



**AMADOR COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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October 7, 2025

The Presiding Judge – Amador County Superior Court
500 Argonaut Lane
Jackson, CA 95642
Amador County Civil Grand Jury
PO Box 249
Jackson, CA 95642

Re: Grand Jury Report Responses 2024-2025

Dear Judge Day:

Please find below the County's response to the 2024-2025 Grand Jury report.

The Board appreciates the time and effort that the Grand Jury has obviously put into the current report and is very appreciative of the even-handed approach that they took when approaching what the Board considers as the preeminent challenge currently facing the County.

Unfortunately, the Board was hopeful that the Grand Jury might take a look at the overall funding for the County – particularly the General Fund – and offer suggestions as to where the additional funding that is needed to enact many of the recommendations might come from.

The largest challenge facing the Public Works department and its charge to properly maintain the County's roads is funding. Everything that the Department does is constrained by funding. Whether it is the number of employees, the amount of material purchased, or the equipment being purchased and maintained, the amount of funding controls what can be done. The advent of SB-1, which was passed in 2017, but has only started yielding its full benefit over the past three years, adding about \$2 million per year to the Public Works budget for the past several years, but prior to that the Public Works Department barely had enough to operate, let alone replace its aging equipment or complete capital maintenance projects. The Department has been balancing all of those needs with the new funds, and progress is currently being made in the form of new maintenance projects on Upper Ridge Road and Martin Lane that will be complete by the end of the year. The Pine Grove Project has been awarded and will also be getting underway soon, and that has been a significant resource hog even though it only offers predominantly improvements to a State Highway.

Despite the fact that the County is seeing progress on some larger projects, there is an incredible amount of catching up to do, which is why the Board asked the voters to approve a 0.75% sales tax to be dedicated to roads at the election in November, 2024. That request was soundly defeated, gaining only 40% approval county-wide. The Board has heard what the voters are saying – the County needs to live within its means and cannot expect additional sources of revenue. The problems need to be solved through innovation and austerity – not by expansion of

scope. Nevertheless, without additional funding from somewhere, a properly sized and efficient Public Works Department will continue to struggle with the challenge of properly maintaining the County's road system. That is the challenge that the Board would like to have seen the Grand Jury identify – what expenditures should be reduced so that more funding can be provided to roads.

The approach advocated so distinctly by the voters in 2024 must be reflected in the approach that Public Works takes towards its duty to maintain the roads. Care must be taken to avoid more esoteric proposals that can seem like a good idea but ultimately take away from the Department's ability to improve roads. Without intending to be overly critical of the Grand Jury, many of the suggestions contained within this report would require the addition or diversion of resources, which ultimately will reduce the work that gets done on the actual County Road system. It is for this reason that many good-intentioned suggestions here will be declined.

With that being the case, the Board of Supervisors offers the following responses to the 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report:

FINDINGS

F1. Amador County's lack of sufficient funding to complete necessary road repairs, maintenance and paving has resulted in the deterioration of county roads.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F2. Due to Amador County's limited use of existing personnel to more proactively seek available road grants, opportunities for funding have potentially been missed.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F3. The Amador County Public Works' current shortage of staff limits the quantity and timeliness of road maintenance and repair work that can be completed.

The respondent agrees with the finding but notes that there is no additional funding to increase staff.

F4. Amador County's lack of short-term and long-term planning for the repair and maintenance of roads has resulted in a reactive rather than proactive approach, leading to an ineffective system in which repairs and maintenance occur mainly in response to complaints, rather than being guided by strategic prioritization.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. Having such a plan certainly seems like a solution, but the reality is that we do not have the resources to attach such a plan, and it would sit idle on a shelf becoming stale despite the resources that would be required to create such a plan.

F5. The Amador County Public Works' lack of a comprehensive method to assess and document road conditions on an ongoing basis has resulted in the Department's inability to conduct remedial action effectively.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. The Department has competent professional personnel that are capable of assessing a road failure and determining the best course of action. It is possible that there has been an excessive reliance on consultants to evaluate and design repairs when the most prudent response would be to enact an imperfect repair more quickly, allowing resources to be focused on more repairs versus more design.

F6. The Amador County Public Works' lack of producing ongoing, informative reports to County managers hampers the ability to effectively determine staffing requirements, road work priorities and funding needs for Public Works.

The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding. The presence of these reports would not yield the additional resources needed to complete various tasks, and the County does not have the ability to allocate additional resources to Public Works for any purposes without cutting other expenditures. As mentioned previously,

F7. Amador County's lack of effective communication to inform the public about planned road repairs, the response to complaints, and the funding mechanisms for road improvements has led to widespread frustration.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Amador County Public Works evaluate current internal road work costs versus outsourced road work for labor and material to determine ways to improve cost efficiencies. Evaluation to be completed by January 1, 2026. Execute any process changes by June 1, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Public Works always utilizes a "Make vs Buy" analysis for determining whether to perform work in house or to utilize consultants or contractors. With staffing as limited as it is in the Public Works Department, it is typically best to outsource construction and more complex engineering work, which is what is done now.

