

Road Report

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

22nd roundabout opens on RCOC roads -- more coming

There are now 22 functioning roundabouts on Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) roads, with the recent opening of the 10 Mile/Napier roundabout on the Novi/Lyon Township border.

Additionally, there are at least seven more roundabouts on city streets in Oakland County for a total of 29. That means the county continues to have the largest concentration of roundabouts in Michigan -- and more are on the way.

Over the next two years, RCOC will add five more roundabouts on Baldwin Road between Morgan and Waldon roads in Orion Township. And there will likely be others in the coming years as well.

In fact, RCOC now considers roundabouts a standard alternative whenever it looks at improving an intersection, either to improve traffic flow or safety. "In many cases, roundabouts can both increase traffic capacity and improve intersection safety," explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "That



The 10 Mile/Napier roundabout as seen from above. The roundabout opened in November. The project included cutting a hill to the west of the roundabout to improve sight distance.

means we get a lot of 'bang for the buck' with roundabouts."

Engineering studies have suggested that roundabouts can increase road capacity by up to 50 percent compared to signalized intersections. Studies by the Federal Highway Administration and oth-

ers indicate that converting signalized intersections to roundabouts reduces the number of traffic fatalities at the intersections by 90 percent.

"There is virtually nothing else we can do, as a road agency, that will reduce traffic fatalities by 90 percent," Kolar said.

Road Commission prepared for winter

The skies are turning grey, the temperatures have dropped and the leaves have fallen from the trees -- in other words, winter has returned. And the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is ready for the winter weather.



RCOC is also continuing to update its fleet of snowplows/salt trucks. "We are methodically working toward replacing an aging fleet of trucks," said RCOC Vice Chairman Greg Jamian. "Nonetheless, we are

ready to take on the winter." He noted RCOC has purchased 47 new snowplow trucks since 2013 and expects to replace 12 more trucks each year going forward.

Road Commissioner Ron Fowkes noted the agency is prepared for whatever Mother Nature brings during the winter, though a milder winter is always appreciated. "The winter snow season historically makes or strains a road commission budget," Fowkes said. "A lighter winter will definitely help

Again this year, RCOC has hired part-time, temporary snowplow/salt-truck drivers to augment its full-time staff. The agency hired 36 temporary drivers.

"The part-time, temporary winter help is a great way to ensure we provide the service that Oakland County residents deserve," explained RCOC Chairman Eric Wilson. "With the part-time workers, we expect to have approximately 170 snowplow drivers available this winter."

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A message from the Chairman:

2017 was a busy year for road construction

By Eric Wilson,
RCOC Chairman

What a road construction season it has been -- as unpleasant as orange barrels can be, they are a clear sign of progress on our roads. My fellow road commissioners, Greg Jamian and Ron Fowkes, and I are pleased that 2017 was one of the most productive years for roads in Oakland County in a long time.



Thanks to the new revenue we started seeing on Jan. 1 this year (the result of the increase in the state fuel taxes and vehicle-registration fee), we have put the pedal to the metal on road repair. We have been purposeful, persistent and pertinacious -- and the results can be seen on roads across the county.

We resurfaced 45 miles of roads, built a new roundabout, started a couple of large road-widening projects and reconstructed a couple heavily traveled roads, among other

efforts. The new roundabout is at the intersection of 10 Mile and Napier roads on the Novi/Lyon Township border.

The large widening projects included initial work on the long-anticipated Baldwin Road project from Morgan to Waldon in Orion Township. This is a massive, multi-year project that will transform southwestern Orion Township. It includes five roundabouts and sections that will be four-lane divided boulevards as well as five-lane segments.

The other big widening project that we started this year was Dequindre between Long Lake Road and Burning Bush Drive on the Troy/Sterling Heights border. This two-lane road will be reconstructed as a five-lane road with continuous center left-turn lane. We are completing some water and sewer work this year -- the bulk of the road construction will take place next year.

Another big and long-anticipated project that wrapped up this year was the reconstruction of Orchard Lake Road from

Northwestern Highway to Maple in West Bloomfield Twp. This section of Orchard Lake Road was reconstructed as a four-lane, divided boulevard. The project will greatly improve traffic flow, property access and safety in this vibrant commercial district.

This year we also tried a new paving technique on Williams Lake Road from Elizabeth Lake Road to Pontiac Lake Road in Waterford Township. Known as the "Texas Two-Step," the concept involves first sealing the road with a thin asphalt mix ("chip seal") followed by paving with a couple inches of asphalt. As the name implies, the technique originated in Texas -- we'll see how well it works in Michigan.

We appreciate the patience of the motorists, residents and businesses this year as we worked to improve roads across Oakland County. We plan to keep up this pace and keep chipping away at the roads that have deteriorated over the past decade.

So, watch out for the orange barrels -- we're just getting started.

Orchard Lake Boulevard, 14 Mile to 15 Mile, opens to traffic



The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has opened all lanes of the newly constructed four-lane boulevard on Orchard Lake Road between Northwestern Highway and Maple Road in West Bloomfield Township. The approximately \$7.2 million project was funded with a mix of federal and local dollars. Local funding was shared by RCOC and West Bloomfield Township. The project included the complete reconstruction of the road (which was previously five lanes) as well as the construction of eight-foot-wide pedestrian paths on both sides, drainage improvements and new pedestrian crosswalks.



Road Commission urges opposition to telecom bills

The Michigan Legislature is considering a couple of bills -- House Bill 5097 and Senate Bill 637 -- that would result in road agencies across the state being forced to subsidize the activities of for-profit telecommunications companies with funds that were intended to be used to improve Michigan's crumbling roads. Legislators should oppose these bills.

