

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



A publication of the Road Commission for Oakland County

www.rcocweb.org

Welcome to the Chairman's End of the Year Report

Happy holidays from the Road Commission for Oakland County.

This end-of-the-year *Chairman's Report* is intended to help keep you up to date on what is happening at your Road Commission, what we've accomplished in the last year and what we anticipate in the year ahead.

I hope you find this useful and informative.

In addition to providing the best road system we can for the residents of Oakland County, another goal of the Road Commission is to do everything we can to ensure that Oakland County is open for business by providing a road system that connects the county to the region, the state, the rest of the nation and even the international community.

The analogy I like to use is that our

road system is sort of like an element of "the silk road" that allows for the movement of goods and services across the nation and the world. The original silk road was an ancient network of trade routes which linked the regions of the ancient world in commerce and which derived its name from the important silk trade that was done via the ancient transportation network.

Many of our roads today play a similar role. Roads under the jurisdiction of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) provide access to the many businesses based in Oakland County and connect them to the state roads that connect them to customers in other counties, regions, states and even internationally (via the Blue Water bridge in Port Huron, for example). While these travel routes

extend far beyond Oakland County's borders, without the critical county roads that link our businesses to the larger transportation system, the economic might of Oakland County would be greatly diminished.

Because of this, I and my colleagues on the Road Commission Board, as well as the agency administration and staff, are committed to doing everything we can to not only ensure that access but also to make certain those roads are in the best condition they can be with the resources available to us.

- *Greg Jamian, Chairman*



Board of Road Commissioners:

- Gregory C. Jamian, Chairman*
- Ronald J. Fowkes, Vice Chairman*
- Andrea LaLonde, Commissioner*
- Dennis G. Kolar, PE, Managing Director*
- Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE, Dep. Managing Dir./*

RCOC put more new surfaces on roads in 2019 than ever before

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) put a new surface on more roads in 2019 than in any previous year in its 106-year history, with more than 120 miles of roads receiving some form of new pavement.

The largest amount of road improvements was the 102 miles of roads that received a resurfacing treatment known as a preservation overlay. The Road Commission Board committed an unprecedented \$25 million to the program for 2019.

A preservation overlay involves simple resurfacing with two inches of asphalt and is best suited to roads that are in fair condition. The program provides a smooth, new road surface and extends the



life of the road by five to 10 years.

"This Board is committed to doing everything we can, with the resources available, to improve the roads," stated RCOC Chairman Greg Jamian. "We believe the preservation overlay

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RCOC prepared for winter: Part-time drivers have been hired, drivers have reviewed best practices

Each year, during the winter months, the Road Commission for Oakland County's (RCOC) most-important task is clearing the roads of ice and snow. And each year, the agency spends several months preparing for this task before the first snowflakes fly.

This process includes reviewing winter operations with all RCOC truck drivers and making sure all the trucks and plows are in good condition.

Again this year, RCOC has augmented its roster of full-time snowplow drivers with temporary drivers. The agency hired approximately 11 temporary drivers this year.

"These part-time workers are a great way to ensure we provide the service that Oakland County residents deserve," explained RCOC Chairman Gregory Jamian. "With the part-time workers, we have approximately 170 snowplow drivers available this winter."

RCOC is also continuing to update its fleet of snowplows/salt trucks. "We are gradually replacing our aging fleet of trucks," said RCOC Vice Chairman Ron Fowkes. "Over this past fiscal year, we added 12 new snowplow/dump trucks to update our fleet," he noted. "As an added safety feature, the new trucks are equipped with green lights that can be seen from a greater distance during winter maintenance. Pickup trucks used for winter maintenance are also being equipped with the green lights."

Road Commissioner Andrea LaLonde noted the agency is prepared for whatever Mother Nature brings during the winter, though a milder winter is always appreciated. "Winter maintenance is one of our most critical functions," she said. "While we are ready for a worse than normal win-



An RCOC plow truck equipped with a wing plow.

ter, we would welcome a mild season."

Jamian 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.

Last year, RCOC implemented a rapid-response plan that includes 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. The effort proved successful and will be used again this year. Additionally, RCOC continues to use non-road-maintenance staff and hires contractors to help on back roads and in subdivi-

sions during heavy snow events.

Despite the addition of the part-time, temporary employees and the rapid-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 explained. He also reminded motorists not to crowd the plow and give the plows "room to groom."

Winter Maintenance Facts

Here are a few facts about the Road Commission's winter operations:

- ▶ RCOC maintains more than 2,700 miles of county roads and 230 miles of Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) highways.
- ▶ Average annual salt use: 64,000 tons.
- ▶ Gallons of diesel fuel used in 2019: 563,000.
- ▶ Gallons of liquid brine used annually: just under 7 million (brine is naturally occurring salt water that RCOC pumps from its brine wells).

PAVE — CONT'D FROM FRONT program is the best bang for the dollars and the best way to improve as many roads as possibly as quickly as we can."

Additionally, RCOC completed a number of other road improvement projects this year, including:

- Widening and reconstructing Sashabaw Road from I-75 to Clarkston Road in Independence Township,
- Reconstructing and widening John R Road from Long Lake to South

- Boulevard in Troy,
- Reconstructing Livernois Road from Avon to Walton in Rochester Hills,
- Reconstructing the 12 Mile Road/Novi Road intersection in Novi,
- Replacing bad concrete on 10 Mile Road between Greenfield and Evergreen roads in Southfield
- Paving the gravel section of Sashabaw Road between Sherwood and Granger roads in Brandon Township,
- Constructing a roundabout at the

- Adams Road/Gunn Road intersection in Oakland Township
- Constructing a mini-roundabout at the Carroll Lake Road/Cooley Lake Road intersection on the Commerce Township/White Lake Township border,
- Replacing the culvert that carries the Seeley Drain under Haggerty Road on the Farmington Hills/Novi border and
- Replacing the culvert that carries a tributary of the Shiawassee River under Milford Road in Rose Township.

