



**COUNTY OF MADERA**  
**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
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May 25, 2018

**Judge Dale Blea**

Supervising Judge of the Grand Jury  
Madera Superior Court  
200 South G Street  
Madera, CA 93637

**Madera County Grand Jury**

PO Box 534  
Madera, CA 93639

**Re: Response to the Findings of the 2017-2018 Madera County Grand Jury Final Report Entitled "Madera County Roads: Has "Doing More With Less" Run Its Course?"**

The Public Works Department (PWD) has compiled its responses to your 2017-2018 Madera County Grand Jury Final Report entitled "Madera County Roads: Has "Doing More With Less" Run Its Course?" dated April 30, 2018. The PWD would like to address some of the statements mentioned in the Title, Summary and Discussion of the report before I address the Findings.

The previous Road Department and the current PWD has gone through many changes since the 2008 recession where a large number of employees were laid off Countywide and since that time, all departments have worked hard to evaluate themselves to maximize efficiency. To be efficient, all the specific roles and responsibilities of staff have been looked at closer to make sure that the full scope of responsibility is being achieved and utilized so we can maximize the benefits to the residents of Madera with our limited Public Funds.

"Doing more with less" is not our Department's policy but it may have been perceived as such because our goal is efficiently excellent service and our Highway User Tax Act (HUTA) fund has been minimized by %25 annually in the past 4 or so years. We are the custodians of public funds and we are ALL expected to perform our duties within our budget and abilities. Never has management in the past 2 years requested any employee to do more than what they are being compensated for. All employee rights and rules are observed at all times.

One of my goals as director of the PWD is to make sure that all employees enjoy their employment property and benefits within the Civil Service and County guidelines.

Furthermore, in the Discussion section I would like to correct a huge error by the GJ in estimating the budget for the maintenance of our roads to be \$17,000,000. This budget includes all capital improvement projects, operations, maintenance, and employee salaries and benefits.

Another error in estimation is the cost of our Pavement Management System (PMS). In the GJ Report it is stated that the PWD has been obligated to purchase a \$1-2 million PMS where the actual cost is \$280,000.

I appreciate all the effort the Grand Jury Team has put into this report and if you have any questions about our responses please contact me.

Respectfully,



Ahmad M. Alkhayat, PE, MBA

Public Works Director

## RESPONSES TO FINDINGS IN REPORT:

- F1. Because there is no instruction manual outlining the service request system, the system users are not properly trained.

*Response: The respondent partially agrees with the finding. While there is no published formal instruction manual, individual users have been provided written instructions. All users are inputting information into the system correctly and obtain the appropriate information from callers. Since the Administration Department has recently started using the system Countywide in conjunction with the 311 program, there is the opportunity to create a user manual for all types of service calls, not just road related.*

- F2. Because there are no regular internal audits and no system for alerting PWD of service requests that remain open after two weeks, the processing of service requests is inconsistent.

*Response: The respondent partially agrees with the finding. Clerical staff pull a report weekly of all service requests that have been open longer than two weeks. This list is sent to the Deputy Director, who in turn sends them to the road supervisors. It is accurate to state the software has no mechanism to flag a request that has been open more than two weeks, but inaccurate to state there are no regular internal audits of the system.*

- F3. Because there are no written instructions for PWD staff to request contact information, complainants often receive no follow-up on their request for service.

*Response: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. There is no widely shared instruction manual, but individual users have written instructions. All clerical staff asks for contact information from callers. Most times, callers do not want to share their contact information and would prefer to remain anonymous. An email address is usually asked for since the system can send automatic communication when the status of the request has changed. Clerical staff commonly hears from callers that they do not want to give their email address because they do not want "spam" mail from the County or they do not have an email address.*

- F4. PWD does not adequately promote the service request system to the public.

*Response: The respondent disagrees with this finding. The Service Request system (GORequest) utilized by Public Works Department has been promoted through outreach at public meetings, on the Public Works website, and through Social Media. All Department staff has also been informed of the system so that they can share this with the public when the need/opportunity arises. The County Administration recently adopted the use of the system Countywide and it has been re-branded as MadCoServices and is now tied to the County's 311 program. The promoting of this*

*service has also been expanded beyond just the Public Works Department with its use Countywide, including promoting by the recently formed Public Information Team (P.I.T.) PWD staff utilizes every opportunity to publically promote all the ways a service request could be inputted into our system. PWD will continue this practice and will always improvise as applicable.*

F5. The five road crews are not staffed proportionately to their 'districts' workload.

