

County Road System Report

County Information Project Texas Association of Counties

July 2, 2010

BACKGROUND

Some of the more common questions received by the County Information Project concern the unit road system. Often, when the questions come from county officials, they will also ask what are the pros and cons of this system compared to the precinct system of managing county roads. We never make a recommendation of one system over another since, as everyone knows, conditions vary across the state. Or as people have said before, one size does not fit all.

However, we do try to provide a list of counties that utilize the so-called unit road system. Interested officials can use the list to determine who has experience with this type of road system. For example, in 1998, the County Information Project published a report listing those Texas counties using the unit road system at that time.

In 2003, the CIP conducted an unrelated survey which included a question asking if the county had a unit road system. Since the survey as a whole was not related to county roads, there were a number of counties that did not answer this question on the 2003 survey. No follow up calls were made to contact the counties that did not answer the unit road system question. An updated list of counties using the unit road system was developed using data from both this survey and the 1998 report. The updated list was then published on the TAC web site where it can still be found.

In 2009, the CIP conducted a short survey that asked county officials which of the four types of optional county road systems provided by statute, in Chapter 252 of the Transportation Code, was utilized in their counties. Unfortunately, there were some problems associated with the survey which resulted in a long delay in producing this report. For example, the survey failed to include the default road system described in Chapter 251 of the Transportation Code as one of the possible selections on the question that asked respondents to identify which system their county used.

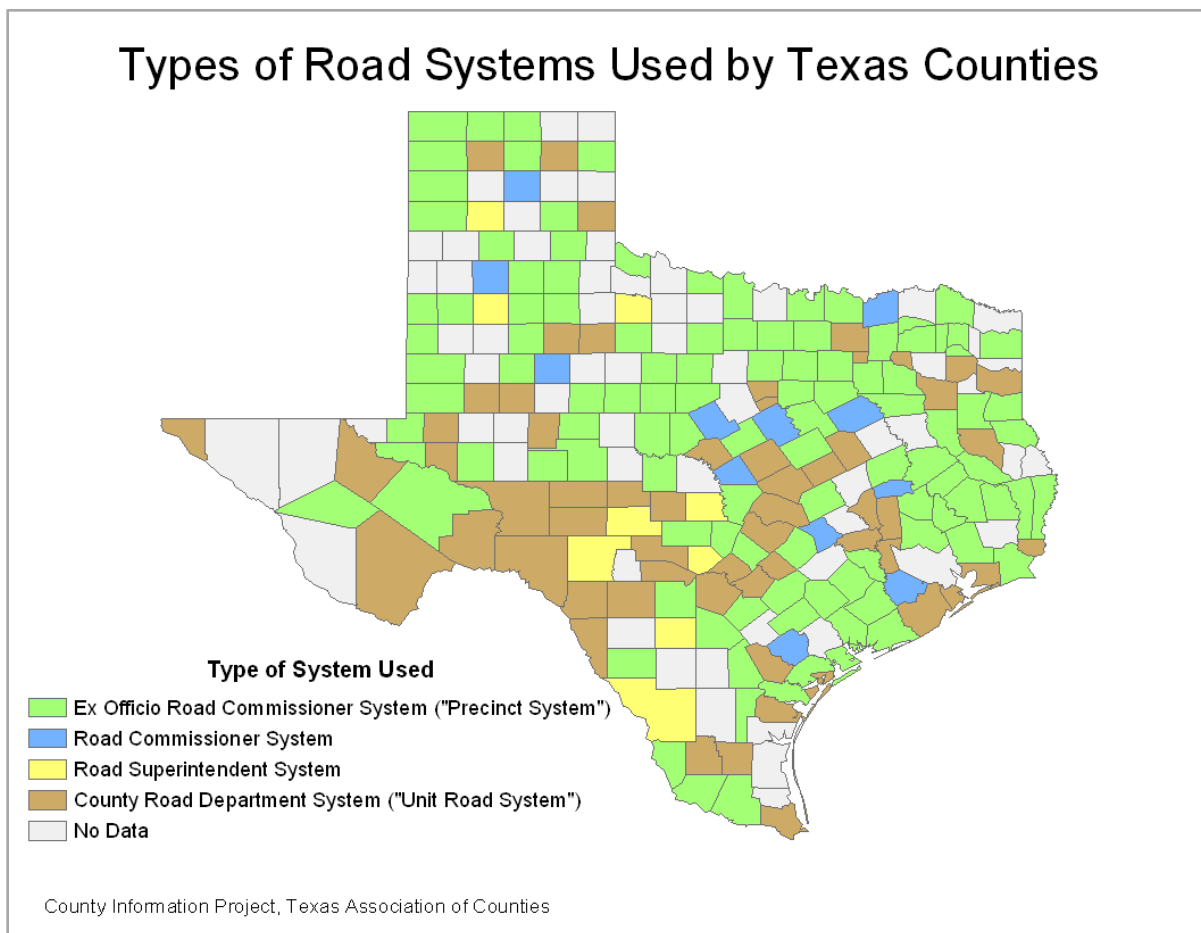
SURVEY RESULTS

WHICH SYSTEMS ARE USED?

