

mcrpc mercer county regional planning commission

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May 5, 1981

The Honorable Rudolph Dininni, Chairman
House Transportation Committee
P. O. Box 106
House of Representatives
Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

SUBJECT: House Bill 527

Dear Mr. Dininni:

As Executive Director of the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, I would like to offer some of the following comments pertaining to House Bill 527, which proposes to transfer certain Class six State roads back to the local governments. Our Commission has worked, over many years, with the Commonwealth in its highway planning and transportation planning process. As such, we are very acutely aware of the type of problems the municipalities face, as well as the Commonwealth, in handling the many thousands of miles of roads in the State system. I think it important, however, that certain points be brought out in reference to the particular roads that are under consideration, the general condition of these roads, and some of the causes of those conditions before they are given back to the local governments for responsibility.

Some of the photographs submitted with this report give you a very clear idea of the problems of many of our roads in Northwestern Pennsylvania. This occurs regularly, every year, on almost every State highway in our area, regardless of its classification. The problems start showing in late February to early April and literally takes the entire summer to make the temporary repairs.

The potholes are a continual problem. They stem from several very serious conditions that need to be addressed.

1. None of these roads have an adequate base.
2. There is no protecting surface course.
3. There is no adequate drainage.

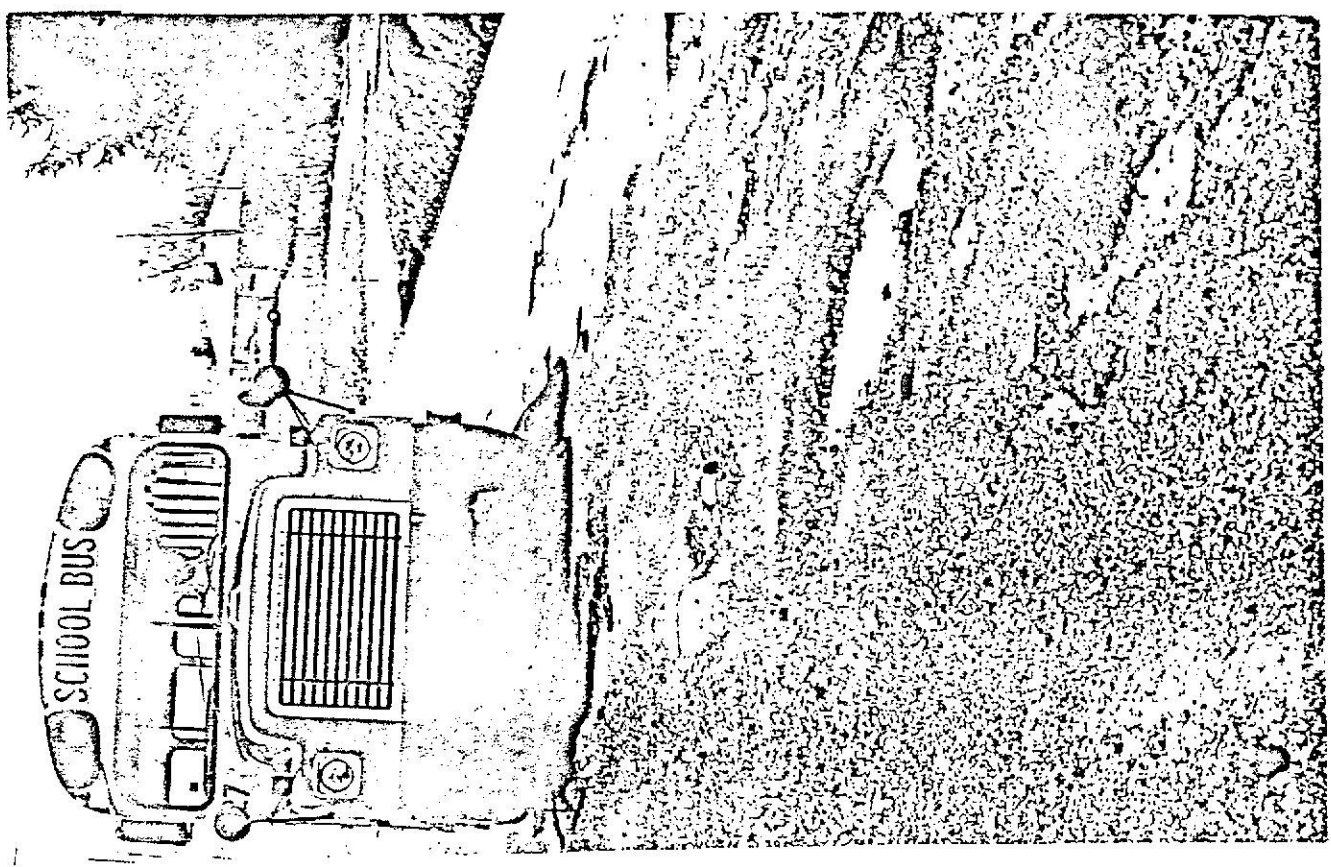
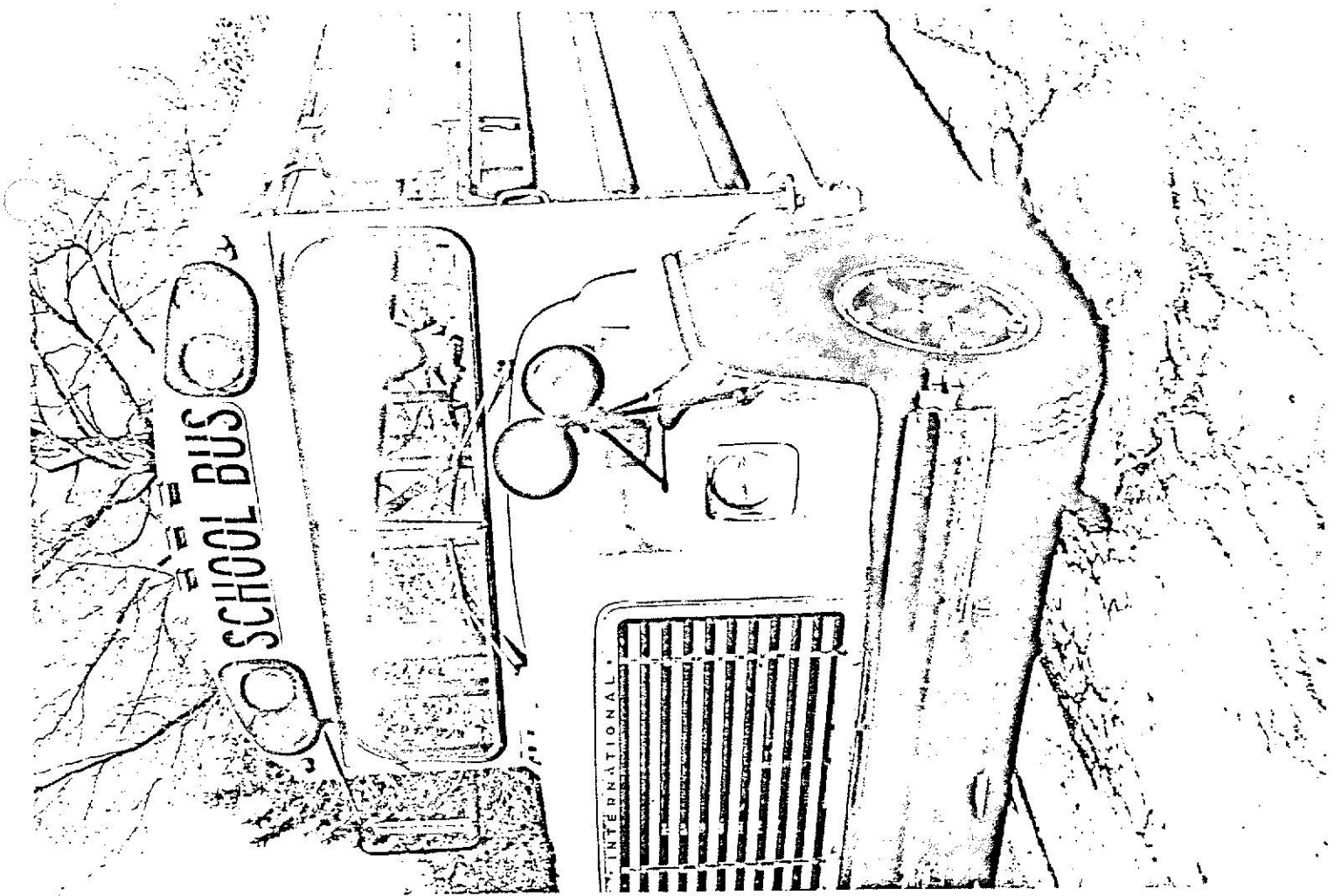
The combination of those three factors alone cause annual, continual deterioration of the cartway.

