

2021 Supplementary Township Survey

Overview

As part of the 2019-2021 Legislative Study of County, Township and Tribal Road Needs, the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute conducted a survey of organized townships across the state. This survey focused on component costs such as gravel prices and blading costs as well as typical maintenance practices.

Since the initial survey was conducted, UGPTI has received multiple requests to assess township funding levels to present a more complete picture of the roadway maintenance situation at the township level. UGPTI plans to address township funding from two perspectives: actual funding derived from government sources, a survey of township expenditures and plans. Ongoing funding sources include: mill levies, highway tax distributions and state aid. UGPTI will work with state agencies to obtain information on statewide funding levels for townships. This report is a summary of a survey of township governments regarding typical expenditures and needed improvements.

Survey Process and Returns

The survey instrument was designed using Qualtrics which allowed for online responses to survey questions. In addition, the North Dakota Township Officers Association mailed out copies of the survey which were then entered into Qualtrics to provide a single data repository. The survey included questions about actual expenditures, budgeted amounts and additional improvements or maintenance activities not typically covered under general road maintenance and improvements. At the request of NDTOA, three questions regarding policy issues were added to the end of the survey. UGPTI neither endorses nor opposes policy positions or initiatives and the survey questions were added to minimize the cost of administering an additional survey as well as to increase survey response rates.

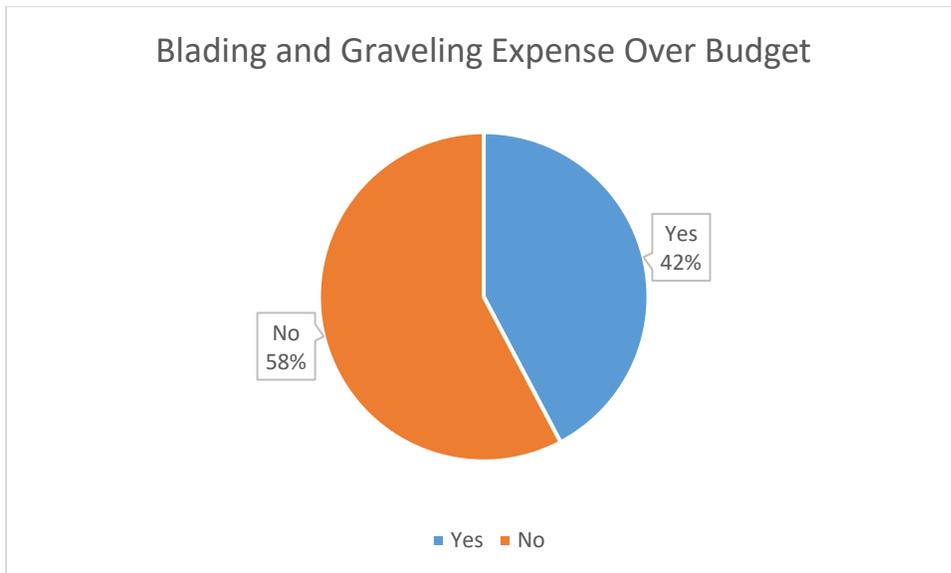
Survey Items and Results

Blading and Graveling Expenses

The first section of the survey asked township officers for information about typical improvement and maintenance activities. Questions 1-3 focused on expenditures for blading and graveling activities. Townships reported that in 2020 an average of \$27,137 was spent for blading and graveling activities in their townships. There was significant variation in the reported amounts, many of which were readily explained by the location of the township in proximity to significant traffic generators as is found in oil producing areas in western North Dakota.

Of the township responses, 42% indicated that their blading and graveling expenses exceeded the amount that was budgeted for 2020 (Figure 1). The average reported amount that blading and graveling expenses exceeded budget was \$11,837.

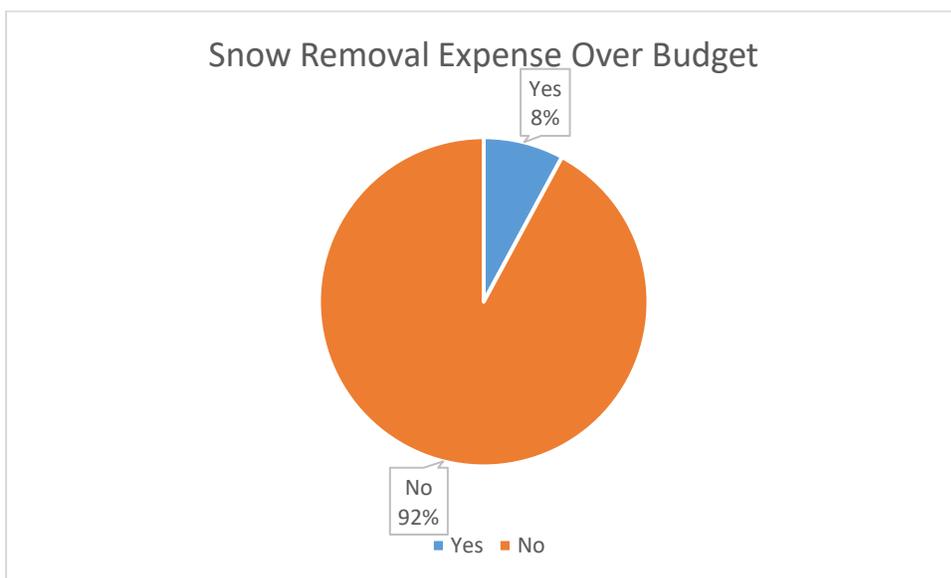
Figure 1. Percentage of Townships Reporting Blading and Graveling Expense over Budget



Snow Removal

The second group of questions asked township officers for information about snow removal activities in 2020. Townships reported that in 2020 an average of \$2,226 was spent for snow removal which is below a typical year due to below average snowfall statewide. As with the previous questions, responses varied due to differences in snowfall across the state. Of the township responses, 8% indicated that their snow removal was over budget (Figure 2). If snow removal costs exceeded the budgeted amount, townships were asked to report the amount by which the budget was exceeded. The average amount that snow removal expenses exceeded budgeted amounts was \$5,099.