The table in Appendix 1 indicates which type of road system is used by each county. In some cases, no system is indicated. This occurs when we have no data from those counties from our 2009 survey or from our 2003 survey.

Appendix 1 shows the current type of road system used by 191 counties. It also shows that while we know that certain counties previously used the unit road system, we don't always have data on what type of system is currently used. Thus, we have combined the data for 178 counties from our 2009 survey, 14 counties from our 2003 survey and three counties from our 1998 research to create this table.

Of those, 111 counties use either the default road system described in Chapter 251 of the Transportation Code, commonly referred to as the precinct system, or the Ex Officio Road Commissioner System described in Subchapter A, Chapter 252 of the Transportation Code as shown in the following map. The County Road Department System described in Subchapter D, commonly referred to as the unit road system, is used by 59 counties. Of the remaining 22 counties, 12 reported using the Road Commissioner System and 9 reported using the Road Superintendent System described in Subchapter B and C respectively.



WHO NO LONGER USES THE UNIT ROAD SYSTEM?

If the response indicated the county did not use the unit road system, we asked officials if they had previously used it when they stopped using it. The results from those two questions are shown in the table found in Appendix 2. As previously mentioned, we do not always know the type of system currently used by these counties.

OPINIONS AND COMMENTS ON THE UNIT ROAD SYSTEM

As indicated previously, we did not ask county officials to state their preferences or opinions concerning the different road systems. We believe this topic is best handled by county officials communicating directly with each other. Some officials did make their preferences known on the survey; however, that data is not included in this report.

Other comments questioned what would happen with the data once it was collected, if it would be shared with the state, etc. Basically, the data will be published in this document – which will be available in PDF format on the TAC web site. Consequently, the report will be available to anyone who requests it or who locates it on the TAC web site.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

THE SURVEY FORM

In 2009, The County Information Project (CIP) conducted a short survey to determine which road systems are used by each county. That survey had a limited number of questions:

1. Chapter 252, Transportation Code, contains four subchapters that define the different systems of county road management available to counties in Texas. Under which type of road management system is your county currently operating?
 - a. Subchapter A. Ex Officio Road Commissioner System – A county commissioner is the ex officio road commissioner of the county commissioner's precinct.
 - b. Subchapter B. Road Commissioner System – A commissioners court may employ not more than four road commissioners.
 - c. Subchapter C. Road Superintendent System – The commissioners court of a county may appoint a road superintendent for the county or one superintendent in each county commissioner's precinct by an order made at a regular term of the court.
 - d. Subchapter D. County Road Department System (aka "Unit Road System") – The county road department, administered by the county road engineer, is responsible for the construction and maintenance of county roads as a whole without regard to commissioners' precincts. If the commissioners court is unable

to employ a licensed professional engineer, it may employ a county road administrator to perform the duties of the county road engineer.

2. On the previous page you indicated that your county uses a Unit Road System, in approximately what year did your county adopt that system? (Only asked of counties that told us they used the Unit Road System on question one.)
3. On the previous question you indicated that your county uses a Precinct System, has your county ever used a version of the Unit Road System? (Only asked of counties that told us they did not use the Unit Road System on question one.)
4. If you answered YES, approximately when did your county start and stop using a Unit Road System?

In addition, space was provided for comments on specific questions and at the end for general comments.

RESPONDENTS

Originally only county judges were asked to participate in the survey. At the urging of some concerned county officials, all county commissioners were also asked to participate. Since the requests went out via e-mail, county judges and commissioners that did not have an e-mail address on file with the Texas Association of Counties, or who had previously requested that we not send them survey solicitations, were not included.

Of the officials contacted, 272 looked at the survey. Of those, 256 officials from 178 counties completed the survey. Because the survey was sent to five officials in each county, we received multiple responses from some counties.

Appendix 1

County	System ¹	County	System	County	System
Anderson		Childress		Fayette	
Andrews	A	Clay	A	Fisher	
Angelina	A	Cochran	A	Floyd	A
Aransas	D	Coke	A	Foard	
Archer		Coleman	A	Fort Bend	B
Armstrong		Collin	D	Franklin	A
Atascosa	A	Collingsworth	D	Freestone	
Austin	A	Colorado	A	Frio	C
Bailey		Comal	D	Gaines	A
Bandera	D	Comanche	B	Galveston	D
Bastrop	A	Concho		Garza	A
Baylor		Cooke	A	Gillespie	A
Bee	D	Coryell	D	Glasscock	
Bell	D	Cottle		Goliad	B
Bexar	D	Crane	D	Gonzales	A
Blanco	A	Crockett	D	Gray	
Borden	A	Crosby	A	Grayson	A
Bosque	B	Culberson		Gregg	
Bowie		Dallam	A	Grimes	D
Brazoria	D	Dallas	A	Guadalupe	D
Brazos	D	Dawson		Hale	B
Brewster	D	Deaf Smith	A	Hall	A
Briscoe		Delta	A	Hamilton	A
Brooks	D	Denton	A	Hansford	A
Brown	A	DeWitt	A	Hardeman	A
Burleson		Dickens	A	Hardin	
Burnet	A	Dimmit	A	Harris	
Caldwell	D	Donley	A	Harrison	D
Calhoun	A	Duval		Hartley	A
Callahan	A	Eastland	A	Haskell	A
Cameron	D	Ector	D	Hays	A
Camp	A	Edwards	C	Hemphill	A
Carson	B	El Paso	D	Henderson	A
Cass	A	Ellis	A	Hidalgo	A
Castro		Erath		Hill	A
Chambers	D	Falls	D	Hockley	A
Cherokee	A	Fannin	B	Hood	D

