



Joint Committee on Force Accounts
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FORCE ACCOUNT Limits Increase - SUPPORT
May 6th, 2021

Good morning Co-chair Roegner, Co-Chair Johnson, and members of the Joint Committee on Force Accounts, and thank you for the opportunity to provide support testimony for force account increase.

My name is Brett Boothe and I currently serve as the Gallia County Engineer, County Engineers' Association of Ohio's 2nd Vice President, and County Engineers' Association of Ohio's Government Affairs Co-Chair. Before becoming the county engineer in 2009, I worked in the private sector and also worked as a Transportation Engineer with ODOT. On behalf of Gallia County, one of the 52 rural counties in Ohio, I manage and invest nearly \$10 million in infrastructure annually.

The Problem: Road and Bridge Projects Not Being Completed

Gallia County has 453.567 miles of roads to maintain. This is broken down into 207.92 miles of asphalt; 127.887 miles of chip and seal, and; 117.76 miles of gravel.

- Asphalt Roads (15 year life)*
 - $207.92 \text{ miles asphalt} / 15 = 13.9 \text{ miles need paved every year in order to maintain cycle.}$
 - Currently, Gallia County averages 4 miles per year (not including grants), thus resulting in a shortfall of 9.9 mile every year. At a cost of \$70,000/mi, this is an annual shortfall of \$693,000/year for just asphalt roads
- Chip and Seal (5 year life)*
 - $127.887 \text{ miles chip and seal} / 5 = 25.6 \text{ miles need chip and sealed every year to maintain cycle}$
 - Currently, Gallia County averages 7 miles per year (not including grants), thus resulting in a shortfall of 18.6 miles every year. At a cost of \$18,000/mi, this is an annual shortfall of \$334,800/year for just chip and seal roads
- Gravel to upgrade to Chip and Seal
 - $117.76 \text{ miles} \times \$150,000 = \$17,664,000$. Over 10 years, the shortfall is \$1,766,400/year in order to simply upgrade aggregate roads to chip and seal.

* Assumes solid base, no extra work, and no road damage by heavy vehicles.



Additionally, Gallia County has 277 bridges, of which 26 are structurally deficient and another 164 are functionally obsolete. Historically, on a 10-year replacement plan, Gallia County is able to replace 4 bridges a year (for a total of 40 bridges every ten years). This leaves Gallia County a full 150 bridges behind in necessary improvements and/or replacement over that 10-year period. Gallia County would need to replace 19 bridges a year for 10 years, to meet the current needs of our county. This equates to a shortfall of \$3,110,300 per year, which does not even include more bridges becoming deficient over that 10 year span

Cost Increases

Since 2003, labor, material and equipment costs have continued to escalate. #57 stone has increased 49% since 2008, which has a bearing on a county with approximately 130 miles of stone roads. The last six months, plastic pipe alone has increased 40% in cost. These steady increases lead to higher project costs and are eroding the capabilities of County Highway Employees due to abutting the force account limits.

In Gallia County, I have always taken the approach if the work can be less expensive by putting out to contractor, then we bid out. If the project can be completed less expensive with Gallia Highway employees, then we do the work ourselves. Except in Gallia County, highway employees are not doing the projects we can do less expensive due to the force account limits.

What “Force Account” means to Southeast Ohio? Without grants, Gallia County does not have the funds to pave roads. In order to apply for these grants such as OPWC, Gallia County must have match money. With out force account saving money, Gallia County will have a hardship coming up with the match money. Gallia County Engineer has used OPWC funds mostly for resurfacing, with these paving projects going exclusively to contractors. Force Account means paving roads and building bridges in Gallia County, without force account we lose both.

Even with the additional revenue from the 2019 gas tax increase and an increase on force account limits this year, Gallia County will not have the ability to upgrade the approximately 130 miles of stone roads to asphalt and upgrade deficient bridges, but it helps. That is why the Ohio Legislature increasing force account limits the last time the gas tax was increased in 2003 was so important.

Gallia County has highly skilled employees and equipment to safely and cost effectively provide the services the public expects. Since the last force account increase, Gallia County has less employees, less equipment, and not built any more facilities.