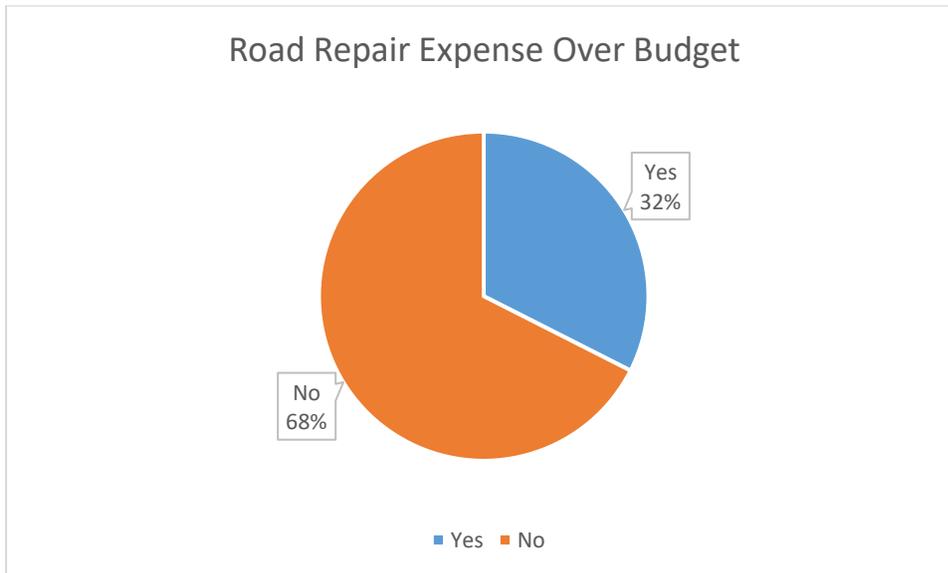
Figure 2. Percentage of Townships Reporting Snow Removal Expense over Budget



Road Repair

The third section of the survey asked township officers for expenditures for road repair in 2020. Road repair activities are above and beyond typical graveling and blading maintenance activities. Examples would include repairing washouts or other improvements affecting the structure of the roadway. Townships reported that in 2020 an average of \$12,227 was spent for road repair in their townships. Road repair expenses exceeded budgeted amounts for 32% of the townships reporting (Figure 3). If road repair costs exceeded the budgeted amount, townships were asked to report the amount by which the budget was exceeded. The average amount that road repair expenses exceeded budgeted amounts was \$17,646.

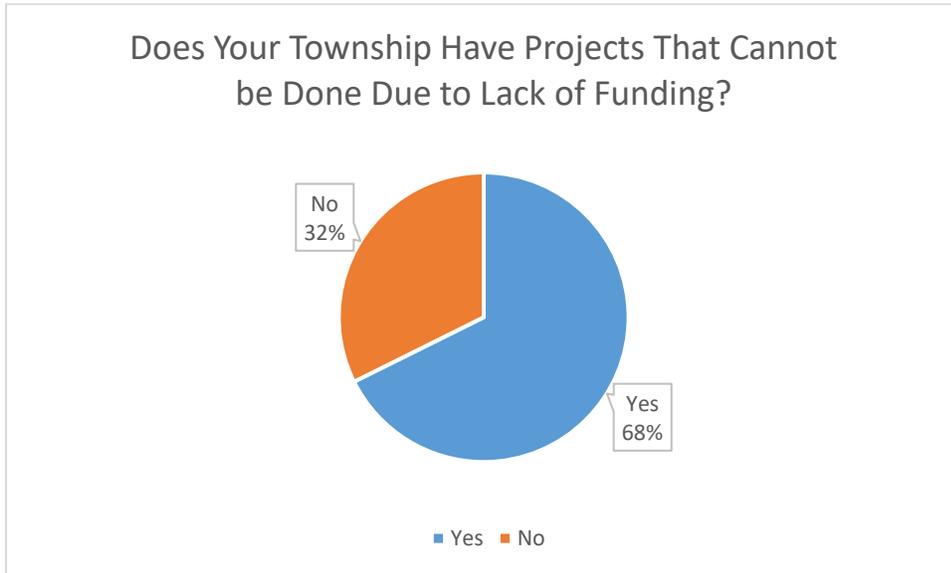
Figure 3. Percentage of Townships Reporting Road Repair Expense over Budget



Other Projects

The next section of the survey asked township officers whether there were roadway projects in their township that could not be completed due to lack of funding. Of the township officers that responded, 68% reported that their township had roadway projects that could not be completed due to lack of funding (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of Townships Reporting Road Projects that Cannot be Completed Due to Lack of Funding



Township officers were then asked to identify the types of projects that are needed in their township. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple project types (Figure 5). The three most often reported project types were: replacing deteriorated or undersized culverts, fix spots that turn boggy in the spring and establish an adequate roadway gravel base. Tree removal from right-of-way and replacement of damaged or faded signs were the next two most reported improvement types. Township officers were asked to provide a cost estimate for each of the improvement types that were selected. Due to the high variation in the responses, they are not reported in this document.

Figure 5. Special Projects Needed as Identified by Township Responses

