You don't have to drive far around the area to know that our streets, road ways and highways could use some serious attention.

Every spring we lament the sad conditions of our roads as they shed their icy coatings of snow, ice, salt and sand, cracking in many places from the thawing of the frost underneath.

If there is any joy to this annual tradition, it is knowing that ensuing potholes will be small enough not to engorge the entire car, hopefully.

You also don't have to speculate very long to known that your stretch of road probably won't be on any municipality's priority list.

Road repair is big-time bucks. It might be cheaper to put up a three-story building than repair a major portion of a road. Probably not much cheaper, but you get the idea that repairing roads is very quickly getting out of the control of many local units of government.

How often have your heard that maybe roads should just go back to gravel. Could be a solution, if the cars today were built with steel frames instead of the light-weight metals now the industry standard.

Road work, road repair and road costs are important considerations for any area, like here in Iron County. Poor roads won't exactly give anyone the much of an incentive to start a business here, or build a home, or even buy a new car.

Doesn't matter if you get 35, 45 or 85 mpg on your vehicle, drive that automobile down a dusty, potholed, gravel road, and you're not traveling more than 10 to 20 mpg tops.

Road repair is expensive. No way to get around it. As the price of crude oil increases, so too does the cost of paving materials. Somebody's got to pay and no matter who or what is actually footing the bill, the real payers for the paving is us taxpayers.

Maybe, if we're a little reluctant to use our own oil resources to fuel our own fuel needs, we could use some of that homegrown stuff to offset the rising costs of paving materials. Just a thought, and it would probably take an act of Congress to get that to work, and you know how cooperative that bunch has been.

To offset the rising costs of road repairs and to meet the growing needs to have road repaired, many units of government are asking their constituents to pass road millages. It helps these units raise the extra monies so they can even consider making out a road priority list, but they'll never be able to raise enough money to fix all the roads that need fixing.

What's the answer? I don't have a clue, and obviously so far, neither does anyone else.

We are a highway nation. We love our automobiles, trucks, SUVs and anything else that comes on wheels of any sort. We forged a nation traveling across this country on less than ideal roadways with covered wagons powered by oxen or horses. Can you imagine how smooth that ride must have been?

Fixing our roads is an integral part of moving forward and, like new sewer and water lines, important not just for the health of our local economy but for the health of our local citizens.

It's a costly process but we don't have a lot of choice. We may choose not to use a road in poor shape, but sooner or later whatever road we drive is going to suffer from that same wear and tear, and the repair costs involved will determine the priority list.

--Allyce Westphal