



# JAMES (JIM) A. WIECHART, P.E., P.S.

## ~Mercer County Engineer~ REPORT FOR 2025

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***The primary mission of the Mercer County Engineer is to serve the citizens of Mercer County with safe, superior rural local transportation and drainage systems. The Mercer County Engineer will complete this mission through the building, maintaining and managing of these rural infrastructure assets in an efficient & cost-effective manner in coordination with other local, state and federal partners.***

Since the founding of our Republic, the common thread of both our nation's founding and nearly every political, public policy debate has been over those nearly 250 years, is how limited or how involved government is in each of our lives.

I find it to be interesting that the polar opposites of this debate are framed in this way. One polar opposite side says in totality all or nearly all government can be bad and is an infringement on personal rights & privileges. While on the other end of the political spectrum, there is a line of thinking that promulgates the notion that all government can serve individuals and make their individual lives better. Many people & often-times, a simplistic media, can paint this debate in the simplistic all or none / black or white / or on / off switch of public policy.

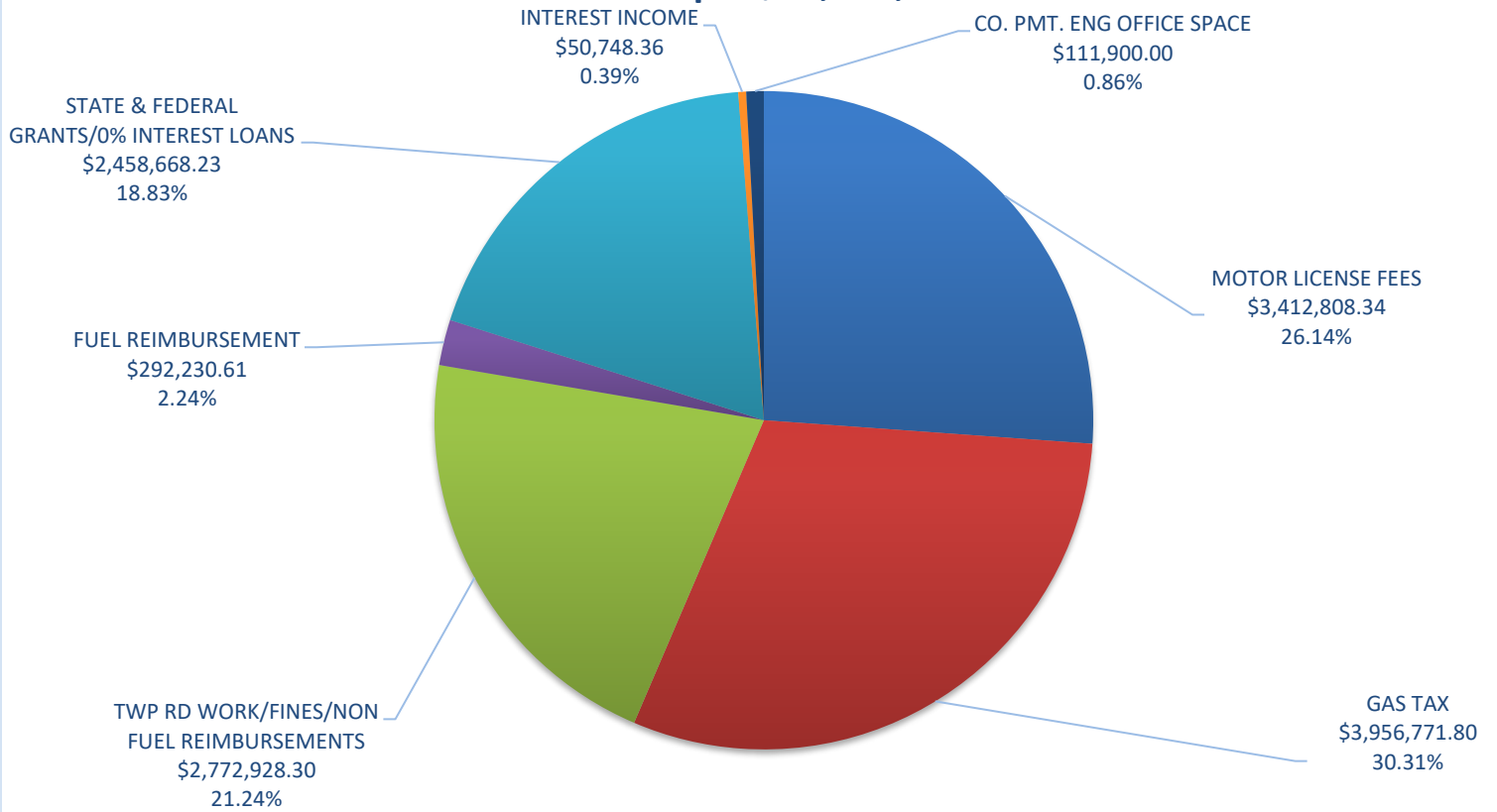
What I have found in 3 decades of public service is that the world is a far more complicated place than we fathom and is communicated by both poles of this political-public policy debate. I have seen some very beneficial things government has done for citizens at the federal, state & local level at reasonable cost.

