year Budget Review estimated a \$3M county budget deficit for 2025-2026. The review identified multiple options for the Amador County Board of Supervisors to consider to "close the gap," including one option to "consider taking back some of the \$4 million of General Fund money that has been sent to Public Works this fiscal year." Board members expressed a desire to

¹⁶ Per this Department of Transportation grant, In-Kind Match is cost sharing, where a portion of the total project cost is not paid for with Federal Funds.

¹⁷ Per 2-5-25 grant report to Board of Supervisors, Request for Proposals were released.

avoid impacting the roads budget if possible. The County Administrative Officer was tasked with working on options for addressing the budget deficit to bring back to the Board of Supervisors.

4. Budget Conclusions

As noted earlier, the grand jury only conducted a high-level review of the current year budget compared to the prior year actuals, not a forensic analysis. However, general conclusions can be made based on extensive documentation reviewed and interviews conducted.

Overall, the current budget shortfall for roads is an overwhelming issue for Amador County and one that is a challenge statewide. In this investigation the grand jury focused on how Amador County can more proactively obtain funds for roads and improve processes to maximize the funds that are available.

The grand jury asserts that formal planning for how currently available funds will be used to improve roads is essential. There also may be opportunities for expanding funding sources and/or reallocating more county funds towards roads. Additionally, revisiting the cost versus benefits of using internal staff and additional equipment compared to outsourcing road work should be explored to identify potential cost savings and increased efficiency in road maintenance processes

Amador County Public Works Personnel Resources

1. Staffing

Several people interviewed by the Grand Jury cited a shortage of Public Works personnel. Within the last decade, road maintenance crews were reduced from 3 crews to 2 crews, an approximate eight-person reduction in workforce. This has resulted in insufficient staffing levels to complete the road work that is needed.

Public Works has experienced challenges related to staff retention. Staff turnover results in increased time spent to onboard and train new employees. During the Grand Jury interviews non-competitive salaries were cited as a contributing factor to staff turnover.

Between the period of January 1, 2025 and March 31, 2025, Public Works hired 5 new employees to fill existing positions. Four of these positions are road maintenance crew members and one is a senior project manager.

The County outsources paving and other major road work to contractors instead of utilizing road maintenance crews, requiring a bidding process. Outside contractors have the skill levels and equipment needed for larger-scale jobs.

The table below summarizes the Public Works Employee Hours for Fiscal Year 2024/2025

year-to-date through February 2, 2025.^{18 19} The detailed data in the original report has been consolidated into major categories for clarity and brevity.

TABLE G

PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEE HOURS (1)		Total Hours	% of Public Works Hrs
ADMINISTRATION & ENGINEERING		8467	34%
ROAD CREW		14694	58%
TRUCK SHOP		2068	8%
TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEE HOURS		25228	100%

ROAD CREW EMPLOYEE HOURS BREAKOUT		% OF ROAD CREW HOURS
NON-PRODUCTIVE HOURS (1), (2)		2953 20%

PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEE HOURS (1)		
DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE	525	4%
SHOULDER MAINTENANCE	393	3%
DITCHING	1358	9%
ROADSIDE BRUSHING	357	2%
CULVERT REPAIRS / MAINTENANCE	1596	11%
TREE REMOVAL	592	4%
DEBRIS REMOVAL (TRASH)	161	1%
PATCHING	3964	27%
ROAD GRADING	169	1%
DIG OUTS	505	3%
SIGN MAINTENANCE	303	2%
STRIPING	357	2%
YARD/SIGN SHOP MAINTENANCE	355	2%
SUPERVISOR LABOR	608	4%
TRUCK SHOP MAINTENANCE	163	1%
OTHER WORK HOURS (3)	193	1%
MEETINGS, etc. (4)	144	1%
TOTAL ROAD CREW WORK HOURS (1)		11743 80%

(1) Figures rounded to nearest value
(2) Non-Productive hours = vacation, sick leave, holiday, comp time, personal leave, etc.
(3) Other productive hours = storm damage, vehicle maintenance, other road work;
Items with 50 or less hours were consolidated into this category
(4) Meetings, etc. = labor contract, safety meetings, etc.

¹⁸ Above report is extracted from *Amador County Department of Public Works Cost Accounting Management System Division/Activity Report – Summary Report by Act Cd (W/ Divsn) Month Posted;*
Run Date: 02/10/2025 Fiscal YR 2025: 7-1-24 thru 2-10-25

¹⁹ This report does not represent a full year; therefore, seasonality can impact employee hour percentages.

