

Wyoming

“You Show Us – 2000”

City/County Cooperation Extending the Taxpayers Dollars

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Anyone that is associated with County Road & Bridge budgets knows the dilemma - the budget is shrinking and you need to do as much, if not more, with less resources.

We vie with other departments for scarce resources, hard dollars, personnel and equipment. One way to do a better job with fewer resources is cooperative projects and sharing resources. For years local governmental agencies within Park County have been working together in many ways that are beneficial to the local agencies and the taxpayers.

Not that it is a new idea or new concept for regional agencies, but locally we have been successful in sharing resources and cooperative projects. Our story is not so much what we do, but rather a brief synopsis of a successful project; the benefits and some pit falls to avoid when working on cooperative projects.

Historically Park County, Wyoming has had a good relationship with the Cities and Towns and has been able to share resources to accomplish projects that are mutually beneficial. The best example of successful projects is the yearly chip sealing project.

Annually the City of Cody Street Department and Park County Road & Bridge Department combine personnel and equipment to chip seal between 40 and 50 miles of City and County Roads. The City provides a chip laydown machine with operators, the County supplies oil distributors, water trucks and traffic control and both entities supply trucks, rollers, and personnel required to complete the project.



From the first of July until the project is complete, the two jurisdictions work together as one entity on both City and County roads. Prior to the chip seal operation the departments also cooperate in having materials crushed, cold mix asphalt mixed and laid down, and preparing roads for chip sealing.

By working together it is estimated that the agencies realize approximately a fifty cents per square yard savings over having the work contracted out. That savings does not include preparing a bid-ready project, bonding, inspection and project administration costs that would be required to formally bid a project of this type. There are also costs saved by not having to duplicate equipment between agencies and by having larger volumes of asphalt and gravel materials, which leads to saving because of the scale of the project.

Other benefits include allowing the operators and crews between agencies to work together and to cross train and share experiences that would not normally be offered. Upper management and elected officials also both share and profit from the rewards when local residents and taxpayers realize their agencies are cooperating, resulting in everyone being a beneficiary.



While this concept appears to be a win-win situation for every one, there are several implementation issues that need to be considered for success to be realized.

1. Gain the support of political forces, elected officials and upper management - everyone must share equally in the costs and benefits.
2. Gain the support of the personnel who are going to be asked to work together. As different agencies work together, it is most important to let all persons involved know who is supervising the project. It will not work to have two or more persons who think they are in charge. Crews need to work as a unified team with a common goal.

3. Supervisors must understand and have confidence in the value of the cooperative project and supply strong support to the overall goal.
4. Don't compete against private contractors. If possible, include them in the project.

In addition to the success with the chip sealing operations, the local agencies also cooperate in the other areas to share costs and reduce duplication of equipment or services. Local agencies currently cooperating together with Park County include the City of Powell, the City of Cody and Town of Meeteetse, as well as other local agencies. Examples of other areas of cooperation include gravel crushing, permitting, agreements, contracts and inspections, cold mix contracts, inspection and laydown of materials and exchange of equipment, such as trucks, excavators, dozers and large trailers. We have also found it very effective to have these same governmental agencies cooperate in our Drug & Alcohol Program, both in the setup, training and maintenance of the necessary vendor relationships.