

Road Report

A publication of the Road Commission for Oakland County for public officials serving Oakland County www.rcocweb.org

RCOC compiles 35th three-year budget

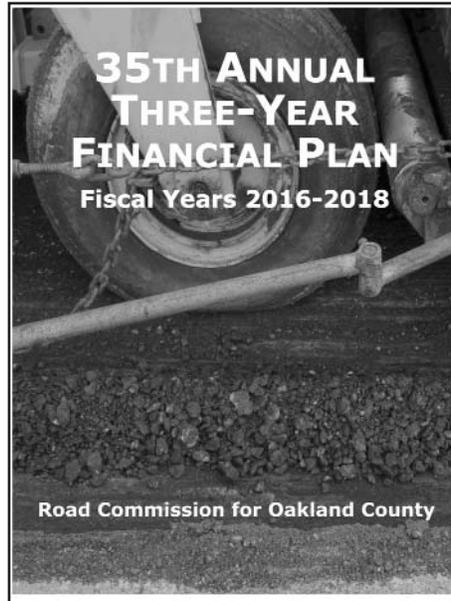
The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) was one of the first governmental agencies around to create a three-year rolling budget, when it started that process in 1980 -- and the process has served the agency well for the last 35 years.

The most recent RCOC three-year budget, known officially as the RCOC Three-Year Financial Plan, was received by the RCOC Board at its March 12 meeting.

"Using a rolling, three-year budget process has allowed us to anticipate financial changes before they hit us, so we can appropriately plan for them," stated RCOC Chairman Ron Fowkes.

"Budgeting this far ahead has eliminated many of the budgetary surprises that occur when you operate only on an annual basis."

In fact, RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar notes it was thanks in large part to the three-year budgeting process that the Road Commission was able to



This year's Three-Year Financial Plan is the 35th edition.

avoid layoffs during the "Great Recession." "We were able to anticipate

the drop in funding ahead of time," Kolar stated. "This gave us some extra time and allowed us to reduce our staff through attrition. So, while we reduced our head county by 35 percent, we never had to lay off a single employee. Not many entities can make that large of a staff reduction without layoffs."

The most recent three-year budget, which is available on the RCOC Web site (www.rcocweb.org, in the Publications section under the "About Us" tab, in the "RCOC Financial Documents: Three-Year Financial Plan" category) paints a picture of continuing financial challenge at the Road Commission, particularly in light of the failure of Proposal 1 on May 5.

The document predicts an anemic increase of 0.81 percent per year in state road funding during the three-year period of 2015-2018. It also points out that RCOC received less state revenue -- its primary source of operating funds -- in
CONT'D ON PAGE 2 -- SEE FIN. PLAN

RCOC will continue working toward adequate road funding despite failure of Prop. 1

Despite the failure May 5 of Michigan's Proposal 1, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is committed to continuing to seek adequate funding for the state's roads.

"I believe the failure of Prop. 1 had more to do with voters' attitudes about the legislative process in Lansing than with the need for road funding," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "I heard frequently from voters that they were willing to pay more toward improving Michigan's roads, but simply didn't like Prop. 1. However, through the process of discussing Prop. 1, many voters also became much more educated about road funding."

Kolar noted that without additional funding, roads in Oakland County will continue to deteriorate. "We know that at current funding levels we are not able to

keep up with the rate of deterioration, and that, unless we receive additional funding, the roads will continue to get worse," he stated. "But, we will continue to do everything we can -- as we always have -- to spread the resources we do have as far as possible."

However, Kolar said he will also continue working with state legislators to encourage them to act as quickly as possible to resolve the road-funding crisis. "Time is of the essence," he stated. "Each year that passes without a resolution to the road-funding crisis means the problem gets larger and more expensive to fix."

The managing director noted RCOC computer models suggest at current funding levels, two-thirds of county roads will be in poor condition by 2020 as compared to 44 percent today.

What's Inside

Watch roundabout being built 2

County presents RCOC with \$2 million 2

Troy helping to fund road repairs 3

Strategic Planning meetings wrap up . . 3

Watch construction of the 14 Mile/Orchard Lake roundabout through workzone camera on RCOC Website

It is now possible to watch the progress of the construction of the roundabout at the intersection of 14 Mile and Orchard Lake roads on the West Bloomfield Twp./Farmington Hills border via a real-time workzone camera looking down on the site.