Further, I have seen some over-reaching public policy at various levels of government that never considered the law of unintended consequences that just ended up being goofy, costly public policy – a net negative. The other things I have found in those 3 decades is that local government is the most responsive & serves the citizens in the most unbureaucratic manner possible. Government is more likely to get it right when government invests in things that all citizens can use. INFRASTRUCTURE COMES TO MIND. However, an investment in equality of outcome at the individual level often ends up as a net negative to society.

Many times, I have seen state policymakers thump their chest and say local government reform is most needed while ignoring and not focusing on the inefficiencies and challenges within the state level of government. This debate about the role and extent of government will go on long after we are gone from Earth and as long as our Republic exists. I hope and pray that the promise and benefits that our wonderful, imperfect nation has created to humankind will long endure. As we head towards 2026 (Happy 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday America!), this county engineer stands by the firm belief that government does it best when government creates & maintains things that all citizens can use – roads, bridges & drainage infrastructure.

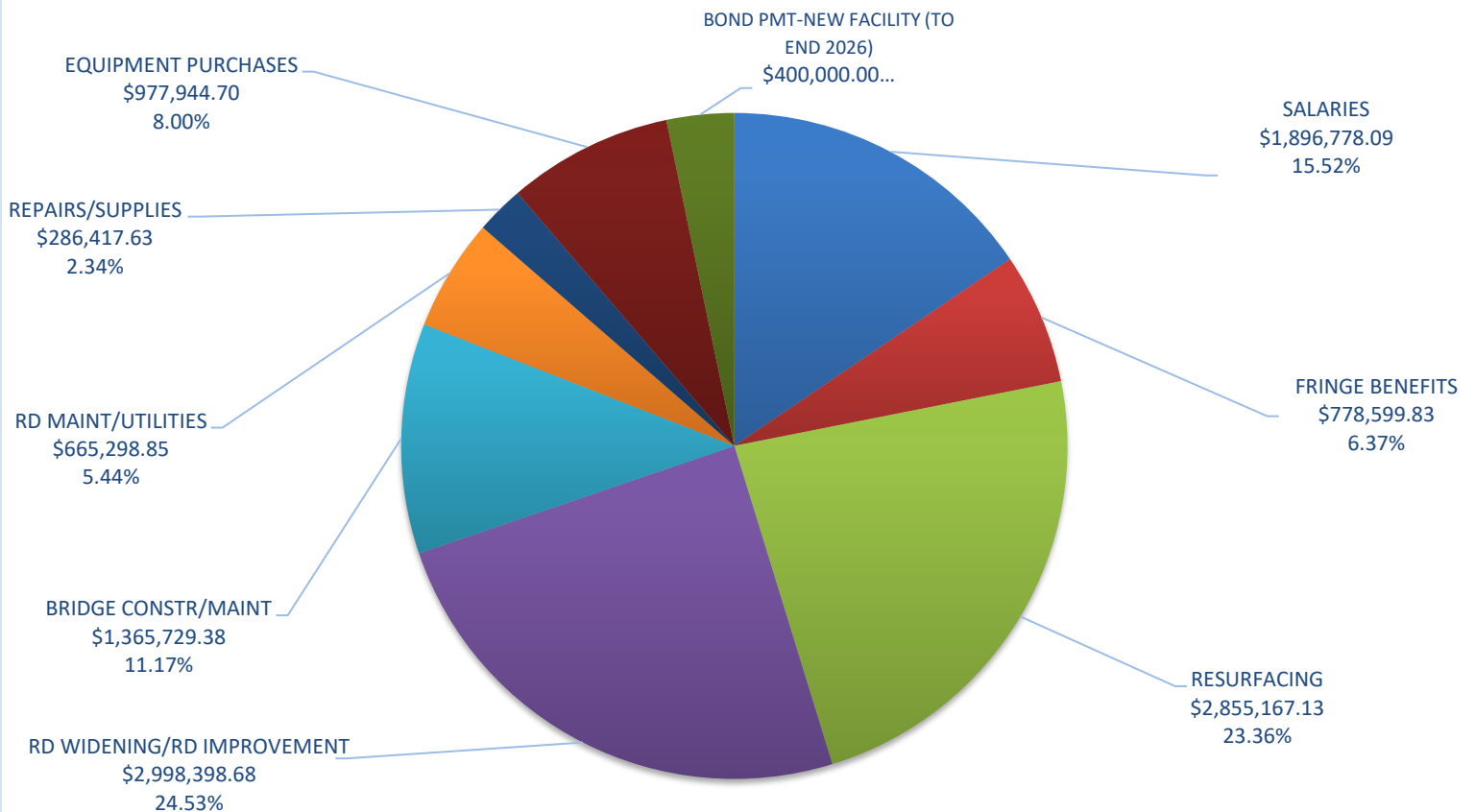
In 2025, the approval by our voting statewide citizens of the 10-year continuation of the OPWC programs was hugely important to the continuation of our long-term capital improvement efforts. This assists with our long-term crusade to widen deficient width roads (of which, we still have many). 2025 was another successful year of improving our county at reasonable cost. The details of this report (without much fanfare or flamboyance) demonstrate with facts & figures, the mission driven efforts of our team here. I am fortunate to work with this talented, dedicated group of folks. Please feel free to review this report and get back with us related to questions, considerations or suggestions. It is a privilege to serve the public.