The bills are being promoted as an effort to help expand broadband access across the state. However, they would do this at the expense of Michigan roads, which can hardly afford to lose any funding.

The bills would severely restrict the fees that road agencies could charge telecom companies for the permits required to place and maintain their equipment in road rights of way. Additionally, they would reduce the size of the bond these companies must post when they install equipment in the right of way and prohibit road agencies from requiring the telecoms to perform or pay for surveys of the rights of way as a condition of the issuance of a permit.

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) does not generate revenue through the permit process. It does seek to cover the costs incurred as a result of a permitted activity through the permit fee.

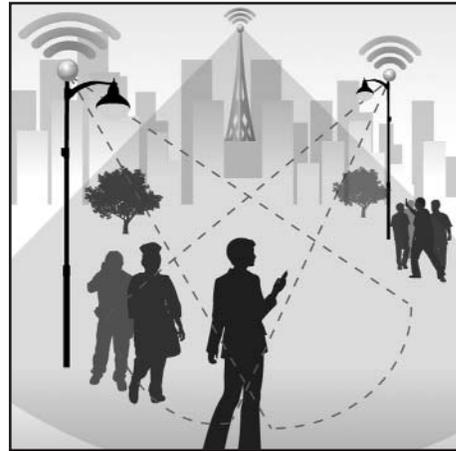
On many occasions, the proposed limits would not cover the staff time required to review permit applications and inspect the permitted work. That means the cost

of any staff time above the limits would be covered by RCOC using funds intended to be spent improving the roads.

"It seems ironic that the state Legislature finally agreed to increase road funding in 2015, with those new dollars starting to flow in 2017," RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar stated, "and now is considering forcing us to give some of those hard-earned dollars to for-profit telecom companies."

Kolar noted RCOC must spend millions of dollars every year acquiring the rights of way for road projects -- money provided by the motoring public. "Given the strict right of way acquisition laws, why would the Legislature grant the telecoms virtually free access to those rights of way?"

The bills would limit the telecom companies to providing a single security bond for the entire county, regardless of the number of locations in which they installed equipment. These bonds are intended to allow road agencies to be able to restore the right of way following a



telecom installation or service issue if the telecom company fails to do so.

The single bond allowed in the bill could be woefully insufficient if the contractor fails to fulfill its responsibilities. This could result in right of way in front of homes or businesses remaining torn up indefinitely.

Concerning the surveys, there are many utilities buried in the road rights of way already, and there are other objects such as sidewalks, landscaping, light poles and traffic signal poles. Any request by a telecom to place equipment in the right of way should identify all objects already in the right of way, and the impact their equipment will have on these items.

Requiring such a survey is not an unreasonable expectation in exchange for a for-profit company being able to place its service in the publicly paid for right of way.

While these bills may be well intentioned, they represent a text-book example of the law of unintended consequences. The negative implications and costs for Michigan's road agencies far outweigh any benefits they might provide.

RCOC plans busy construction season for 2018

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) plans another busy road construction season in 2018.

The coming year will be the second with new state road funding that began Jan. 1 of 2017 (as a result of the 2015 state road-funding package that raised the fuel taxes and vehicle-registration fees). "We're committed to putting as much of the new money into the roads as possible," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar.

The RCOC 2018 Road Improvement Program calls for nearly \$60 million worth of road projects. The full 2018 construction list will be included in the first quarter 2018 edition of *Road Report*.

SNOW, CONT'D FROM FRONT

the Road Commission plan for maintenance activities after the winter is over."

Wilson noted the RCOC team is constantly looking for best practices when it comes to maintaining roads during the winter months, such as the "wing plows" ordered with new trucks in recent years. The wing plows extend from the right side of the truck and are retracted when not in use. They can expand the width of roadway a single truck can plow, enabling trucks to plow a roadway lane and the shoulder at the same time, for example.

"Equipping many of our trucks with wing plows improves their efficiency," he pointed out.

RCOC has also introduced a quick-response plan that includes adding light-duty trucks to more quickly get to isolated icing occurrences and other urgent situations as well as to more quickly get into subdivisions and crossovers/turnarounds on

boulevards. RCOC has also hired contractors to help out on back roads and in subdivisions during heavy snow events.

Despite the addition of the part-time, temporary employees and the quick-response plan, Jamian explained that motorists must still be vigilant when driving during or immediately after snow events. "Drive for the conditions. That will make a safer environment for everyone on the road," he noted. He also reminded motorists not to 'crowd the plow' and give the trucks 'room to groom.'

Residents with mailboxes along road-sides are reminded to check the stability of boxes. "If your mailbox or post is at all loose, chances are it will not withstand standard snow-removal operations," RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar said. "Taking time to tighten screws and securing or replacing mail receptacles or posts now will help prevent future mishaps," Kolar added.

31001 Lahser Road
Beverly Hills, MI 48025

Lahser, 12 Mile projects win Michigan Concrete Association awards

Two Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) projects completed during the 2017 construction season have earned awards from the Michigan Concrete Association (MCA).

The Lahser Road project, which involved a complete reconstruction of Lahser Road from Civic Center Drive to 11 Mile Road in Southfield received the prestigious MCA Award of Excellence in the arterial road category.

RCOC's concrete slab replacement project on 12 Mile Road between Haggerty and Farmington roads in Farmington Hills was recognized with an MCA Award of Excellence in the concrete pavement restoration category.



The newly reconstructed section of Lahser Road just south of the I-696 Service Drive.



The 12 Mile Road concrete patching project in Farmington Hills (Haggerty to Farmington Road)

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 Senior Manager of Communications Craig Bryson at (248) 645-2000, ext. 2302.

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