Employees

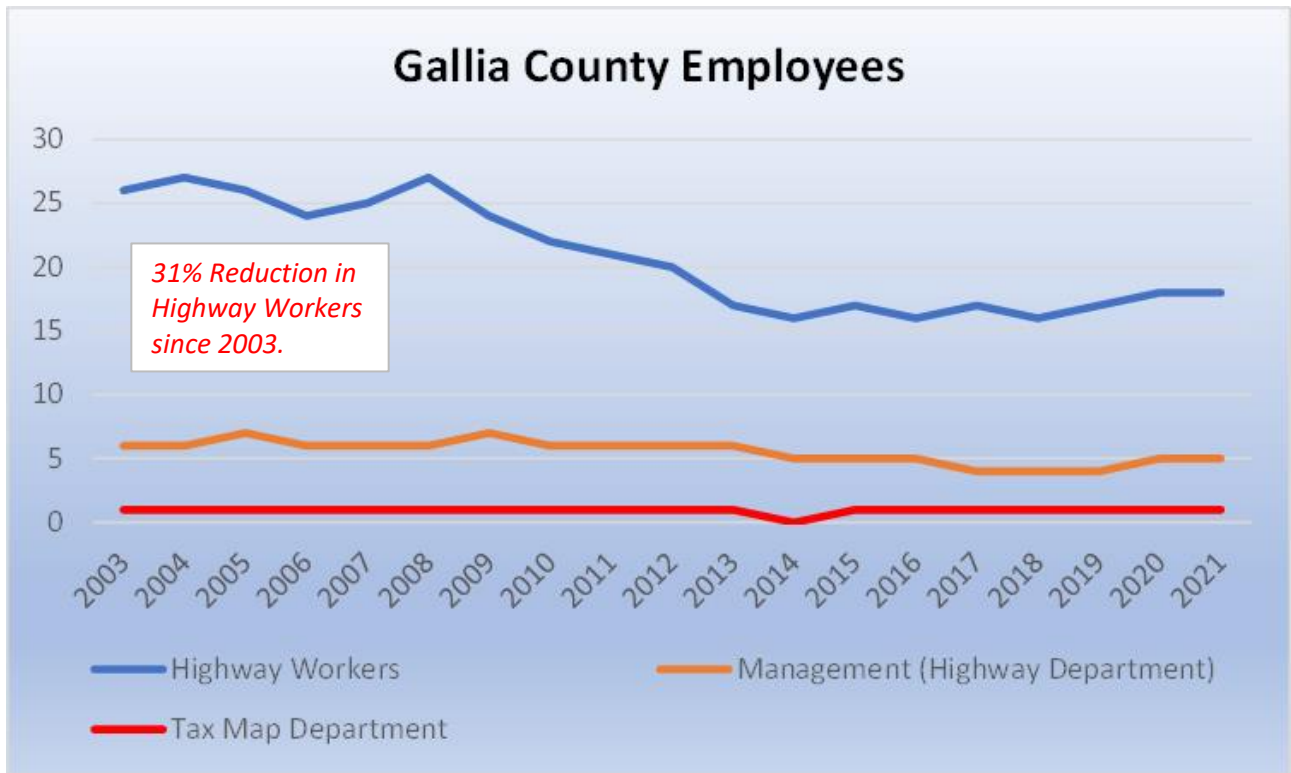
Gallia County Engineer as employed highway workers with a cross trained set of skills. A focus on experience for new hires has been primarily on heavy equipment operations, then secondly another trade such as welding, steel work, concrete finish work,

Safety Matters

- Drug/Alcohol Testing - New Hire/Random
- Background Checks
- Tool Box Talks
- PERRP Inspections
- PERRP Trainings
- Snow and Ice Training



commercial driver’s license, hazmat certification, diesel mechanic trade schooling, etc. Gallia County requires all new hires to complete CDL class A and Hazmat Certification by the end of probation or they will be let go. Requiring all employees to have CDLs provides the needed operators for the 14 snow/ice routes. The safety culture at Gallia County is, We walk the walk, not just talk the talk because SAFETY MATTERS. Our employees are well suited to handle any highway project in Gallia County with the cross trained staff.



Highly Skilled Gallia County Highway Workers

CDL Class A	14
CDL Class B	4
Tanker Endorsement	11
HazMat Certification	10



Equipment Inventory

14% Reduction in Equipment since 2009.

	2009	2021
Passenger Vehicle	16	13
Dump Trucks*	24	20
Road Graders	5	4
Loaders	1	2
Track Excavators	1	2
Wheel Excavators	4	2
Trailers	8	9
Cranes	2	1
Other Equipment	9	7
Total	70	60

* Includes 2 Distributors, Water Truck, Low Drag, Wrecker

Gallia County Highway Facilities

	2003	2021
Highway Garage Built in 1948	1	1
Salt Bin Built in 1998	1	1
Porta Pug Mill Built in 1974	1	1

No new facilities since 1998.