Of the total Public Works employee hours, road crews accounted for 58% and administration and engineering accounted for 34% of the total. The remaining 8% of employee hours represented truck shop maintenance.

Road crew non-productive employee hours accounted for 20% of total road crew hours, which included categories such as vacation, leave, holiday and compensatory time. Road crew productive employee hours covered a multitude of road work types, with ditching, culvert repairs, and patching the highest percentages of work conducted.

2. Training

The Grand Jury also received input during several interviews that there is generally a lack of formal training for the road maintenance crews. Much of the instruction is “on the job training.”

During the Grand Jury investigation, some citizens complained that pothole repairs do not always last very long. Suggestions were made during Grand Jury interviews that Amador County road maintenance workers would benefit from training by Caltrans to determine their materials and methods to maximize durability of road repairs.

An analysis is needed to determine how current staff can be better trained to complete more effective repairs. According to the Caltrans website Training & Resources section, Caltrans offers cost-subsidized training classes for local agencies in coordination with the California Local Technical Assistance Program.

Communication about Amador County Roads

1. External Communications

Members of the public primarily file complaints and road work requests by visiting or calling Public Works, contacting their district county Supervisor, or through the County website.

Not everyone interviewed by the Grand Jury was aware that road information could be found on the county website, indicating that the availability of the online process is not well known. Further, the Online Service Request form is embedded on the website under the Transportation and Public Works Department section, making it difficult to find using general searches about roads on the website. In contrast, Calaveras County’s website displays road information on the home page, with direct links to a road maintenance schedule and a service request form.

Once a complaint or service request in Amador County is submitted either online, via phone message, or in person, the issue is directed to an administrative support person, who then documents the issue either via an email, a Service Request form, or a paper note. The administrative support person then forwards the issue to a Public Works supervisor or a member of the road crew to complete the repairs.

Once road work requests have been addressed, individuals who submitted a request are typically not directly notified of the outcome. They are informed only by viewing the road if the work is underway or when the work is or isn’t completed. Notification is sent if the request is deemed not currently feasible by Public Works. Internal documentation of Service Request forms is

maintained through paper copies within Public Works. The Grand Jury was informed that not all input is formally documented, depending on the type of issue or how the input was submitted.

Current road Projects are listed on the Amador County website, embedded in the Transportation and Public Works section, which include major projects, including the Carbondale Bridge Project, the old Amador Bridge Project, the Bell Road Bridge Project, and the SR-88 Pine Grove Corridor Improvement Project. A list of Completed Projects dating back to 2019 is included. The Grand Jury could not find a comprehensive list of other current scheduled road work on the website.

The Grand Jury observed that, despite the multitude of complaints and work requests, there is a lack of formal, regular communication with the community from Public Works, or Amador County as a whole, regarding the current state of the roads. Other information that would be informative for the community would include known roads in need of repairs, the amount of money budgeted for road maintenance, and the future plans and schedule for road improvements.

The current lack of effective communication leaves the public unaware of overall road conditions, maintenance priorities, and budgetary constraints. This limits the public's insight into how funds are allocated for road improvements. The 2024 Measure Q ballot sales tax proposal to help fund Amador County roads, which did not pass, highlights where more information available to voters could have had an impact.

Amador County does not have a Public Information Officer (PIO). Several people interviewed by the grand jury indicated that having a PIO would be beneficial, but a lack of financial resources was cited as the reason for the lack of such a position.

If budget constraints make hiring a full-time PIO unfeasible, another option is to allocate time from existing staff positions to manage communications about County roads. Alternatively, a volunteer communications committee could be established composed of knowledgeable and engaged community members. This committee could assist by proactively identifying and reporting hazardous or deteriorating road conditions, and coordinating information about roads between citizens, Public Works and the Board of Supervisors.

There are low-cost or no-cost communication methods available to the County to supplement town hall meetings, newspaper editorials and regularly scheduled Board of Supervisors meetings, which are currently recorded and posted by a local radio station on Facebook. Examples of road-specific communications methods that could be utilized include having an Amador County dedicated YouTube channel and using social media platforms such as Nextdoor, Facebook, and Instagram. These methods are commonly used by other public entities statewide.

These collaborative approaches would not only enhance Public Works' responsiveness but also foster greater public understanding and participation, along with shared responsibility in maintaining safe and reliable road infrastructure throughout Amador County.

