CRYSTAL FALLS—A proposed road project that would bypass Alpha has been pulled from a county road project list, as Iron County Task Force members decide to focus on maintaining current roads. __PUBLIC__

"The first responsibility, in our minds, is to maintain the roads we already have," Road Commission Superintendent Doug Tomasoski told Task Force 13B members during the annual meeting Jan. 9.

The Road Commission will focus on three roads during the 2013 construction season.

A section of Gibbs City Road from McNutt Road to East Siding Road will be rebuilt this year, Tomasoski said. The final phase of the Gibbs City Road project from East Siding Road to Iron Lake Road is tentatively scheduled for the 2014 construction season, according to the task force list.

Rebuilding a section of Idlewild Road from Bible Camp Road to Tobin-Alpha Road is also planned for this year. The Road Commission will contribute $76,000 from its general fund to meet a 20 percent match for the Idlewild Road project. Another part of that road was resurfaced last year as part of a Crystal Falls Township water project.

A 6/10th of a mile section of County Road 424 from the west Alpha village border to near Buck Lake Road has been moved up from the 2016 list to this year, Tomasoski said. State D funds will be used to match the STP federal funds for that project.

Projects on the list for 2014 include completion of Gibbs City Road and 1 1/2 miles of Lind Loop from U.S. 141 to New Bristol Road. Including a portion of Lind Loop completed last year as part of a Crystal Falls Township water project, the entire Lind Loop will have been repaved during the past eight years, Tomasoski added.

Portions of Baumgartner Road are on the list for 2015, and two major phases of reconstruction of Sunset Lake Road are slated for 2016-17 construction seasons, with finish work tentatively set for 2018.

Funding under the federal D program was eliminated from the 2013 DOT budget, Tomasoski said. Some of those dollars ended up in the STP budget. "The STP [Surface Transportation Program] funds are more flexible than the fed D funds," Tomasoski said. "They can be used for road maintenance and bridge work."

Task Force 13B consists of road commission, county transit and municipality representatives. The group prioritizes county-wide road construction plans. That list is brought before a more wide-ranging task force representing Iron, Gogebic and Ontonogon counties, which forwards its recommendations to the Michigan Department of Transportation. That meeting will be in state January or early February.

The Road Commission bids out all major road construction projects. "We seem to be making headway," on maintaining roads, Tomasoski said.

Tomasoski said he and the Road Commission try to coordinate various factors into deciding what roads to repair first: the physical condition of a road coupled with traffic density and type of use are primary considerations.

Two other factors are state and federal fund availability. The Road Commission currently receives funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation under STP. Those funds require a local match. State funds are also available under the State D program. State D programs must be used on all-season roads and can be used as the match for STP-funded projects.

Contributions from townships and other municipalities also come into play. 'If a township or

municipality can contribute to the match, that can go a long way toward making some projects more feasible," Tomasoski told the task force.

Townships turn in a three-year road construction wish list to the Road Commission annually. The Road Commission also bids out projects for counties that are independent of the task force.