

County receives road repair grant

Written by Kerry Craig
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With a renewed push for the discovery of oil and gas deposits across the state, county roads as well as the state's Farm to Market road system have suffered damages by heavy and, sometimes, overweight trucks that wear down the roads.

Hopkins County Commissioner Beth Wisenbaker said an increased need for money to repair the roads is due to a renewed emphasis on energy development across the state. In the last session of the Texas Legislature, a need to help both counties and Texas Department of Transportation [TxDOT] in the repair of rural roads and Farm to Market roads was identified.

"With the help of the legislature a "CETRZ" [County Energy Transportation Reinvestment Zone] was established," she said. "The legislature put \$500 million into a pot, and they gave \$250 million of it to TxDOT and the rest of the money to be divided up. The counties ended up with some money to be divided among themselves.

"Based on a complicated formula, because it is the government, on how much would go to each county, Hopkins County, through this whole process, ended up with \$174,000 that we could apply for through the grant process," Wisenbaker said.

While county commissioners applied for \$174,000, the total amount of the grant will be a bit more, \$217,000.

Under terms of the grant, the county must match 25 percent of the grant total.

"If I give you a quarter and you give me 75 cents, to go fix a road, I got a great deal," she said. "I know the whole commissioners court felt that way."

The time frame for submitting a grant application was very short, beginning in December. All commissioners turned in projects to prove the need for the grant funds.

"That was very easy," Wisenbaker said. "We all turned in a little over 30 miles of roads each and over \$10 million worth of damages that has been caused."

Information such as this provides the legislature with facts and figures on the damages that are being caused in the county, and commissioners are hopeful the legislature will appropriate more money next year.

Each commissioner was required to submit a prioritized list of roads that have been damaged and in need of repair.

The terms of the grant allows the county to work on the roads needing the most attention, but those roads must be on the list that was submitted.