## Total Receipts \$13,056,055.64



Note: Carryover monies, grants and 0% interest loans make up the difference between revenue and expenditures.

## Total Expenditures \$12,224,334.29



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### EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

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The following is a list of the purchases over \$5000 during 2025

Bomford Kestrel Mowing Attachment for 6M	\$ 59,496.00
2025 Caterpillar 320 TCS Excavator (#15C) (trade in 2018 Model 320 Caterpillar \$72,000 #4C)	\$ 195,000.00
2012 International Single Axle Dump Truck Used (#21)	\$ 35,000.00
Canon TX-4200MFP Printer Z36 with Stacker (Large Format)	\$ 11,450.00
2026 Intl HV507 SFA 6x4 Cab & Chassis (#22)	\$ 120,630.57
2024 Intl CV515 Cab & Chassis, Sign Bed, Hydr Crane, Air Compressor (#8P) partial payment-completed in 2025	\$ 121,400.00
2025 Ford F350 4x4 Crew Cab Truck w/8' utility bed (#10P)	\$ 60,506.00
Superior Broom Model DT74J (#6R) (trade in Broce Broom for \$13,500 #1R) with accessories	\$ 76,544.21
2026 HV 507 6x4 Cab & Chassis Truck (#23)	\$ 122,644.50
2025 Moritz Tilt Deck Trailer 7'x16'+6' GT22 (#11T)	\$ 18,515.00
T66 T4 Compact Track Loader (#16C)	\$ 63,935.68
SGX 60 Stump Grinder-Skid Loader Attachment	\$ 10,816.38
Pay Loader Bucket Model 930	\$ 8,400.00
Accessories for #22 2026 Intl HV Tandem Axle Chassis -Dump Body, Hydr System, Hitch, Plow & Spreader	\$ 98,800.00

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### ROAD MAINTENANCE

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Roadside maintenance of existing roadway components is a very important part of our operations. During 2025 there were 415 signs replaced, out of 5,281 signs in our total inventory on both county and township roads.

Contract mowing was completed in our entire county on all our county roads, with Running G Farms, LLC doing this work at a cost of \$83,086.90. 3½ rounds were completed through contract. One county mower conducted specialized mowing activities and ran consistently from May through October. This specialized mower made 3 rounds on our county roads. Once mowing was caught up on roadway side ditches and conditions allowed during the regular mowing season, a small portion of 5 county ditch maintenance open ditches were mowed.

