



**COUNTY OF DEL NORTE**  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
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Date: 8 April 2024  
To: Neal Lopez, County Administrative Officer  
Randy Hooper, Assistant County Administrative Officer  
Clinton Schaad, Auditor-Controller  
From: Jonathan Olson, County Engineer  
Subject: Request for Reclassification of Roads Division

The County continues to be unable to fully fill or retain all positions in the Roads Division even after making modest wage increases and eliminating two positions over the past four years. I am proposing modifications to the Classification Descriptions, elimination of one Classification Description, and reduction in the total number of positions.

Significant changes to the pay Ranges are also proposed. The wages currently being offered were the main reason cited by the last two workers who left County employ. Both indicated that they liked the work, but that wages were insufficient for the type of work as compared to other locally available opportunities. Both workers indicated that they would likely stay with the County if wages were higher.

The County, and specifically the tax payers, is missing out by not having a fully staffed Road Division especially one that is staffed with experienced workers. In recent recruitment efforts the typical candidate for Maintenance Worker I/II/III has been someone with little to no experience; it seems that only novices are interested in applying based on the currently offered wages. The Road Department, if fully staffed, would be able to take on significantly more paving, chip sealing, and other road maintenance and construction projects at a significant savings compared to hiring contractors at Prevailing Wage Rates to perform the same activities. At current staffing levels it is virtually impossible to take on larger projects or even basic paving and chip sealing projects. Other County Departments could also benefit from being able to utilize a fully staffed Road Division for special non road related activities.

It is my opinion that the main barrier to recruitment and retention is the relatively low wages compared to the requirements that the County has for skilled journeyman level road workers; specifically the requirement for all road personnel to obtain and maintain a Class A Commercial Driver's License. Modification to the level of responsibility in the job descriptions and the level of skilled labor justify wage increases for the Road Division.

**Proposed Changes:**

Each of the Classification Descriptions discussed below have been modified to show the proposed changes to the roles and responsibilities; see attached proposed job descriptions, range suggestions, and suggested position control (number of employees for each position).

- Eliminate the Road Maintenance Worker I/II/III Classifications and replace these positions with Road Maintenance Trainee/Laborer, Truck Driver/Relief Operator, and Operator respectively.

- Eliminate I/II from the Shop/Road Equipment Mechanic progression.
- Eliminate Traffic Control Technician I/II and replace with Traffic Control Specialist.
- Eliminate the two (2) Senior Road Maintenance Worker positions.
- Eliminate I/II from the Road Foreman Position and add one (1) Foreman Position.

Position Control Proposed:

Ten (10) Road Maintenance employees spread across the Trainee, Driver, and Operator positions. If adopted as proposed there would be a 50% vacancy rate in this category.

Two (2) Road Foremen. If adopted as proposed there would be a 50% vacancy rate.

One (1) Shop Foreman – filled.

One (1) Traffic Control Specialist – filled.

One (1) Equipment Mechanic – filled.

One (1) Assistant Road Superintendent – filled.

One (1) Road Superintendent – filled.

One (1) Administrative Analyst – filled.

One (1) Account Clerk – filled.

See attached position control document for current number of positions.

Reduction of one (1) position for a total of 19.

Consideration of Countywide Staffing Structure:

It is my opinion that the Road Worker positions are different from other positions in the County and should be set apart and seen as separated from other “workers”. Road construction and maintenance requires significant experience, skilled labor, and responsibility with expensive equipment that can cause great damage and endanger public safety if improperly used. Each member of the team will often drive, transport, and operate trucks and equipment valued at over half a million dollars. The proposed Job descriptions reflect a level of skill, responsibility, and requirements that garner higher wages than similarly named positions.

I am proposing a Pay Range for the Road Superintendent that is below Appointed Department Heads therefore limiting compaction.

Funding:

The Road Fund has been steadily increasing the Department Allotment year over year due to gas tax funding. This steady income stream can fully fund all of the proposed changes.

While making these proposed adjustments will likely rectify the current woes of the Road Division staffing, it is imperative that wages continue to be increased each year based on inflation or some other metric so that the Road Division does not again fall behind. Consistent attention must be paid to cost of living increases if the intention is to recruit and retain skilled labor for the long term.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jon Olson, County Engineer

Heidi Kunstal, CDD Director

Attachments: Organizational Chart, Position Control, Pay Range Suggestions, Job Descriptions.