

House passes measure aimed at modernizing and updating county gravel road systems

SPECIAL TO APPALACHIAN NEWSPAPERS

On March 13, the Kentucky House passed legislation aimed at modernizing and improving county gravel road systems across the commonwealth, according to a statement from the House Majority Caucus.

House Bill 622, sponsored by House Transportation Committee Chair Rep. John Blanton, R-Salyersville, would require the Department of Rural and Municipal Aid to oversee a pilot project evaluating the use of chip seal and reclaimed asphalt pavement on county gravel roads.

The pilot project would begin on July 1 and end on June 30, 2030, the statement said.

“Our state has a significant number of county gravel roads, particularly in rural areas,” said Blanton. “Gravel roads can be expensive to maintain, putting strain on a county’s road budget. House Bill 622 would allow counties to utilize county road aid funds to modernize and update their county gravel road systems through chip seal or reclaimed asphalt pavement, two cost-effective road maintenance treatments.”

Under HB 622, a county may spend county road aid funds on chip seal or RAP up to the percentage of roads in its county road system that are surfaced with gravel on July 1 of that fiscal year. By Oct. 31 of each year beginning in 2027 and ending in 2030, the Department of Rural and Municipal Aid would be required to submit a report on the use of chip seal and RAP on county roads to the Legislative Research Commission, the administrative arm of the General Assembly, the statement said.

HB 622 would also prevent the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet from restricting the use of recycled asphalt products used on a project, provided that the asphalt

mixture meets the performance standards and criteria used by the cabinet. The cabinet would also be required to submit an annual report by October 31 of each year beginning in 2026 on the use of RAP in projects undertaken by the cabinet to the LRC.

“Giving counties this option would allow them to improve road quality more cost-effectively while laying the groundwork for further modernization in the future,” Blanton added.

If enacted, the legislation would take effect July 1, 2026.

HB 622 now heads to the Senate for consideration. For more information and to keep track of its progress, please click here or visit, legislature.ky.gov.

Kentucky would require photo ID to file open records request under bill passed by House

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY KENTUCKY LANTERN

With no questions on the floor, the Kentucky House passed a bill that would allow public agencies to require photo IDs from residents who request public records.

House Bill 567 from Rep. Patrick Flannery, R-Olive Hill, gained approval from the House with a vote of 71-19 Friday morning. The 19 votes against the bill included 13 Democrats and five Republicans.

The bill now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

If passed by the General Assembly this year, the bill would change the state’s open records laws to allow a public agency’s records custodian to ask for a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver’s license, to prove a records requestor’s residency. The General Assembly changed state law in 2021 to allow only Kentucky residents to request public records of agencies in Kentucky, with some exceptions for news organizations.

In his explanation of the bill, Flannery said local governments and police departments are seeing an influx of automated requests from chat bots that check boxes on the request saying they are a Kentucky resident. The current state law doesn’t say how

proof of residency can be verified. “This situation with the bombardment of these requests result in a strain on taxpayers’ resources and time and can slow agencies’ responses to otherwise valid requests made by Kentucky residents, news-gathering organizations and other needed services that are provided by our police and local agencies that have to deal with what we would consider unlawful requests,” Flannery said.

Previously, Lawrenceburg Police Chief Bryan Taylor joined Flannery in a House committee to testify in favor of the bill. Taylor told lawmakers that the bill would help his office weed out open records requests made by online bots.

Flannery filed a floor amendment to the bill, which was also approved, to allow public agencies to ask for a requester’s ID via facsimile, email, mail or by hand-delivery. The amendment also says the agency could ask for alternative proof of residency if the requester does not have a photo ID. He said he proposed the amendment after getting “constructive criticism” about when a requester lives in one part of the state and is seeking documents from an agency located elsewhere in Kentucky.

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