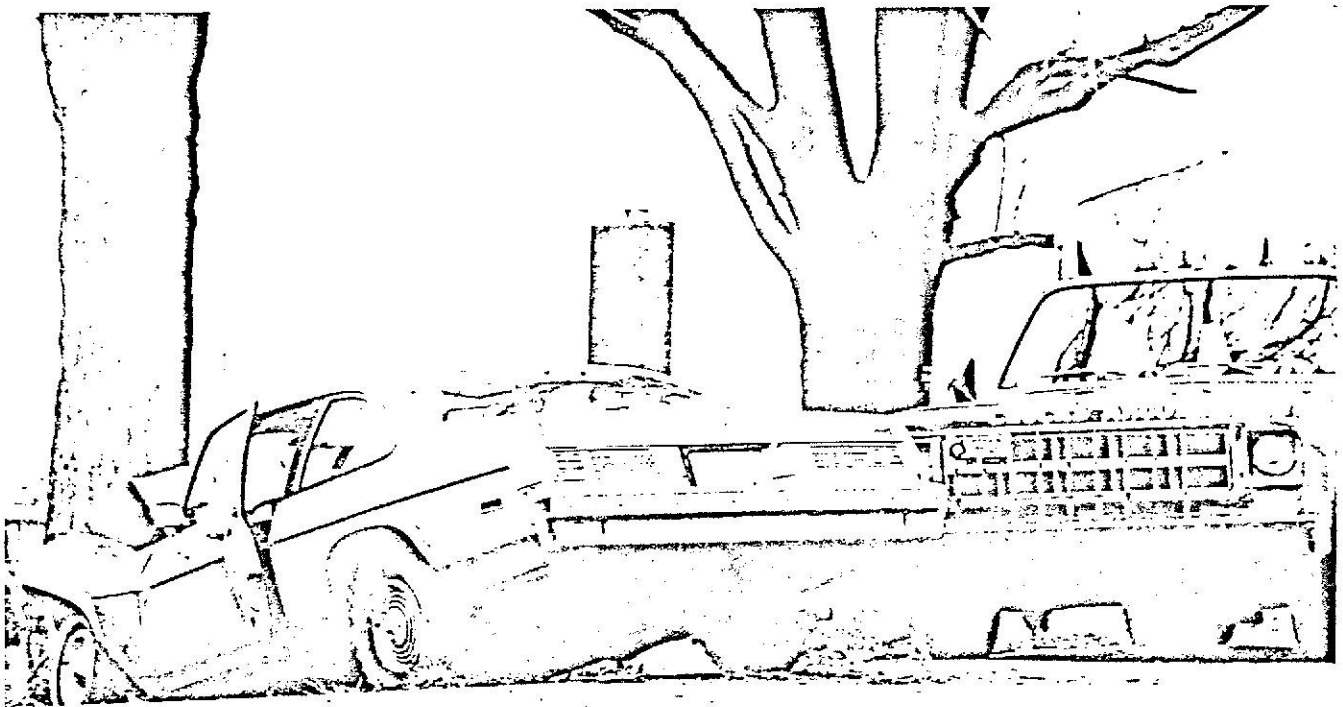
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county commissioners

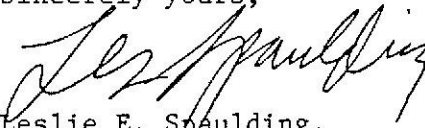




4. The cartways are very narrow, 8 to 14 feet, and in many cases, right-of-ways are not sufficient to make a really good usable cartway to begin with.
5. The resurfacing material has not been holding up on any of the roads that have been resurfaced in recent years. Most of the roads for consideration in the Class six category have not been permanently surfaced since they were turned over to the State many years ago. Very little other improvements have taken place over that same period of years.
6. Bridges that would be involved on the roads proposed to be turned over to local governments need to have special consideration. We would recommend that they all be replaced where necessary, and that the formula for maintenance of these roads reflect the cost of maintaining bridges, not linear miles of roads. Mercer County, in particular, already has over 300 County bridges, 3rd highest in the State, that are the County's responsibility and an equal number of local government bridges. We do not need more in a poor condition.
7. Local government revenues are dropping off as has been the case with the Commonwealth. It should be stressed that local governments have less resources to turn to for fixing roads. You have already dropped our liquid fuels reimbursement 25% since 1970, while costs have soared. About their only source of revenue is a real estate property tax, which in many cases is at its legal limit, and in other cases at its tolerable limit in most of the communities. All roads should be restored to acceptable standards, and agreed to by both parties. I do not believe the binding arbitration is good or necessary if the Bill includes that language as suggested by the Local Government Association.
8. The local governments in our area must know specifically that legislation is designated for rebuilding of these roads and for adequate maintenance reimbursement. Too many promises were made by the legislature when these roads were turned over to the Commonwealth, many years ago, most of which are in the same condition as they were at that time, with little or no State attention. The local governments must have the detailed information as to how those roads are going to be rebuilt and maintained in a specific piece of legislation or budget item. \$2,500 per mile is totally inadequate as proposed for maintenance.
9. Finally, I would stress that the road turn back in Northwestern Pennsylvania needs more than a normal formula method of handling the reimbursement. You must realize and see how bad the roads are in this part of the State to believe it. They simply are not that way in the central and eastern part of Pennsylvania. Our best State roads are often in deplorable condition. These Class six roads need more than just cursory attention, they need major attention and work. I would strongly suggest that any reimbursement formula for maintenance of these roads, once they are rebuilt, give consideration to such things as weather, severity, topography, rain fall, etc., which now is totally missing in the formula for liquid fuels reimbursement to the local governments. These are the strong contributing factors to our road deterioration.

I thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to the Local Government Commission.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Les Spaulding".

Leslie E. Spaulding,
Executive Director

LES/ew

cc: Roy W. Wilt
Michael Gruitza