County crews installed 45 catch basins. 8 locations had trees cut and brush removed, along with other miscellaneous locations with more minor cuttings. In fighting snow and ice, 2,005 tons of salt were used at a cost of \$155,713.91 and 2,005 tons of grit were used at a cost of \$22,314.38. 1,705.50 hours of overtime were worked in snow removal. In all, the costs of snow and ice control and removal to our operations in 2025 were \$590,177.36.

Roadside herbicide spraying of 385 miles of county roads was completed by The Dalton's at a cost of \$34,386.28. 126 miles of the 385 were also treated with preventative growth regulator.

**FULL ASPHALTIC CONCRETE RESURFACING**

<u>ROAD NAME</u>	<u>WIDTH</u>	<u>LENGTH (MILES)</u>	<u>TOTAL COST</u>
Ft. Recovery-Minster	24'	3.041	\$268,399.45
Staeger	24'+	0.703	\$125,449.50
Union City	26'	3.639	\$432,876.65
Sharpsburg (pavement widening)	6'	2.138	\$218,869.00
St. Peter (pavement widening)	6'	3.900	\$429,662.70
<b>Total</b>		<b>13.421</b>	

**18 ROADS RECEIVED CHIP & SEAL RESURFACING &/OR FOG SEAL VIA OUR CREWS**

<u>ROAD NAME</u>	<u>WIDTH</u>	<u>LENGTH (MILES)</u>	<u>TOTAL COST</u>
Mercer	24.00'	1.455	\$32,268.81
Mercer	23.75'	3.341	\$73,929.28
Strable	18.75'	2.006	\$36,352.64
Erastus-Durbin	19.00'	1.502	\$24,570.49
Ft. Recovery-Minster	24.50'	2.016	\$45,966.30
Watkins	19.00'	2.526	\$47,371.48
Watkins	19.25'	0.558	\$13,152.15
Siegrist-Jutte	19.25'	1.007	\$18,405.76
Wabash (strip seal)	8.00'	4.535	\$50,896.58
Erastus-Durbin	18.75'	3.026	\$53,505.02
Monroe	23.75'	1.501	\$32,336.37
Karch	20.50'	2.014	\$37,615.74
Coldwater Creek	24.75'	0.774	\$21,245.08
Co Rd 716A	19.00'	1.968	\$35,904.49
Cassella-Montezuma	18.50'	4.043	\$70,329.49
Wabash	19.00'	1.005	\$19,272.96
Township Line	19.25'	2.282	\$43,855.64
Frysinger	18.75'	3.789	\$68,023.97
<b>TOTAL FULL CHIP &amp; SEAL/ FOG SEAL RESURFACING</b>		<b>39.348</b>	<b>\$925,505.07</b>
<b>(TOTAL COST INCLUDES CONTRACT HAULING &amp; LOADER COST)</b>			

**\*\*\*Note: Our crews also chip sealed and/or fog sealed 33.98 miles of township roads beyond the 39.348 miles of county roads completed summing to 73.328 miles of local road chip sealing &/or fog sealing our crews completed on county and township roads. This work on township roads amounted to \$594,803.03.**

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## **DITCH MAINTENANCE INFRASTRUCTURE**

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County ditch maintenance activities continued to improve our county drainage maintenance infrastructure. We appreciate your input and feedback on drainage related topics. There were 55 ditches sprayed in order to keep noxious weeds and brush to a minimum. Five of the open ditches were fully mowed and 11 had work done on them in some way: dip out, rip rap placement or tile repairs. All eleven open ditches had rip-rap material placed in long stretches to protect the banks from erosion. 467 loads of recycled concrete were hauled to various ditches and used as rip-rap.

Five new ditch projects were implemented via the SWCD S.B. 160 process and were accepted for permanent maintenance with our office. This consists of three 2-stage ditches totaling 4.90 miles in Center & Union townships for \$1,249,450.28; and 2 tile ditches totaling 2.531 miles in Center & Marion townships for \$833,330.00 in drainage improvements to our program.

