



BRYAN DHUME, PE, PS - COUNTY ENGINEER

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TO: Chairman Kunze, VC Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Antonio  
Transportation Committee Members  
FROM: Bryan Dhume, PE, PS  
DATE: March 19, 2021  
RE: **Sub HB 74, Transportation Budget  
FORCE ACCOUNT limits increase - SUPPORT**  
County: Madison  
Budget: \$6,000,000

I am writing to express my support for Sub. House Bill 74, the Transportation Budget, particularly the addition of the language increasing county and other local government force account limits. I support HB 74 as a means of providing safer roads and bridges for the constituents of Madison County.

As a county engineer in a county with a small population and small budget, we rely heavily on the use of force account work in Madison County pertaining to the maintenance, repair, construction, and reconstruction of our roads and bridges. This is out of necessity in an effort to stretch our tax dollars as far as they can go to maintain the infrastructure we are responsible for. We have a very skilled work force with the necessary tools that takes pride in their work. We build bridges, install box culverts and drainage systems, widen roads and chip seal pavements in an effort to provide the safest road system possible for the citizens of our county.

We will build by contract if it is the more efficient way, or if we lack the competency to complete a certain job. We regularly bid out paving, striping, and federal-aid bridge work. Many times we will build projects by force account but utilize subcontracts, in the case of a longer span beam type bridges. This arrangement allows us to take advantage of our labor and equipment doing what we are good at, and contracting out that with which we are not. We have become very creative over the years at getting the best bang for our tax buck – BUT we have been hitting a wall more and more due to the force account limits imposed on us.

Trying to explain to someone that the bridge we need to replace cannot be done with our own skilled forces because it costs more than \$100,000 normally results in a head shake of confusion from the public. There is an expectation that the tax dollars we use to maintain our road system is managed well. Politically speaking, I understand that limits must be in place, but just like with our funding, these limits tie our hands as managers of our tax money if they don't keep up with rising costs. The cost to construct a bridge and maintain roads has more than doubled since 2003, and our hands are being tied when it comes to providing safe roads and bridges for our constituents.