R2. The Amador County General Services Administration and/or Public Works allocate more ongoing personnel time to seeking available road grants. To be implemented by November 1, 2025.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Staff time assigned to this task is reasonable. The problem is that most grants that offer funds for maintenance projects also require a significant match, which affects the funding available for other projects. Further, roads that are typically eligible for grants may not be the roads in most need of attention,

R3. To increase efficiency, the Public Works Director identify the training needs of current department staff, including that of road crews, and develop a training plan. To be completed by January 1, 2026. Implement plan by March 1, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. This is one of those esoteric items that was referred to earlier. Training will be engaged as needed and for specific purposes.

R4. The County Administrative Officer and the Public Works Director evaluate current Public Works Department staffing numbers, skill levels, and job responsibilities to make any necessary changes to maximize productivity. To be completed by January 1, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. This activity is completed every year during the budget process. It will be performed again once a new Public Works Director is installed following the retirement of the current Director.

R5. The Public Works Director develop and implement a process to routinely survey and document current County road conditions, based on the Pavement Condition Index (PCI), in the Pavement Management Program on an ongoing basis. Process implementation to begin by April 1, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The County has a PCI study that was completed many years ago. Very little has changed, and the roads that were the worst on the list are still the worst – there is no need to spend significant resources to identify what we already know. Any member of the Public Works Department can tell you what the worst roads in the County are, and it is up to the Board of Supervisors to prioritize the significant maintenance projects to address the deficiencies.

R6. The Public Works Director determine, from road condition surveys and updated Pavement Management Program data, the roads that require immediate repair. Initial report to be completed by June 1, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Public Works Director can make that determination now, without the additional cost of a study. The factor that the Grand Jury overlooks when asking the County to assemble this data is the daily traffic that each road sees. There are many roads that are in bad shape that see very little daily traffic other than by those individuals that live on those roads. Roads such as this will typically receive a lower priority for capital maintenance than a road in better shape that serves a higher daily traffic.

R7. The Amador County Board of Supervisors oversee the development of a 5-year strategic plan, updated annually, for how the County will work to improve County roads to an overall Good condition, per the rating criteria in Table A in the Road Conditions section of this report. To be completed in time for the 2026/2027 Fiscal Year Budget planning.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The public at large does not care whether the County has a 5-year plan or not. They want to see progress in the form of asphalt going down – not in paperwork that will sit on the shelf. Having this plan would also do no good because there is no way to fund the projects contained within it without taking serious cuts from other departments. The Grand Jury neglected to identify which programs should be whittled down in order to fund these projects. Suffice it to say that there is very little extra money floating around the County to pay for these projects, let alone the studies being suggested within this report.

R8. The Amador County Board of Supervisors oversee the development of a short-term action plan, to be developed by the Public Works Director, to improve the County's roads that incorporates current road conditions, prioritizes road projects, includes a forecasted schedule of road work, to be updated at least semi-annually. To be completed by November 1, 2025.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Board of Supervisors approves the resolution every year for the SB-1 projects, and along with that comes an estimated schedule. The schedule is also discussed during the budget process. Additional plans and/or studies do not accomplish the true goal of getting the work done on the roads.

R9. The County Administrative Officer and the Public Works Director oversee the development of an electronic database for entering and tracking road service/work requests and\ complaints received - from initiation to resolution. To be implemented by October 1, 2025.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. This is another of the esoteric recommendations that would ultimately utilize rare resources and tell us what we already know. It would be nice to have, but given the nature of the economic challenges today, it is not at the top of the list for implementation.

R10. The Public Works director oversee the development of reports, to be provided to the County Administrative Officer monthly and quarterly to the Amador County Board of Supervisors, that includes data for the month and fiscal year-to-date:

- Road Work Scheduled – Including which road and type of work
- Road Work Completed – Including which road and type of work
- The number and type of road service/work requests received and those completed
- The number and type of citizen road complaints and damage claims received and the resolution

Above to be completed by April 1, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The first two items on the list are to be submitted monthly to the CAO, although the current Public Works Director has been negligent in doing that in a timely fashion. That will be corrected. The remainder of the items are not warranted. The county does not prioritize service requests based on the number of requests received but prioritizes them based on the judgment of staff as they are considered. That will not change.

R11. The Amador County Board of Supervisors oversee the development and execution of a communication plan for enhancing information provided to the public about roads. To be completed by January 1, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. This is another increase in scope for the Public Works Department that has no offsetting revenue source, making the already scare funding even more scarce.

R12. The County Administrative Officer and Public Works Director oversee enhancements to the County website so that County road information is on the home page, including direct links to a road maintenance schedule and the online Work Request form. To be completed by December 31, 2025.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The work request form is available online already, but it will be made more prominent if possible. The other items in this recommendation will not be implemented, so no changes are necessary.