There was a total expenditure of \$250,461.30 and over 725.50-man hours involved for ditch maintenance infrastructure related tasks. One of the largest maintenance ditches is the Beaver Creek, which serves as an outlet for Grand Lake St. Marys. On Beaver Creek, we continued with an ongoing erosion control project (placing rip rap) on the banks. This year approximately 1,823.22 tons of rip-rap (at a value of \$68,188.43) was installed along the banks near the lower end of this maintenance ditch. Beaver Creek rock work done by contract is complete the entire length. This accomplishment took many years, but the investment that was made to place all of that slope protection should result in far lower ditch maintenance costs on Beaver Creek. The accumulated cost of spraying various ditches by Right-of-Way Management (\$13,076.10) and Allen Chase Enterprises, Inc. (\$89,810.66) was \$102,886.76.

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## **PAVEMENT MARKINGS**

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109.1 miles of center line and 55.83 miles of edge line striping and auxiliary markings was completed by Oglesby Construction, Inc. at a cost of \$88,010.16.

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## **LITTER PICK-UP**

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Our office works with the Mercer County Solid Waste District to facilitate litter pick-up. 7 Mercer County townships picked up litter along county roads in 2025. The Engineer's office paid each group \$30 per mile of county roads for their efforts in this community service project. Litter was picked up along 218.615 miles of county roads. The Solid Waste Office furnished litterbags, safety vests, signs & dumpsters. The Mercer County Solid Waste Office paid the litter disposal fees.

### BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

The bridge crew completed 4 bridge replacements. Two large culverts were replaced, and one large culvert was extended. It is important to be mindful that the bridge crew not only completes the actual structure work of the construction but also does all the excavation and embankment activities adjoining the structure work; often-times improving not only the bridge structure but also improving the adjoining roadway approach attributes via their efforts. On occasion, our bridge crew supports our roadway crews and on occasion, our roadway personnel will support our bridge crew, as is needed with good flexibility in directing labor & equipment to any needed operations. Waterproofing procedures were completed on five bridges. One bridge project was federally funded and completed by a contractor.

### 2025 BRIDGE & LARGE CULVERT REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

<u>TWP</u>	<u>BRIDGE/ CULVERT</u>	<u>ROAD NAME</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>COST</u>
GRA	C0-08.20B	MERCER-DARKE CO LINE	88 LF 96" DIA CLASS III T&G RCP	\$123,721
GRA	C60-5.92B	CARTHAGENA	80 LF 72" DIA CLASS III T&G RCP	\$72,890
UNI	C125B-2.47B	PALMER	PRESTRESS BOX BEAMS 140.82' C/C BEARINGS 32' WIDE (FEDERAL AID-CONTRACTOR: JUTTE EXCAVATING)	\$932,054
HOP	T160A-02.95B	HONE WEIR	80 LF 9'W X 5'H PRECAST CONCRETE BOX	\$92,842
HOP	C196-5.87B	TAMA	90 LF 14'W X 8'H PRECAST CONCRETE BOX	\$166,393
REC/GIB	C30B-3.58C	FT RECOVERY-MINSTER	16' X 6' X 4' TWO PIECE BOX CULVERTS (EXTENSION)	\$24,878
GRA	C40-01.36C	LANGE	106 LF 72" DIA CLASS III T&G RCP	\$48,444
HOP	T91-04.98C	HELLWARTH	56 LF 76" W X 48"H CLASS III T&G ELL RCP (COST SHARE WITH HOPEWELL TWP)	\$22,667
<b>BRIDGE SUPERSTRUCTURE WATERPROOFING</b>				
WAS	C31-7.47B	ST PETER	210 SQ YD SUPERSTRUCTURE	\$21,447
GRA	C60-4.28B	CARTHAGENA	125 SQ YD SUPERSTRUCTURE	\$10,879
BLA/DUB	C61-23.34B	TOWNSHIP LINE	123 SQ YD SUPERSTRUCTURE	\$9,458
BUT	C110-9.98B	ST ANTHONY	110 SQ YD SUPERSTRUCTURE	\$11,812

**Note:** Some of the bridge and culvert materials for these projects were purchased in 2024. Also, some of the projects may have been started in 2024. Cost shown is 2025 and may not be total project cost.

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**PERSONNEL**

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A total of 27 employees make up our annual personnel. In the year 2025 there were 6 seasonal employees that worked for the Engineer. In 2000 we had 31 full-time employees. In 1984 there were 39 full-time employees.