The camera images, which are automatically taken every 15 minutes, can be viewed on the RCOC Web site, www.rcocweb.org (click on the "14 Mile/Orchard Lake roundabout workzone camera" link at the bottom of the homepage). Site visitors can also view a time-lapse series of all the photos taken at 15-minute intervals since the camera was installed on April 9.

Additionally, RCOC will produce a two-minute video compilation of the photos at the end of the project that will allow viewers to see the process from beginning to end.



A view of the under-construction roundabout from the workzone camera.

"This is our largest project this year and a pretty large project by anybody's standards," explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "This camera provides a way for both Road Commission staff and the public to follow the progress at this highly anticipated project."

Kolar added the Road Commission is often asked about the status of a project, and this allows people to see that in real time. "We're also often asked how projects like this occur," he noted. "Through this camera, people will be able to see each step in the process and how it is done. The camera is really an educational tool."

FIN. PLAN -- CONT'D FROM FRONT
2014 than it did in 2004. State road-funding dollars are generated by the state-collected gas tax and vehicle-registration fee.

The document also sets projected spending levels for road construction, road maintenance and all other agency activities for the three-year period. Additionally, it sets staffing levels for the three years, based on anticipated revenues.

For this three-year period, the plan calls for RCOC to maintain the current staffing levels, which remain below those of 1962. The document also provides detailed plans for expenditures in every budgetary area.

Finally, the document identifies "unmet needs" -- those items deemed a priority by the agency's leaders, but for which there is no funding available. This list includes everything from road-improvement projects to new equipment to staff to building improvements as well as a wide variety of other items.

In all, the plan identifies more than \$184 million in unmet needs in 2016, more than \$150 million in unmet needs in 2017 and more than \$161 million in unmet needs in 2018.

"While the financial picture continues to present challenges," Kolar said, "without the long-term planning that this process affords us, we would be in much worse shape."

\$2 million contribution from Oakland County will help with equipment purchase

It looks like Oakland County general government will be sending \$2 million to the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) to help pay for some sorely needed new trucks.

County Executive L. Brooks Patterson proposed the \$2 million contribution to the Road Commission on May 6 (the day after Prop. 1 failed at the polls). The County Board of Commissioner's Finance Committee approved the issue on May 21, and the full Board gave its unanimous nod the same day.

"We are very appreciative of this contribution," stated RCOC Chairman Ron Fowkes. "It's no secret there is a road-funding crisis in Michigan, and this contribution will help us to purchase some badly needed equipment to replace some pieces in our aging fleet."

The money will be used to offset part of the \$3.8 million cost of the previously planned purchase of 12 new dump trucks and three road graders. The trucks will be used for a variety of operations, ranging from snow plowing and salting in the winter to pothole patching in the summer. The graders will be used to grade gravel roads in the spring, summer and fall and

to plow snow in the winter.

"These dump trucks are the work horses of our fleet," RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar said. He noted these new trucks will be even more versatile than similar trucks already in the fleet, because they will come with easily interchangeable boxes on the back.

"We can swap the dump boxes with 'v-boxes' for salting or brine tanks, so the trucks will be useful for a wide range of activities," Kolar explained.

The graders are needed to help maintain the 770-plus miles of gravel roads in the RCOC system. "We have one of the largest gravel road systems in the state," Kolar said. "And our aging fleet of graders is breaking down with increasing frequency. These new graders will help to ensure that we can provide timely maintenance on these roads."

RCOC Fast Fact

RCOC re-stripes all of its roads every year. That equates to painting **14 million feet** of road striping every single year. Re-striping ensures the lane and edge markings remain clearly visible.

Troy steps up for second year to help repair roads

For the second year in a row, the City of Troy is taking the lead to help repair a number of Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) roads within the community.

This year, the city dedicated \$2 million of city funds for concrete repairs on sections of Dequindre, John R and Big Beaver roads. Last year, the city put approximately \$5.5 million into repairs on sections of Long Lake, John R, Crooks, Livernois and Big Beaver roads.

The Road Commission also contributed to the project, and approximately \$400,000 worth of Tri-Party Program funds are being used this year as well.

"We really appreciate the City taking such a proactive role in helping to improve the Road Commission roads in the community," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "The City of Troy has been a great partner."



The slab replacement work underway on John R Road.

Most of the work this year, as was the case last year, is concrete slab replacement. This involves identifying the worst sections of the roads, removing

those sections and replacing them with new concrete.