*Response: The respondent partially agrees with the finding. The finding requires further analysis and assumption of workload. The 2017-2018 fiscal year budgets have been approved and do not include funding all authorized positions. The Work Crew was re-assigned and work load requirements have been shifted to be as efficient as possible.*

*The Work Crew referenced in the report was comprised of 1 Road Supervisor and 2 Road Construction Maintenance Workers. The main duties of this crew were to pick up trash and spray shoulders throughout the County. Instead of sending them to the mountains to respond to a service request to pick up trash on a certain road, these requests would be sent to the appropriate road crew in that area. This allowed us to fill a vacant supervisor position in Crew 1 and re-assign the two workers to other crews that were short-handed.*

F6. Road crew morale is low.

*Response: Respondent disagrees with finding. Respondent is not aware of, nor does the Grand Jury offer any facts in support of this.*

F7. Because PWD lacks a written policy and procedures manual for road repairs, road repair standards are inconsistent.

*Response: Respondent agrees with this finding.*

F8. Because PWD does not ensure that every road maintenance worker has been formally trained for every type of job to which they might be assigned, job performance can be adversely affected.

*Response: Respondent disagrees with this finding. Training is the responsibility of the road crew supervisor and varies crew to crew based on which tasks they might assign their staff. Each road crew supervisor has worked their way up through the ranks over their career and is familiar with the required maintenance activities and operation of equipment. They direct their staff daily to perform the tasks at hand and have weekly meetings with their crew.*

F9. Road maintenance workers do not receive proper and adequate safety training.

*Response: Respondent partially agrees with this finding. Each staff member has been provided the Department's Safety Manual and Heat Illness Prevention Program. In addition, each crew has a weekly tailgate safety meeting, and all new hires receive flagging training. It has been noted that not all crews are familiar with proper temporary traffic control despite having the adopted standard field guide available to each of them (Work Area Traffic Control Handbook adopted by American Public Works Association). The Department has scheduled onsite training and certification through UC Berkeley Institute of Traffic Safety for setting up proper work zones and temporary traffic control. This will include updated flagging training and certification for all road crew personnel.*

F10. Written temporary traffic control plans and procedures per Caltrans guidelines are not utilized consistently.

*Response: Respondent agrees with this finding and has scheduled certified training for all road crews as noted in response to F9.*

F11. Because PWD does not oversee or review the written temporary traffic control plan for every job before it is started, safety is compromised.

*Response: Respondent partially agrees with this finding. While there is no separate written temporary traffic control plan for each and every job, each crew has the APWA field guide Work Area Traffic Control Handbook which is the adopted standard throughout the industry, and the crew supervisor is to ensure the proper setup of the temporary traffic control. The Department has also scheduled onsite training and certification through UC Berkeley Institute of Traffic Safety for setting up proper work zones and temporary traffic control. This will include updated flagging training and certification for all road crew personnel.*

F12. Because road crew trucks lack sufficient safety lights and beacons, safety is compromised.

*Response: Respondent disagrees with this finding. **All** road crew fleet has aftermarket flashing beacons installed to increase visibility.*

F13. Monthly meetings between the Deputy Director and road maintenance supervisors are ineffective.

*Response: Respondent disagrees with this finding. Respondent is not aware of, nor does the Grand Jury offer any facts in support of this. Monthly meetings were non-existent under previous administration. These meetings began 3 months ago with the intent to increase communication, eliminate equipment scheduling conflicts between crews and operate more efficiently. Since implementing these meetings;*

*communication on all levels has increased, and there have been less equipment scheduling conflicts between crews.*

#### **RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN REPORT:**

R1. PWD develop an internal office policy and procedures manual within the next year.

*Response: The Department is currently in the process of implementing this recommendation by creating a procedure manual.*

R2. Office staff immediately receive formalized training for their service request job responsibilities.

*Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Clerical staff has received training and with the transition to the Countywide use of the MadCoServices app, we will be working to develop an updated procedures manual in conjunction with County Administration that will be provided to staff once completed.*

R3. Office staff request the name, address, telephone number and email for every person who generates a service request, effective immediately.