Our employees and their years of service to Mercer County:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>	<u>YRS</u>
Borns, Kirk	Sign Manager	30*
Freeman, Todd	Equipment Operator 2/Crew Leader	25*
Gray, Richard	Bridge Worker 2	26
Hague, David	Equipment Operator 2	6
Harter, Derrick	Highway Maintenance Supervisor	20*
Heinrichs, Karen	Administrative Assistant	20*
Kahlig, Renee	Office Assistant	11
Knapke, Anthony	Bridge Worker 2	13
Louth, Garth	Auto Mechanic 1/Equipment Operator 2	3
Laffin, Brad	Operations Manager	36
Meier, Austin	Equipment Operator 2	6
Mescher, Samuel	Equipment Maintenance Supervisor	26
Messner, Dusty	Highway Maintenance Superintendent	25*
Muhlenkamp, RJ	Equipment Operator 2	2
Moeller, Aaron	Design Engineer/Assistant County Engineer	9
Norris, Gary	Equipment Operator 2	1
Porter, Darren	Highway Maintenance Supervisor/Safety Director	29
Post, Nick	Mechanic 2	6
Rolfes, Casey	Equipment Operator 2	6
Schamp, Aaron	Survey Design Technician/Drainage Deputy	5
Schoenleben, Bryan	Equipment Operator 2	11
Smalley, TJ	Bridge Supervisor	26
Steinlage, Michael	Equipment Operator 2/Ditch Maintenance	21
Walls, Trace	Equipment Operator 2	1
Watercutter, Anthony	Equipment Operator 2	10*
Waterman, Kiel	Equipment Operator 2	13
Wiechart, James	Mercer County Engineer	26

\* Denotes employees that were awarded Certificates of Appreciation for their years of service with the Mercer County Engineer.

## *Employee Recognition*



*10 years of service*

*Tony Watercutter (Equipment Operator 2)*



*20 years of service*

*Derrick Harter (Highway Maintenance Supervisor)*

*Karen Heinrichs (Administrative Assistant)*





*25 years of service*

*Todd Freeman (Equipment Operator 2/Crew Leader)*  
*Dusty Messner (Highway Maintenance Superintendent)*



*30 years of service*

*Kirk Borns (Sign Manager)*

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## INTERESTING FACTS

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- There are 363 bridges on Mercer County township and county roads. Every year all 363 bridges are inspected by our office.
- There are 444 miles of township roads and 386 miles of county roads in Mercer County.
- There is an average of 14 miles of county roads and 14 bridges per employee.
- Since 1999 the Mercer County Engineer has received approximately \$11,283,471.87 in competitive state grant programs for local road improvements.
- Since 1999 the Mercer County Engineer has received \$38,897,597.53 in competitive federal grant programs for local road improvements.
- No real estate, sales or property taxes fund county road and local road bridge improvements in Mercer County. Road user fees in the form of motor vehicle gas taxes and license fees fund our efforts.
- Asphaltic Concrete prices as bid by the Mercer County Engineer increased 48.5% from 2010 to 2025, an average annual increase of 3.2% per year.
- By the end of 2025, we have 38.39% or 147.577 miles of our county road pavements at or wider than 22'.
- 86 miles of sub-surface tile and 117 miles of open ditch are under maintenance by this office.
- The number of Mercer County Engineer full and part-time employees has decreased over the last 20 years with less resources going towards salaries and fringe benefits as a percentage of the total budget.
- Average years of service of county engineer full-time employees is 15.46 years.

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## SUMMARY

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Much was accomplished in 2025 and we welcome your comments, suggestions and questions to our office: Mercer County Engineer, 4884 Mud Pike, Celina OH 45822, Phone# 419-586-7759, e-mail: [engineer@engineer.mercercountyohio.gov](mailto:engineer@engineer.mercercountyohio.gov). Listed below are some of the short and long-term goals for the office for the years to come as well as our mission statement.

1. Maintain an acceptable standard of condition of our roadway pavements & bridges.
2. Obtain outside funding sources to supplement our budget for capital improvements.
3. Be aggressive where possible in putting significant resources into capital improvement projects like roadway widening, bridge replacements, etc.
4. Assist townships in getting outside funding sources for their capital improvement projects and assist them in the administration of those funds.
5. 24' by "44"—long-term goal to have all county road pavements widened to a minimum width of 24' by the year 2044.
6. Improve the condition of our county ditch maintenance program ditches and tile.

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*Jim*

**James (Jim) A. Wiechart, P.E., P.S.**  
Mercer County Engineer