RCOC stretching dollars by “buying” federal road funds from rural road commission

It might seem like a strange concept, but it has proven beneficial for the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC): “Buying” federal road funding from other road agencies.

So far, RCOC has bought nearly \$10.4 million in federal road funding originally intended for rural Michigan county road commissions. In each case, RCOC has purchased the funds at either 75 or 80 cents on the dollar.

“These are funds that were designated for specific projects in rural counties, most in the Upper Peninsula,” explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. “Often, the rural county road commissions are happy to sell off the federal funding, because it comes with so many strings attached,” Kolar said.

Because the rural road commissions have much smaller staffs, they often do not have the expertise in-house needed to comply with all the requirements that come with the federal funds. A change in state law several years ago allowed other road agencies to exchange their state road dollars for the federal dollars.

Because the state dollars come with far fewer strings attached, it is far easier for rural road commissions to use them. Because of this, the state dollars are per-

ceived as more valuable, and the rural road commissions are willing to sell their federal dollars at a discount to get the state dollars.

“This is a win/win situation,” Kolar explained. “RCOC has the in-house staff and is very adept at meeting all the requirements to use federal funding, so we are thrilled to get the federal dollars at a discount. The rural road commission, who don’t have the expertise, are happy to be able to use the state dollars instead.”

The one caveat for RCOC is that the federal dollars are designated as “rural” dollars, meaning they cannot be used within the federally designated “urban area.” For Oakland County, that means the dollars must be spent on road projects primarily in the northern, more-rural township. “This allows RCOC to reallocate dollars previously budgeted for our rural projects to more urban areas where road volumes are higher,” Commission Chairman Greg Jamian said.

To date, the purchased federal funds have been used to resurface sections of Oakwood Road, Dixie Highway, Grange Hall Road, Milford Road, Fenton Road, Davisburg Road, East Holly Road, McGinnis Road, Baldwin Road and Lakeville Road.

RCOC Board honors former staffer for leadership in ITS

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board, on Nov. 7, honored its former Planning and Development director and international leader in the field of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), Jim Barbaresso.



Barbaresso left RCOC in the 1990s after helping to launch the FAST-TRAC system of adaptive traffic signals, which remains one of the largest and most advanced signal systems in the nation. Since then, he has led the ITS efforts of several large corporations, and is currently ITS practice leader and senior vice president at HNTB consulting engineers.

In 2014, Barbaresso was the chairman of the first-ever ITS World Congress in Detroit. He has been active in the annual ITS World Congress events around the world and in helping governments establish ITS systems in places as far away as the Middle East and as close as Detroit.

Earlier this year, Barbaresso was named to the ITS World Congress Hall of Fame and named the 2019 recipient of the ITS World Congress Lifetime Achievement Award (presented in Singapore on Oct. 21).

RCOC Managing Director Kolar recognized by TIA for commitment to safety

Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Managing Director Dennis Kolar was honored recently by the Transportation Improvement Association (TIA) for more than 42 years of service dedicated to saving lives, preventing injuries and reducing traffic crashes.

Kolar, who has been with RCOC for nearly 35 years, previously worked at MDOT for seven years.

TIA is an Oakland County-based non-profit organization dedicated to studying safety trends that negatively impact society, and developing solutions that can be implemented to save lives, prevent injuries and improve mobility. TIA Chief Executive Officer Jim Santilli noted that Kolar has, “consistently upheld traffic safety as a top priority, which has helped Oakland County achieve one of the lowest traffic crash fatality rates in the world.”

Santilli pointed out that in 2018, Oakland County had a traffic fatality rate (the number of deaths per 100 million vehicle miles of travel) of 0.41. The national rate for the same year was 1.14 and Michigan’s rate was 0.95.

“It’s an honor to receive this award,” Kolar stated. “And while I am absolutely committed to safety, I am not singlehandedly responsible for Oakland County’s success in this regard. Without the outstanding team at RCOC, this would never have been possible.”



RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar, left with his TIA award, and TIA CEO Jim Santilli.



RCOC invites students to paint snowplows

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) this year added some color to its snowplows by inviting local school children to paint the plows. Ten schools participated, providing a wide variety of colorful, artistic expression on the big orange plows. Watch for them on the roads this year during major snow events. Shown here are students from the Lake Orion school district with the plow they painted.

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**

(click on "Contact us")

RCOC enhances efficiency through new financial software

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has taken another step to improve efficiency by launching a new "enterprise" computer software system to handle most financial functions.

The new software, known as Precision, was created for county road agencies, and is allowing RCOC to streamline its financial and accounting functions and more easily create custom reports and share data.

RCOC gets SEMCOG grant to share stormwater data

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has learned it has received a \$30,000 grant from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) that is intended to help the agency share stormwater data with SEMCOG, digitize stormwater data and establish GPS coordinates for RCOC drainage structures.

The grant was awarded as part of SEMCOG's Southeast Michigan Infrastructure Management Program. The work is to be completed by June 30, 2020.

SEMCOG notes that the data generated through the grant will help provide a foundation for enhancing infrastructure coordination and developing an "underground infrastructure needs assessment complimentary to the region's transportation asset management program."

Henderson named new RCOC general counsel/Legal director

The Road Commission has named Jennifer Henderson it's new general counsel and Legal Department director. Henderson joins RCOC with more than 20 years of legal experience including most recently as general counsel at Guardian Alarm. She also has experience working with road commissions. She replaces longtime RCOC attorney Dianne Hersey who retires at the end of the year.

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for OAKLAND COUNTY

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