

## RUSSELL COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

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*Approved  
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### Dirt Road Improvement Policy

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#### Purpose

The Russell County Highway Department is responsible for the maintenance of over 600 miles of County roads in Russell County. Approximately one third of this mileage consists of unpaved roads. Many of these unpaved roads do not have adequate right of way or geometric alignment to feasibly improve the road to the standards of a planned and newly constructed road. Efforts continue to improve county maintained unpaved roads through routine maintenance, additional right of way and easements, utility relocation, drainage improvements, grading and alignment changes, and permanent surface (tar and gravel and asphalt); however, it is becoming increasingly difficult due to available funding to make the desired improvements. Increased land values, property division and changes of ownership have made it more and more difficult to acquire the necessary right of way to improve the road to the desired standard for paving. The increased cost of utility relocation and construction have also made it more impractical to make significant changes or improvements to existing roads especially with the increased demand for maintenance of existing roads; paved and unpaved.

Based on these challenges, a dirt road improvement policy is being adopted in an effort to continue the program in the most cost effective and practical manner with the safe travel of the public along the County road system remaining the first priority.

#### Method for Selecting Roads

The Highway Department maintains a database of paved and unpaved County roads. Roads are categorized and rated based on volume of traffic, connectivity, functional classification, access/usage, and condition. In determining which dirt roads are improved, weight must be also given to the location of the road and cost of the required improvements to determine feasibility.

#### Improvement and Design Criteria

The design of new and reconstructed roads utilizing Federal or State aid is based on the *Alabama Department of Transportation County Road Design Policy* and the AASHTO publication, *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*. Roads constructed without Federal or State aid should also adhere to these guidelines. For very low volume roads, the AASHTO publication, *Guidelines for Geometric Design of Very Low-Volume Local Roads (ADT≤400)* is referenced. Most unpaved roads have a volume of traffic in the low volume (ADT≤400) category; however, planning should be undertaken to consider future estimated traffic volumes in making design decisions.



1. Local Roads with 1600 and greater ADT (Average Daily Traffic)

This classification of roadway is typically located in less rural areas and serves higher density residential and/or commercial development. It is very rare for an unpaved road to fall in this category.

- A. Design speeds are typically 35-55 mph
- B. Right of Way/Easement should be a minimum of 60 ft. up to 80ft.
- C. Pavement width is a minimum of 22 ft. up to 24 ft.
- D. Shoulder width is 4 to 5 ft.

2. Local Roads with 400-1599 ADT

This classification of roadway links adjacent properties and planned residential development to higher functional classification roads (collectors and arterials). Most unpaved roads do not fall into this category.

- A. Design speeds are typically 25-45 mph
- B. Right of Way/Easement should be a minimum of 60 ft.
- C. Pavement width is a minimum of 20 ft. up to 22 ft.
- D. Shoulder width is a minimum of 3 ft.

3. Local Roads with 0-400 ADT

This classification of roadway also links adjacent properties to higher functional classification roads but are typically located in more rural areas with less density of development or population. Most unpaved roads fall into this category.

- A. Design speeds are typically 15-35 mph
- B. Right of Way/Easement is a minimum of 40 ft.
- C. Pavement width is a minimum of 18 ft.
- D. Shoulder width is a minimum of 2 ft.

4. Limited Use (2-way, single lane) Roads with 0-50 ADT

This classification of road links limited and isolated uses of residential, agriculture, recreation, or small commercial/industrial sites to higher functional classification roads. These are typically undeveloped or unplanned sites in rural areas.

- A. Design speed are low at 15-30 mph
- B. Right of Way/Easement is a minimum of 30 ft.
- C. Length of roadway is less than 2640 ft.
- D. Pavement width is 12 ft.
- E. Shoulder width is 1-2 ft.
- F. Serves as only access to isolated areas and a limited number of parcels, sites, or dwellings; with not much potential for future development.
- G. Provides restricted traffic flow; must have adequate sight distance to allow for stopping or backing for passage of opposing traffic.



#### Method for obtaining right-of-way

1. The County Commission shall adopt a Dirt Road Paving List which authorizes the Highway Department to begin acquiring the Right-of-Way for each dirt road on the Paving List.
2. Property owners desiring to have their dirt road paved shall so indicate by voluntarily donating and executing a Right-of-Way deed as prepared by the Highway Department. The Highway Department shall be responsible for procuring and recording the executed Right-of-Way deeds for all the property owners on the dirt road.
3. All such donated property shall be sufficient to establish a minimum Right-of-Way width of fifteen (15) feet up to a maximum width of forty (40) feet on each side of the existing dirt road centerline for a total minimum Right-of-Way width of thirty (30) feet or a total maximum width of eighty (80) feet depending on roadway characteristics. The minimum and/or maximum Right-of-Way width may be subject to an exception where the County Engineer utilizes Professional Engineering Judgement to determine that an adjustment to the minimum and/or maximum Right-of-Way width is necessary to accommodate the paving of the dirt road.
4. When a dirt road has been selected for paving that incorporates a NBIS (National Bridge Inspection Standards) Bridge/Approaches, all such donated property shall be sufficient to establish a minimum Right-of-Way width of forty (40) feet on each side of the existing NBIS Bridge/Approaches centerline for a total minimum Right-of-Way width of eighty (80) feet. The minimum Right-of-Way width may be subject to an increase where the County Engineer utilizes Professional Engineering Judgement to determine that an increase to the minimum Right-of-Way width is necessary to accommodate the replacement of the NBIS Bridge/Approaches.
5. If the Highway Department is unsuccessful in negotiating the Right-of-Way acquisition, only then will the Highway Department be authorized by the Russell County Commission to pave the dirt road utilizing the existing, county maintained, Prescriptive Right-of-Way. All dirt roads paved with prescriptive Right-of-Way shall have a minimum pavement width of eighteen (18) feet. Any pavement width less than eighteen (18) feet, shall require Commission approval.

**Adopted X X, 20XX**