*Response: This recommendation is already in practice.*

R4. PWD promote ways an individual can report a complaint by placing the PWD phone number, website and GOREquest phone app information on every road crew truck within 90 days.

*Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Every County vehicle already contains the 311 decals. The County also promotes the GOREquest phone app through its website, social media, public meetings, correspondence, etc. Permanent 311 road signs are also located on major arterials throughout the County.*

R5. PWD develop its own road maintenance job policy and procedures manual within the next year.

*Response: The Department is currently in the process of implementing this recommendation by adopting the Caltrans Maintenance Manual.*

R6. PWD develop its own road maintenance safety policy and procedures manual immediately.

*Response: The Department is in the process of implementing this recommendation by adopting the Caltrans Maintenance Manual which includes Protection of Workers.*

*This is in addition the County's Safety Manual and Heat Illness & Prevention Program.*

- R7. Provide certified training for all road maintenance supervisors and senior road maintenance workers in order to train their crews on the operation of road maintenance equipment within the next six months.

*Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. All road maintenance supervisors and senior road maintenance workers promoted from equipment operator. They have extensive knowledge and have operated all road maintenance equipment assigned to them. Periodically, there is additional specialized training or training for new equipment we purchase or rent. However, this type of training is conducted only when applicable.*

- R8. PWD require all road crew workers be trained by certified trainers within 12 months for every type of job to which they might be assigned.

*Response: This recommendation requires further analysis. Road crew workers are manual labor type positions that trench, weed-eat, pick up trash, flag, etc. All road crew workers will be trained by certified trainers for flagging and temporary traffic control, etc. However, certified training for manual labor is not applicable.*

- R9. Safety training immediately be updated and provided in formats which can be utilized at tailgates and in shop office settings.

*Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The Department has provided PDFs of weekly tailgate meetings to cover all aspects of road work and construction safety. Furthermore, certified training for flagging and temporary traffic controls have been scheduled for all crews.*

- R10. Effective immediately, temporary traffic controls properly follow the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices until the PWD develops its own manual.

*Response: This recommendation is in the process of being implemented. The Department has scheduled onsite training and certification through UC Berkeley Institute of Traffic Safety for setting up proper work zones and temporary traffic control. This will include updated flagging training and certification for all road crew personnel.*

- R11. Effective immediately, PWD designate an individual in a managerial position to review and approve all Temporary Traffic Control plans before each job is started.

*Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. Some jobs are emergency response based. Crews cover separate geographic areas and operate from satellite facilities. They do not have access to software to design*

*Temporary Traffic Control Plans for each job before it is started and wait for someone in a managerial position to review and approve. As such, all agencies practice the adopted standards of the Work Area Traffic Control Handbook which is readily available. The Department has also scheduled onsite training and certification through UC Berkeley Institute of Traffic Safety for setting up proper work zones and temporary traffic control. This will include updated flagging training and certification for all road crew personnel.*

- R12. PWD maintain a permanent file for all approved Temporary Traffic Control Plans after each job is done, starting immediately.

*Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. All Temporary Traffic Control Plans will follow adopted standards. There is no need to draw up a Temporary Traffic Control Plan for each job when adopted standards are readily available for all road classifications, easy to follow and exist in a convenient field guide.*

- R13. PWD review the services needed throughout the County and assign road crew personnel as required, on an ongoing basis.

*Response: This recommendation has been implemented. While it makes most sense to assign crews to specific geographic areas to minimize travel time and be readily available for response, there are certain occasions where crews are assigned to work together to complete a specific job or task. This can include operation of equipment, flaggers, trucks, laborers, etc.*

- R14. PWD promote better employee morale within road crews.

*Response: This recommendation requires further analysis. Administration has recently started monthly meetings to enhance communication at all levels. The Department is looking into updating equipment and enhanced training. The Department has also put together a voluntary bowling league outside of work hours to invite employees and their families to interact outside of the job. It's the PWD objective to have good communication throughout the Department and promote a healthy, safe and collaborative work force.*

- R15. PWD and road maintenance supervisors continue monthly meetings with clearly stated objectives.

*Response: The Department agrees and will continue implementation of this recommendation.*

- R16. PWD increase and update the safety lights and beacons on road repair vehicles, effective immediately.



*Response: This recommendation has already been implemented. All road repair fleet is equipped with aftermarket beacons/lights to enhance visibility.*

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