

THE HIGHWAY SHOP CRISIS: WILL WE FIX IT NOW OR PAY MORE LATER?

Please share your feedback regarding the proposed Highway Shop relocation. Your input is important to the discussion.

The original Green County Highway Shop was built in 1937 on 20 acres. Additional buildings were added in 1940, 1950, and 1964. Over the years, portions of the property were taken for other county needs. The construction of the Jail in 1959 and the Justice Center in 2008 reduced the Highway Department's property to approximately 9 acres. Relocating the Highway Department was discussed in 2021 and 2025 but nothing was decided.

Meanwhile, the county jail was failing state inspections, raising serious concerns that the State shut down the jail. Such a situation could have forced the county to house inmates in other facilities at considerable expense. It also would have required sheriff's deputies to transport inmates to court appearances and appointments, taking them away from their regular patrol responsibilities. Under those circumstances, the jail project became a priority.

The current jail project is estimated to cost \$85M. The project is moving along but it has further reduced the Highway Department's property to approximately 5.5 acres. As a result, Highway has had to relocate materials and equipment to other locations throughout the county. This arrangement creates additional costs, reduces efficiency, and is estimated to cost more than \$70,000 annually.

Today, the highway buildings are aging, lack adequate heating in some areas, do not meet ADA accessibility requirements, and include an older building containing asbestos. They also lack sufficient space to accommodate today's larger, more expensive highway equipment. Modern winter road operations create additional demands, including the space and equipment needed for brine production and storage.

Relocating all or part of the Highway Department could cost the taxpayers \$20M to \$50M. Doing nothing is not a cost-free option. If the county decides against relocation, the estimated cost to remodel the existing site is approximately \$6M to accommodate equipment, improve facilities, and support modern operations. That investment must be carefully evaluated against the cost and long-term benefits of constructing a new facility.

Furthermore, delaying a necessary decision carries financial risks. Construction costs will likely increase, equipment and operational demands will continue to evolve, and the county will remain responsible for maintaining inadequate facilities in the meantime. The county will pay more by delaying the relocation.

I encourage you to contact the Highway Department at **(608) 328-9411** and arrange a tour of the facility. Seeing the conditions first hand may help you understand the challenges facing the department and the importance of finding a lasting solution.

Once you see the highway department, please email your comments to me by November 4. The County Board is scheduled to vote on this matter on November 5.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts, Kathy

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