

Norton Shores Street Millage Ballot Proposal

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED STREET MILLAGE

Why is a street millage being proposed?

A street millage is being proposed because approximately 70% of the City's streets are in need of some level of improvement and the current State funding resources for streets are grossly inadequate to address these needs. As time goes on the streets will continue to deteriorate and will be even more costly to repair.

How much will the millage cost me?

The proposed millage of 1.5 mills is equivalent to \$1.50 per \$1000 of taxable value of the property. As an example, if your home is valued at \$150,000 with a taxable value of \$75,000, the millage would cost you \$112.50 for one year. Every spring a notice of the taxable value of your property is mailed to you.

How much money will the millage generate annually?

It is projected that the millage will generate \$1,450,000 in the first year.

What happens if the millage proposal fails?

If the street millage fails, City Council will consider special assessments on properties abutting streets to be improved on an annual basis. The cost of the entire improvement would be spread among the property owners along the improved streets based on foot frontage. At this time, the estimated cost is \$95 per front foot for a reconstruction project and \$25 per front foot for a mill and resurface project.

Where is all the tax money going that the City already gets to maintain the streets?

Currently, the only funds the City receives for street maintenance comes through the State as a pass through of the motor fuel (gas) tax. Norton Shores receives approximately \$24,000 per mile of major street and \$5,000 per mile of local street per year. These funds are barely enough to cover general maintenance such as snow plowing and pothole patching. No money collected from property taxes for general operating goes to the street fund, however, some of the 2 mills that are collected for capital improvements can and has been used for street improvements. If the millage passes, the gas tax money will continue to fund street maintenance needs.

To put these amounts in perspective, even if we were able to save the \$5,000 per mile we get for a local street for 100 years, it would equal \$500,000 which would only pay for 0.63 mile of street reconstruction.

Why are some streets repaved when they are in good condition while others in worse condition are not?

The streets that are in worse condition typically require total reconstruction of the street which will cost upwards of four times as much as a mill and resurfacing project. This being said, often times streets that aren't in the worst condition receive rehabilitative work to lengthen the life of the street.

What is the difference between reconstruction, milling and resurfacing and micro-surfacing?

When a street undergoes a reconstruction it refers to the removal and replacement of the gravel base and asphalt pavement. This becomes necessary when the pavement reaches a level of deterioration that does not allow the pavement structure to be rehabilitated. A milling and resurfacing is a rehabilitation method whereby the top layer of pavement is ground off and a new pavement surface is applied. Micro-surfacing is a surface treatment that consists of a thin layer of an asphalt based material used as a maintenance measure to seal the street surface to keep moisture out of the pavement structure. Moisture in the pavement structure causes failure and is most visible in the winter and spring in the form of potholes.

How will the streets to be improved be determined?

A couple years ago the City implemented a program (PASER) to rate the quality of the street system, which over time will help City Administration determine the rate of deterioration of the streets and enable the City to target improvements at optimum times. In the meantime, the PASER ratings are utilized to help the City determine the level of improvements needed. This rating, along with other factors such as traffic volumes and patterns, infrastructure needs, accident history, available grant funding (for major streets), and frequency of maintenance needs will be utilized to determine which streets will be improved in a given year.

My street is fairly new; why should I vote for the millage?

Although your street is currently in good condition, eventually it will need to be repaired. We all drive on streets other than the one that is in front of our property so it is important that these streets are maintained. Streets in poor condition can contribute to a higher rate of wear and tear on your vehicle leading to higher repair/maintenance costs. Additionally, good streets contribute to the quality of life in the City and help maintain of property values.

Why is asphalt used for streets instead of concrete?

The initial cost of asphalt has traditionally been more affordable than concrete. With the recent increase in oil prices the cost of asphalt is being directly impacted and the gap of the initial cost between asphalt and concrete is closing. The City is committed to watching the costs of these products and will respond by using the paving method that we feel is the best choice for our streets considering available funding resources.

What is the average life of a street?

A typical street constructed of asphalt has an average life of 20 years, often with some level of restorative work performed at about 12 years. The vast majority of our streets, particularly local streets, were constructed in the early 1980's so they are 25+ years old.

What is the difference between a Major street and a Local street and who makes the determination on the classification?

A Major street as defined by the State is one that provides an extension to a State Route or a County Primary Road to facilitate through traffic; one that provides an integral network to service traffic demands created by industrial, commercial, educational or other traffic generating centers; streets that provide circulation in and around the central business district; streets that are designated truck routes; OR streets that collect traffic from an area served by an extensive

network of local streets. All other public streets within the City are classified as a Local street. Major streets must meet certain design criteria and are recommended for designation by the City, but they must be approved by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Are there any grant funds available to improve our streets?

There are no grant funds available for Local streets. There are some grants available for Major streets but not enough to satisfy all of the needed improvements. The grants that are received typically require a 20% match from the City.

How can I be guaranteed that this money won't be used for anything but street improvements?

The City Council has committed and included in the proposed Charter amendment that a Street Improvement Fund will be established to be used exclusively for street reconstruction and restoration.

Will any of this money be used for routine maintenance?

The street millage funds will not be used for routine maintenance. Money currently received through the State motor fuel (gas) tax will continue to be used for this work.

Overall, I think the City streets are in good condition, why is it felt that they need to be redone?

The recent rating of the streets, the method of which is recognized as acceptable by the Michigan Department of Transportation, indicates that approximately 70% of our streets are rated at or below a 5 on a 10 scale which is indicative of the need for restoration or reconstruction.

What will happen in 20 years when the millage expires?

In 20 years the millage will expire unless there is a vote of the people to renew the millage upon expiration.

The Mayor's message in the newsletter referred to pay as you go; what does this mean?

In essence, pay as you go means the amount of street repairs completed in a year will not exceed what has been collected from the millage. No money will be borrowed in advance (e.g. bonding); therefore no interest will be paid.

I don't have water or sewer in my street, is new infrastructure included in this millage?

No, new infrastructure is not included in this millage. However, it is the City's practice to have all underground infrastructure in good condition prior to improving a street. If water and/or sanitary sewer are not in place, then this infrastructure will need to be installed prior to any street improvement. The installation of water and sewer will be completed through a special assessment to the property owners abutting the improvement, separate from the street millage.