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NEWS RELEASE

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“Benton County Road Projects Underway”

Summer road work is in full swing in Benton County, even more so this year with additional road bonding approved by the Benton County Board. This Spring the County Board approved \$3 million in road bonds for the local road system, bringing the total to \$6 million in new resources dedicated to making improvements to local roads not eligible for state fuel and motor vehicle license taxes. Of the County’s 453 miles of paved and gravel roads, 50% or 227 miles fall into this category, and must be maintained primarily with local resources. To help you identify local roads, roads other than State Trunk Highways numbered above 33 are part of the County local road system.

The first half of a \$6 million road bonding package was approved last year. Also last year, the County Board approved \$2 million in State-Aid bonds to help address a backlog of projects on the County State-Aid road system. The pressing need for resources to repair roads in the most serious condition, combined with historically low interest rates, convinced the Board that road bonding was a good choice for the County. The results produced by these new resources can and will be seen in many roads around the County.

Last year, bonding funded improvements to the following roads: County Road 74 on the East outskirts of St. Cloud, County State-Aid Highway 29 on the East side of Sauk Rapids, County State-Aid Highway 4 both East and West of Foley, and County Road 66 Northeast of Foley. 2007 projects represented a total of 16 miles of roads re-paved. In 2008, road bonds will fund work on County State-Aid Highway 25 between Trunk Highway 23 and Trunk Highway 95, plus bonds will help the County front-fund complete reconstruction of County State-Aid Highway 5 from the City of Gilman to County State-Aid Highway 7, a 6-mile stretch. With the completion of this segment, CSAH 5 will have been completely rebuilt from Gilman to the Benton County line with Mille-Lacs County. Over time, State Aid dollars will flow back into the County to repay bonding dollars, which will then be used on other local road projects.

Major road projects are the most visible aspect of the County road program. But many other safety and maintenance activities have occurred this year. For 2008, the County Board increased the road striping budget to allow more miles of striping, using a more durable paint. This year the Highway Department will spend \$100,000 to re-stripe 85 miles of County roads. The Highway Department will also use federal highway safety funds to place edge “rumble”

strips on 20 miles of County roads. Other major road maintenance activities include putting 25,000 cubic yards of gravel on 15 miles of full width roads and 7 miles of road shoulders, replacing 20 culverts, applying crack-filler to 20 miles of paved roads, seal-coating 4.7 road miles, and putting down 10 miles of asphalt overlays.

Funding road projects continues to be an ever-increasing challenge as the cost of road-building materials escalates. Road bonding has helped the County complete projects that would otherwise have been delayed years. The County also invests on-going resources in the local road program, currently putting \$650,000 each year into a fund for major road projects. The County works with the St. Cloud Area Planning Organization and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to bring federal dollars into the County. In fact, the federal government will contribute \$747,000 to this year's CSAH 5 project. On the road maintenance side, the County Board has added \$260,000 since 2007 to budgets for striping, gravel, and overlays.

Comments or questions about Benton County road projects or maintenance activities can be directed to Public Works Director Bob Kozel at (320) 968-5051, or email bkozel@co.benton.mn.us.

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