

April 11, 2023

The Board of Ellis County Commissioners met in special session for the road tour at 10:49 a.m., Tuesday, April 11, 2023, at the Administration Center, 718 Main Street, Hays, Kansas.

Chair Neal Younger called the special session on the road tour to order. Commissioners present: Chair Neal Younger, Commissioner Nathan Leiker and Commissioner Michael Berges. Also present were County Administrator Darin Myers, Public Works Director Brendan Mackay and Road Supervisor Curt Hoffman.

The itinerary for the 2023 Road Tour on April 11, 2023:

1. 12th Street Bridge on Rome Road. Looked at the deteriorating conditions, small width, and approaches. It was discussed that if the bridge would be closed, Ellis County could gain approximately \$230,000 in grant funding to help replace the Saline River Bridge north of Ellis. Staff would also recontact the City of Hays to confirm they would still be in favor of closing the bridge. This will be discussed more at the May 2nd commission meeting.
2. It was briefly discussed the shortage of rock/chips available to Ellis County for road overlay projects. Public Works would like to have a larger stockpile of rock on hand to allow them to do more projects each year. Public Works would like to have about 5,000 tons of rock on hand.
3. The intersection and road near Catharine Road and Yocemento Road was looked at. Public Works staff had done some recent work to grade the road back to a better condition. It was also discussed what could be done to change the speed limit to the west of the intersection. Public Works staff said an engineer would need to complete a study to determine what is the safe speed for the amount and type of traffic. After this, the Commissioners would have to pass a resolution detailing the new speed limit which would allow Public Works staff to install the new regulatory signs.
4. The Yocemento bridge just north of the railroad tracks was visited. It was noted the width restrictions of the bridge. Staff had to slow down and move over to allow a UPS truck to pass while driving over the bridge. The bridge deck was just repaired by Public Works staff. Due to the repairs, it increased its rating, which made it ineligible for certain grant funds.
5. A brief discussion was had regarding the noxious weeds chemical sales rates only being sold at 50-75% of costs due to statute. If the county would add 2-3 mowing positions, they would be added to the Noxious Weed department, chemicals could be sold at cost to help pay for the mowing positions. These employees could help with Noxious Weed spraying, mowing rights-of-way and potentially help clean up trash in ditches (notably the areas around the landfill on 45th street north of Hays. Public Works staff is to prepare budget numbers for these positions to be considered at a future budget meeting.
6. Staff then viewed the bridge in Ellis near the football field. The bridge is in bad shape and is one of the top bridges needing to be replaced. Saline River Bridge north of Ellis is first on the list. The problem with the bridge in Ellis is it is wider than what is needed. Public Works staff will contact Ellis staff to see if they are interested in keeping the bridge at the same full width and pay for the extra sizing. Public Works staff said engineers stated the Saline River Bridge is the primary bridge to write grants around. If that bridge would get approved, the Ellis City bridge would be the next priority.

7. Staff then reviewed the five furthest south miles of Ellis Avenue. Public Works staff showed the commission how parts of the road have been milled up, mixed with rock, and repacked forming a new surface. Public Works staff is suggesting to the Commission to consider removing all pavement from those five miles and turn it into the rock/milling surface which can be maintained by road graders and would be significantly cheaper to the county. The commission were also shown how the asphalt base is falling apart by standing on the side of the road and seeing the pavement move when a vehicle drives over it. Public Works staff were requested to put together new budget numbers for the project to be presented to the commission at a later date.
8. The commissioners while traveling to the next location, discussed with Public Works to have budget numbers put together on what kind of financial commitment it would take to overlay 10, 15, and 20 miles of road each year, and to include also sealing an additional 10, 15, and 20 miles of road each year.
9. A right-of-way obstruction was then visited at a location near the intersection in Antonino where a landowner continues to disobey the law and have abandoned and used vehicles parked in the county's right of way. The commission gave support to Public Works staff to continue to try to make the landowner remove the vehicles from the county right-of-way.
10. An area on Smokey Hill River Road was viewed where landowners are "farming the ditch". This creates drainage issues on the road.
11. Commission Younger stated he went to the Schoenchen commission meeting. They will be putting together a request to Ellis County for some road improvements within the town. They will be brought to a future commission meeting.
12. The commission then viewed the asphalt road south of Pfeifer. It is also deteriorating, and Public Works staff feel due to its low usage, it does not warrant the cost to replace the asphalt. This section of road is not as bad of shape as Ellis Avenue. It was suggested to have Public Works staff seal the road to gain a couple more years out of the road before the discussion of milling it up.
13. Old Highway 40 east of Victoria was viewed regarding the number of concrete panels that have started to displace during the heat of the summer. Public Works explained how the mini excavator would be nice for those types of projects to assist in making the repairs quicker and easier. Public Works staff would get bids for the excavator and bring back to a future commission meeting for consideration.
14. An area on Buckeye Road was viewed for a request from a landowner to have the county remove trees that are not fully in the county's right-of-way, plus the request to move the trees to a burn pit. Public Works staff do not feel it is in the county's best interest to remove trees not in the right-of-way that do not present a safety hazard to the traveling public. Plus, Public Works staff are busy with many other projects and finishing up FEMA repairs, which would put those projects off or not be able to do at all.
15. The NW Business Corridor project was viewed, as well as a utility relocation near Highway 183. Work has started back up again on 230th Avenue and may be completed by the end of June.
16. 48th Street was then traveled as Public Works staff has put in a grant request to reconstruct that road from asphalt to concrete. It was discussed how difficult road maintenance is considered when the city of Hays only annexes, then owns half of a road to the center line. It is assumed the county will still maintain the road and pay for maintenance for a road not owned by the county. Public Works staff feel it would best if/when the city annexes a road, they should annex both sides of the road and take true ownership of the road. Better cooperation between city and county will help with this issue, as well as communication between the two.

17. Hall Street and 240th Avenue was viewed. It was discussed again that if mowers could be added to the Noxious Weed staff, they could clean the trash up in this area on a regular basis. The intersection at 45th and Hall was discussed due to letters sent to the commission regarding the intersection. Cars continue to drive off the side of the road, even with an above average width of 45th street. Widening the intersection would cost money for right-of-way, and then cars would just shift over further and continue to drive on the edge of the road. Public Works staff will fill in the potholes that have been created by drivers not driving on the road surface. The 45th street intersection is also a city/county conflict. Ellis County owns 230th Avenue, but the intersection was approved by the City of Hays without annexation, leaving repairs to the county.

No formal action was taken during the road tour and the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

The next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. Administrative Center, Commission Chambers, 718 Main Street, Hays, Kansas.

BOARD OF ELLIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

NEAL YOUNGER, CHAIR

MICHAEL BERGES, COMMISSIONER

NATHAN LEIKER, COMMISSISSIONER

ATTEST:

BOBBI L DREILING, COUNTY CLERK