

# **Returning Roads to Gravel Brown County, SD Experience**

**By Jan Weismantal  
Brown County Highway Superintendent**

# Brown County's Problem

- **County Road system is extensive:**
  - 680 miles total
  - 500 miles currently paved
  - 180 miles gravel
- **Road Condition declined significantly this year**
  - Extreme wet cycle in recent years
  - Roads are old
  - Unusual Spring corn harvest this year.

**This was a paved road!**



**So was this one!!**





# Brown County's Budget

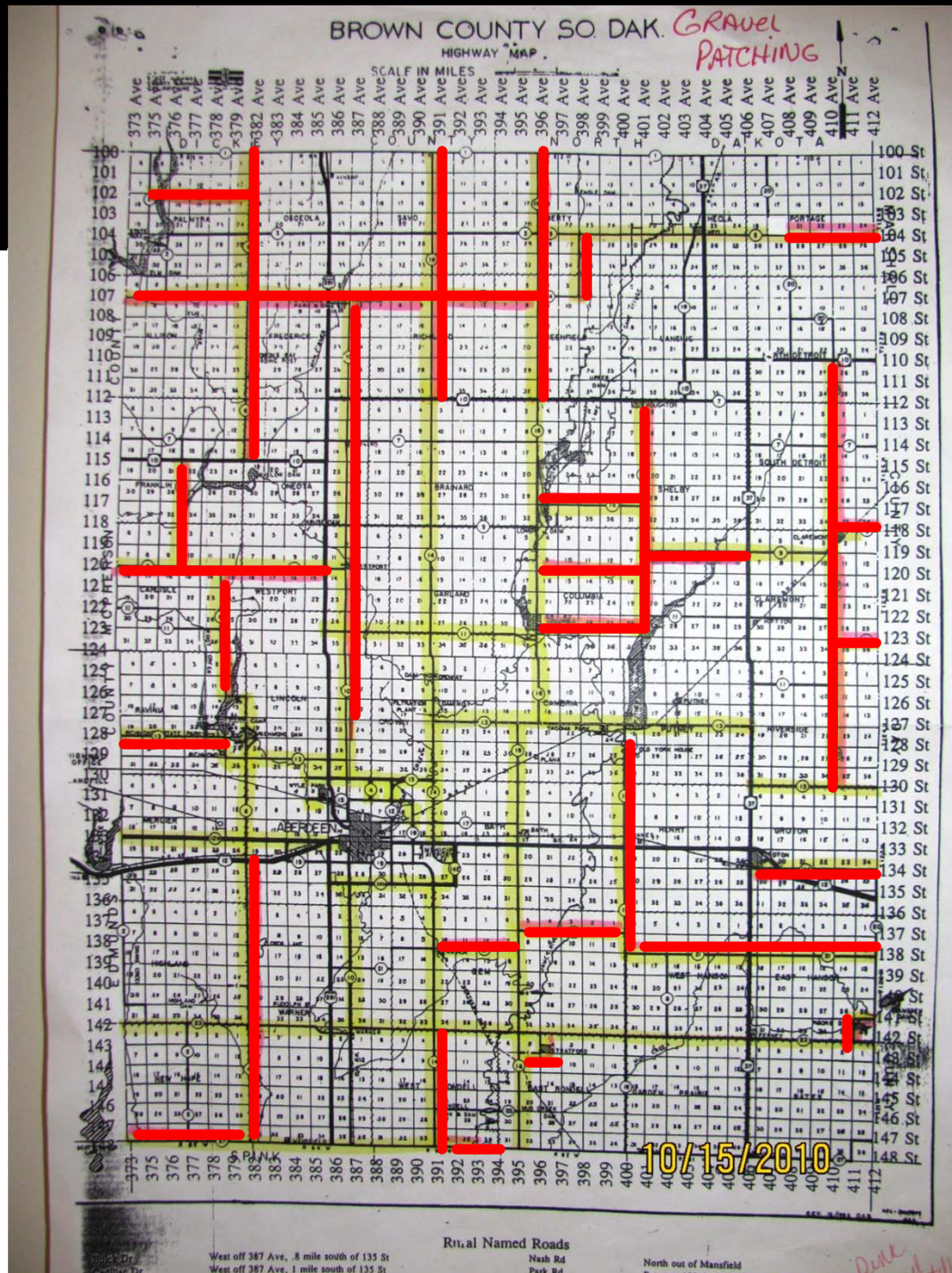
- Total annual hwy budget is 7 million dollars.
- By our best calculation, 30 million dollars is needed annually to repair/maintain the current paved system.
- Far too many paved miles for budget to support.

# **Brown County's Solution**

- **150 miles of pavement can be maintained with current budget.**
- **Critical routes (main arteries) have been defined which make up those 150 miles.**
- **This will become the core road system that will be maintained as paved surfaces.**

# Plans for Management

- The critical 150-mile system will get aggressive maintenance and rehabilitation.
  - A lot of paver patching with hot-mixed asphalt was done this year.
  - 57 miles were chip sealed.
- The remaining 350 miles will get no asphalt maintenance.



Brown Co Hwy Map

Paved roads are highlighted.

Double highlight is that portion of the system that is only being gravel patched.



# Dealing with Public Reaction

- Brown Co had bad experience previously with decision to turn asphalt surfaces back to gravel – public reaction extremely negative.
- This time, no large sections are being milled up and immediately returned to gravel.

# Dealing with Public Reaction (Con't)

- Failing sections of pavement are being “gravel patched”. Residents are not seeing good areas of pavement removed.
- “Gravel patching” is generally done by hauling fresh gravel onto surface and hiring a recycling machine to pulverize the broken pavement and mix the gravel.
- The mixed material is shaped and compacted.

# Dealing with Public Reaction (Con't)

- Safety on gravel patched sections is being addressed
  - Warning signs are placed.
  - Motorcycles – a concern.
  - Mag chloride is used on some sections with high traffic where dust is a problem.
  - Chloride applied only near residences!



# What is Public Reaction?

- **Negative comments:**
  - “What the h\_ \_ \_ are you doing with this road”?
  - Real outcry from schools regarding bus routes.
  - Simply don’t want to give up asphalt surface.
- **Positive comments:**
  - “Just give me a decent road to drive on”.
  - Some see benefit of a better road in safer driving condition although unpaved.



# Summary of Public Reaction

- There is no way to avoid negative reaction.
- We explain as best we can and take the criticism.
- If funding, weather and loads do not change, it is conceivable that 350 miles of pavement currently being gravel patched will eventually be all gravel!
- It's not fun!



**Thanks for Listening**