¹ See the Notes section following Table 1 for an explanation of the types of road systems used.

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County	System
Hopkins	A
Houston	A
Howard	D
Hudspeth	
Hunt	A
Hutchinson	A
Irion	A
Jack	A
Jackson	A
Jasper	A
Jeff Davis	A
Jefferson	A
Jim Hogg	D
Jim Wells	A
Johnson	A
Jones	
Karnes	
Kaufman	A
Kendall	C
Kenedy	
Kent	D
Kerr	D
Kimble	C
King	
Kinney	D
Kleberg	
Knox	C
La Salle	
Lamar	
Lamb	
Lampasas	B
Lavaca	A
Lee	B
Leon	A
Liberty	A
Limestone	D
Lipscomb	
Live Oak	A
Llano	C

County	System
Loving	
Lubbock	C
Lynn	
Madison	B
Marion	
Martin	D
Mason	D
Matagorda	A
Maverick	D
McCulloch	A
McLennan	A
McMullen	
Medina	A
Menard	D
Midland	
Milam	A
Mills	D
Mitchell	
Montague	
Montgomery	A
Moore	D
Morris	
Motley	A
Nacogdoches	D
Navarro	B
Newton	A
Nolan	A
Nueces	D
Ochiltree	
Oldham	A
Orange	D
Palo Pinto	
Panola	A
Parker	A
Parmer	
Pecos	A
Polk	A
Potter	
Presidio	

County	System
Rains	D
Randall	C
Reagan	
Real	
Red River	A
Reeves	D
Refugio	A
Roberts	D
Robertson	
Rockwall	D
Runnels	
Rusk	A
Sabine	
San Augustine	
San Jacinto	A
San Patricio	A
San Saba	
Schleicher	D
Scurry	B
Shackelford	A
Shelby	A
Sherman	A
Smith	D
Somervell	D
Starr	A
Stephens	A
Sterling	D
Stonewall	D
Sutton	D
Swisher	A
Tarrant	A
Taylor	A
Terrell	D
Terry	
Throckmorton	
Titus	A
Tom Green	A
Travis	D
Trinity	A

County	System	County	System
Tyler	A	Wheeler	
Upshur	D	Wichita	A
Upton	A	Wilbarger	
Uvalde	D	Willacy	
Val Verde	D	Williamson	D
Van Zandt	A	Wilson	A
Victoria		Winkler	A
Walker	A	Wise	A
Waller	D	Wood	
Ward	A	Yoakum	A
Washington	D	Young	A
Webb	C	Zapata	A
Wharton	A	Zavala	

Notes:

Counties utilize the following types of road systems which correspond to the letters in the "System column in Table 1. See the Methodology section for more information on each type of system.

- A. Ex Officio Road Commissioner System (aka "Precinct System") – A county commissioner is the ex officio road commissioner of the county commissioner's precinct. The county commissioners are responsible for the roads in their individual precincts. Includes counties using the default road system (Chapter 251).
- B. Road Commissioner System – A commissioners court may employ not more than four road commissioners. Note that road commissioners are employees of the county; they are not county commissioners.
- C. Road Superintendent System – The commissioners court of a county may appoint a road superintendent for the county or one superintendent in each county commissioner's precinct by an order made at a regular term of the court.
- D. County Road Department System (aka "Unit Road System") – The county road department, administered by the county road engineer, is responsible for the construction and maintenance of county roads as a whole without regard to commissioners' precincts. However, if the commissioners court is unable to employ a licensed professional engineer, it may employ a county road administrator to perform the duties of the county road engineer.²

² §252.304, Trans. Code.

Appendix 2

County	Previously had Unit Road System
Blanco	X
Burleson	X
Denton	2004
Dickens	1995
Edwards	X
Fort Bend	2009
Frio	1985
Gaines	1979
Hall	1984
Hays	X
Jeff Davis	X

County	Previously had Unit Road System
Kimble	X
La Salle	X
Lubbock	X
Maverick	X
Midland	X
Polk	1979
Randall	X
Sherman	1992
Walker	1974
Zavala	X

Notes:

Counties that indicated they had previously used the unit road system were asked in approximately what year they had stopped using that system. An "X" in the "Previously ..." column indicates that while the county previously used the unit road system, they were unable to provide the year they switched.