2. Internal Communications

For ongoing road maintenance and repair work, the road maintenance Supervisor prepares a tentative monthly work schedule, assigning tasks to the road crew. Once the work is completed, it is recorded and emailed monthly to the Public Works maintenance Superintendent and the

Public Works Director. The road maintenance Supervisor maintains copies of the tentative monthly work schedule and a list of completed road work. The Grand Jury was not provided with any other reports that would inform the Public Works team about the Department's ongoing priorities and plans for road maintenance.

There is an annual report submitted to the Board of Supervisors with general road work categories as required for SB1²⁰ funding.

The Grand Jury was informed that there are no other regular, specific reports about road conditions and maintenance work that are shared with the County Administrative Officer or the Board of Supervisors. This limits County management's ability to monitor road complaints and service requests and to oversee road conditions, road work scheduled, and road work completed. As a result, County management does not regularly have the requisite information to effectively determine staffing and funding priorities for Public Works.

Planning for Improving Amador County Roads

1. Road Conditions Information

As noted in the Amador County Road Conditions section of this report, Public Works uses a pavement management system, called StreetSaver, to analyze datasets of field-measured road conditions. The Public Works department only updates StreetSaver with projects considered pavement improvements; therefore, the County largely relies on the output of the system calculations based on data that is not current. Without comprehensively surveying road conditions and updating StreetSaver on an ongoing basis, the County only has a system-generated estimate of road conditions based on modeled degradation.

Establishing an ongoing survey of roads and updating StreetSaver as part of road maintenance work will lead to more accurate forecasting, budgeting and scheduling of short and long-term road maintenance.

2. Short and Long-term Planning Tools

Multiple respondents in Grand Jury interviews characterized the current road maintenance planning strategy as reactive and complaint driven. Amador County does not currently have a formal multi-year plan that outlines a strategy for prioritizing road repairs.

Public Works crews normally operate on a tentative monthly road repair schedule. Those crews are sometimes redirected from scheduled work to respond to a more immediate road issue. This creates inefficiencies such as multiple mobilizations to a scheduled work location.

Public Works does not have an ongoing action plan that lists roads requiring repairs or improvements, what staffing and budget is needed, and the forecasted date for completing the work. It is understood that current funding for completing all needed road work in the County is severely inadequate. An action plan would provide a method to define and prioritize the work

²⁰ Senate Bill 1: Road Repair & Accountability Act of 2017

needed to improve County roads within current budget constraints. Defining the roads requiring repairs and improvements on an ongoing basis can form the foundation for long-term planning.

FINDINGS

- F1.** Amador County's lack of sufficient funding to complete necessary road repairs, maintenance and paving has resulted in the deterioration of county roads. **(R1), (R2)**
- F2.** Due to Amador County's limited use of existing personnel to more proactively seek available road grants, opportunities for funding have potentially been missed. **(R2)**
- F3.** The Amador County Public Works' current shortage of staff limits the quantity and timeliness of road maintenance and repair work that can be completed. **(R3), (R4)**
- F4.** Amador County's lack of short-term and long-term planning for the repair and maintenance of roads has resulted in a reactive rather than proactive approach, leading to an ineffective system in which repairs and maintenance occur mainly in response to complaints, rather than being guided by strategic prioritization. **(R7), (R8), (R9)**
- F5.** The Amador County Public Works' lack of a comprehensive method to assess and document road conditions on an ongoing basis has resulted in the Department's inability to conduct remedial action effectively. **(R5), (R6)**
- F6.** The Amador County Public Works' lack of producing ongoing, informative reports to County managers hampers the ability to effectively determine staffing requirements, road work priorities and funding needs for Public Works. **(R9), (R10)**
- F7.** Amador County's lack of effective communication to inform the public about planned road repairs, the response to complaints, and the funding mechanisms for road improvements has led to widespread frustration. **(R11), (R12)**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Amador County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1.** Amador County Public Works evaluate current internal road work costs versus outsourced road work for labor and material to determine ways to improve cost efficiencies. Evaluation to be completed by January 1, 2026. Execute any process changes by June 1, 2026. **(F1)**
- R2.** The Amador County General Services Administration and/or Public Works allocate more ongoing personnel time to seeking available road grants. To be implemented by November 1, 2025. **(F1) (F2)**
- R3.** To increase efficiency, the Public Works Director identify the training needs of current department staff, including that of road crews, and develop a training plan. To be completed by January 1, 2026. Implement plan by March 1, 2026. **(F3)**
- R4.** The County Administrative Officer and the Public Works Director evaluate current Public Works Department staffing numbers, skill levels, and job responsibilities to make any necessary changes to maximize productivity. To be completed by January 1, 2026. **(F3)**