This year's work includes southbound Dequindre from Wattles to south of Big Beaver; John R from Long Lake to just south of Maple; and Big Beaver from I-75 to Adams.

"This work will truly make a significant difference in the City of Troy, and certainly improve the quality of life and business environment in the community," Kolar said.

Troy, RCOC win APWA award

In fact, this Troy/RCOC cooperation was so successful last year that it was recognized by the Michigan Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA). At its annual conference in May, the chapter named RCOC and the City of Troy joint winners of the Project of the Year Award for Governmental Cooperation for the effort.

30 years of building relationships:

RCOC wrapping up biennial Strategic Planning meetings

The top administration of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is wrapping up its biennial Strategic Planning process, which involves meeting with the leaders of virtually every community in the county.

"Since 1985, we have gone out to meet with the leaders of virtually every community every two years," explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "This is an invaluable process -- it really allows us to keep our finger on the pulse of the communities and helps to ensure an ongoing, strong working relationship with each community's leaders."

During the meeting, Kolar and Gary Piotrowicz, RCOC deputy managing director/county highway engineer, review road-funding issues, new RCOC initiatives, the current road-construction program and more. They also ask the community leaders for updates on new development planned in the community, the community's long-term road-improvement priorities and feedback on the Road Commission's level of service in the community.

The three RCOC Road Commissioners (Chairman Ron Fowkes, Vice Chairman Eric Wilson and Commissioner Greg



During the Strategic Planning meeting with West Bloomfield Township, RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar (far right) discusses road projects, while RCOC Chairman Ron Fowkes (to Kolar's right) looks on. In the foreground are Township Planner Marshall Labadie and Township Supervisor Michele Economou-Ureste.

Jamian) also participated in many of the meetings.

The last couple of Strategic Planning meetings were scheduled for June. Once all the meetings are finished, the Road

Commission will compile a report that will summarize what was learned and shared at the meetings, and provide copies of the report to all communities and public officials serving the county.

Oakland County bridges - a success story

In recent months, there has been much public discussion of the poor condition of Michigan's roads, and Oakland County is certainly in the same category. However, when it comes to bridges, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has been very successful at attaining funding to replace deteriorated structures.

In fact, today, 66 percent of RCOC's bridges are in good condition, while only 11 percent of RCOC bridges are in poor condition. This is compared to 44 percent of RCOC's roads which are in poor condition, with only 14 percent in good condition.

"We have been very aggressive in pursuing bridge funding," observed RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "As a result, we've been able to replace some of our most deteriorated bridges in recent years."

In fact, only 17 of RCOC's 105 bridges are currently posted with weight restrictions, meaning trucks are allowed to cross only with a reduced load. The amount of the weight restriction varies from bridge to bridge depending upon the condition of each.

Of the 17 posted bridges, RCOC has attained funding for two: the Big Beaver Road bridge over the Rouge River in Bloomfield Twp. and the Seymour Lake Road bridge over the Paint Creek in Brandon Twp. The Big Beaver bridge is expected to be replaced in 2016, while maintenance will be performed on the Seymour Lake Road bridge in the same year.

Most RCOC bridges are inspected every two years, unless they have shown signs of deterioration, in which case the inspection frequency is increased. One RCOC bridge even requires underwater inspection by RCOC's bridge inspection consultant because of the water depth at its substructure: the Grand River Ave. bridge over the Huron River in Lyon Twp.



The recently constructed Avon Road bridge over the Clinton River in Rochester Hills.

Contacting RCOC

If your constituents need information about a road project or want to report a pothole, traffic signal problem or other road issue, they should call RCOC's **Department of Customer Services** toll free at:

(877) 858-4804

OR

Send us an e-mail via the RCOC Web site:
www.rcocweb.org

ROAD REPORT

Road Report is published quarterly by the Road Commission for Oakland County. Have a question or comment about **Road Report**? Call Public Information Officer Craig Bryson at (248) 645-2000, ext. 2302 or send him an e-mail at cbryson@rcoc.org.

Board of Road Commissioners:

Ronald J. Fowkes, Chairman

Eric S. Wilson, Vice Chairman

Gregory C. Jamian, Commissioner

Dennis G. Kolar, PE, Managing Director

**Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE, Dep. Managing Dir./
County Highway Engineer**

Have a question for RCOC? Call:
Department of Customer Services
(877) 858-4804 or visit RCOC online at
www.rcocweb.org