- R5.** The Public Works Director develop and implement a process to routinely survey and document current County road conditions, based on the Pavement Condition Index (PCI), in the Pavement Management Program on an ongoing basis. Process implementation to begin by April 1, 2026. **(F5)**
- R6.** The Public Works Director determine, from road condition surveys and updated Pavement Management Program data, the roads that require immediate repair. Initial report to be completed by June 1, 2026. **(F5)**
- R7.** The Amador County Board of Supervisors oversee the development of a 5-year strategic plan, updated annually, for how the County will work to improve County roads to an overall Good condition, per the rating criteria in Table A in the Road Conditions section of this report. To be completed in time for the 2026/2027 Fiscal Year Budget planning. **(F4)**
- R8.** The Amador County Board of Supervisors oversee the development of a short-term action plan, to be developed by the Public Works Director, to improve the County's roads that incorporates current road conditions, prioritizes road projects, includes a forecasted schedule of road work, to be updated at least semi-annually. To be completed by November 1, 2025. **(F4)**
- R9.** The County Administrative Officer and the Public Works Director oversee the development of an electronic database for entering and tracking road service/work requests and complaints received - from initiation to resolution. To be implemented by October 1, 2025. **(F6), (F4)**
- R10.** The Public Works director oversee the development of reports, to be provided to the County Administrative Officer monthly and quarterly to the Amador County Board of Supervisors, that includes data for the month and fiscal year-to-date:
- Road Work Scheduled – Including which road and type of work
 - Road Work Completed – Including which road and type of work
 - The number and type of road service/work requests received and those completed
 - The number and type of citizen road complaints and damage claims received and the resolution **(F6)**

Above to be completed by April 1, 2026.

- R11.** The Amador County Board of Supervisors oversee the development and execution of a communication plan for enhancing information provided to the public about roads. To be completed by January 1, 2026. **(F7)**
- R12.** The County Administrative Officer and Public Works Director oversee enhancements to the County website so that County road information is on the home page, including direct links to a road maintenance schedule and the online Work Request form. To be completed by December 31, 2025. **(F7)**

RESPONSES

Pursuant to California Penal Code §§ 933 and 933.05, the Civil Grand Jury requests each entity or individual named below to respond to the enumerated Findings and Recommendations within specific statutory guidelines.

Responses to Findings shall be either:

- The respondent agrees with the finding.
- The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefore.

Responses to Recommendations shall be one of the following:

- The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
- The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
- The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency where applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Civil Grand Jury report.
- The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefore.

The following responses are required within the above-mentioned statutory period;

- The County Administrative Officer and Public Works Director:
Respond to F1 through F7 and R1 through R12, inclusive
- From the following governing body:
The Amador County Board of Supervisors: Respond to F1, F2, F4, F6, F7 and R1, R2, R7, R8, R10, R11.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A. Documents Reviewed by the Grand jury

The grand jury reviewed the following Amador County reference documents and used selected information from these documents in this report:

Department Spotlight – Department of Transportation and Public Works (Located on the Amador County Website December 2024)

County Website: Links - *Departments – Transportation & Public Works*

- *Online Service Request* (Form on the link: *Online Work Request*)
- *Current Public Works Projects* as of 1-19-25
- *Maintained Mileage Road List, 2024*

County of Amador “State of the Roads,” November 24, 2015 (Located on the Amador County Website) (File used to extract information and tables included in this report.)

County of Amador Budget – Fiscal Year 2024-25 for the Public Works Department – In particular: Schedules 8 and 9 and Allocation of Positions by Department (Financials include 2022-23 and 2023-24 Actuals) (File used to extract data for a table in this report.)

FY 2024-25 SBI Project List Correction – Memorandum 5-24-24 from Transportation & Public Works Department to “All Interested Parties”

Board of Supervisors Meeting 1-28-25 minutes re: SR 88 Pine Grove Corridor Improvement Project

Grant Report presented to Board of Supervisors 2-11-25 – In particular, Item: Keep Amador Roads Safe Project

Memorandum: Summary of Cost of Effort for road crew and outside contractors (in dollars) for Fiscal Year 2023-24 (Received from public works 1-27-25)

Memorandum: Summary of numbers of Service Requests from the public for Calendar Years 2023 & 2024 (Received from public works 1-27-25)

Detailed Report of Labor, Vendor, Materials, Equipment from Cost Accounting Management System for the Department of Public Works, Full Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 year-to-date (Report generated 2-10-25 and used to extract data for summary tables in this report.)

Copies of Damage Claims from <Fiscal Years> 2022 through 2025 year-to-date – Received 2-10-25 (Forms used to summarize claims for this report.)

Service Request Forms from July 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024. (Forms used to summarize complaints and service requests for this report.)

Amador County Public Works FY 24/25 SBI Miscellaneous Project List and memorandum dated May 24, 2024

County of Amador Transportation and Public Works 2025 Maintained Mileage Road list presented to Amador County Board of Supervisors 3-11-25

Amador County FY 24-25 Mid-Year Budget Review Presented to Amador County Board of Supervisors 3-11-25 (Data covering July 2024 through December 2024.)

Memorandum entitled Update on Grant Progress dated February 11, 2025 and presented to the Board of Supervisors on that same date.

The grand jury also reviewed:

Amador County Chamber of Commerce: The Case for Measure Q, Published prior to the November 2024 election

Vote by Mail voter information guide for November 2024 election: Impartial Analysis of Measure Q and Arguments in Favor of Measure Q

Various editorials in the Ledger Dispatch newspaper re: Measure Q and citing poor road conditions/needs

Various local social media opinions via Next Door and Neighborhood Watch re: Measure Q and citing poor road conditions/needs

Rural Counties Task Force Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (Prepared by NCE): *California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment - Final Report April 2023* (Report used to extract tables for this report.)

Amador County Transportation Commission Website: Various documents, and in particular: *ACTC 2024 Regional Transportation Improvement Program – 4 Amador County Road projects* (Document used in this report.)

Calaveras County Website 2-15-25:

Front page (as of 2-15-25): Links to Calaveras County Road Information:

- *Public Works Maintenance Schedule* – Goes to Schedule (Ex: 2-17-25 through 2-21-25)
- *Road Maintenance Service Requests* – Goes to page for Minor and Major Road Maintenance Requests online forms
- *The Wagon Trail Project*

Calaveras County Department of Public Works Strategic Plan 2020 thru 2025

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) 2024 Annual Update April 23, 2024

County of Calaveras Adopted Budget FY 2024-25 - Road Department and Roads CIP including narrative goals/objectives

U.S. Department of Transportation in USA TODAY 10-25-24: *Grants nearly doubled for deadly rural roads after USA TODAY investigated* – Re: federal *Safe Streets and Roads for All* grants.

Websites for Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, El Dorado and Sacramento counties: Posted 2024 and/or 2025 public works salary ranges.

2023 California counties' salary information posted on:

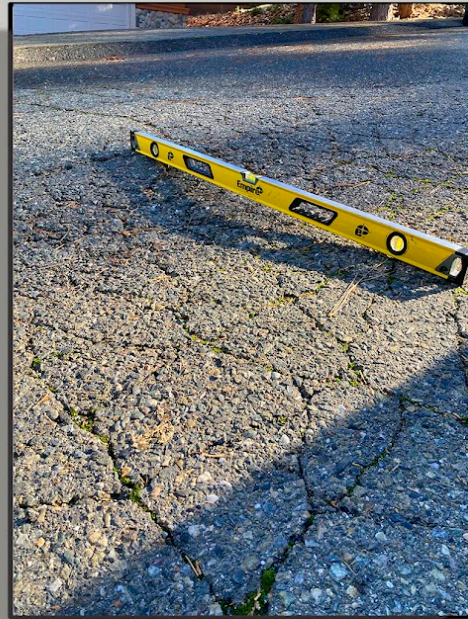
<https://transparentcalifornia.com/download/salaries/> (grand jury focused on public works positions)

Caltrans website, Training & Resources section, California Local Technical Assistance Program (dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/training)

APPENDIX B. Sample Photos of Amador County Roads

SAMPLE AMADOR COUNTY ROADS IN
DISREPAIR

SUGAR PINE DRIVE
WESTBOUND



FAIRVIEW COURT
EASTBOUND

SAMPLE AMADOR COUNTY ROADS IN GOOD CONDITION

SHAKE RIDGE
ROAD

EAST BOUND



SHAKE
RIDGE ROAD
AT
PONDEROSA
ROAD
EAST BOUND

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.