

## HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE ROAD COMMISSION?

CALL, WRITE OR VISIT:

DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

2420 PONTIAC LAKE ROAD

WATERFORD, MI 48328

**(877) 858-4804**

TDD: (248) 645-9923

OR, visit RCOC online at

**[www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)**

## WHAT IS RCOC?

The Road Commission for Oakland County maintains Michigan's largest county road system, with more than 2,700 miles of public roads (including 755 miles of gravel roads). Only the state highway system is larger.

RCOC also maintains:

- ◆ Approximately 90 bridges,
- ◆ Approximately 1,500 traffic signals,
- ◆ Approximately 150,000 traffic signs and
- ◆ More than 230 miles of state highway

## SAFETY FIRST

As a matter of policy, major road-improvement projects are conducted by the Road Commission based on a safety ranking system. At RCOC "Safety First" is more than a motto.

## RCOC:

- Is separate from county general government and receives no direct revenue from property taxes.
- Receives the majority of its funding from the state and federal gas taxes and the state vehicle-registration fee and income tax.
- Has congested roads due to the tremendous growth in the county in recent decades.
- Receives no direct revenue from economic growth and development.
- Pays \$3 million or more to pave a mile of gravel road.
- Pays \$8 million or more to widen one mile of road from two lanes to five.
- Is located in a state that continues to invest less in roads than most of its neighboring states.
- Is located in a state that has ranked in the bottom 10 states in state and local road funding for more than 50 years.

**ROAD COMMISSION**  
for OAKLAND COUNTY  
31001 Lahser Road Beverly Hills MI 48025

## BOARD OF ROAD COMMISSIONERS:

**RONALD J. FOWKES**  
**Andrea LaLonde**  
**Nancy Quarles**

**Dennis G. Kolar, PE**  
*Managing Director*

**Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE**  
*Deputy managing Director*  
*County Highway Engineer*

## RCOC Mission Statement

RCOC strives to provide the public with leadership in:

- Safe and convenient roads
- Sound financial management
- Responsive and dependable service
- Sensitivity to community concerns

Updated 05/21

**ROAD COMMISSION**  
for OAKLAND COUNTY

## COUNTY ROAD SPEED LIMITS:



## HOW ARE THEY SET?

PROVIDED BY  
THE ROAD COMMISSION FOR  
OAKLAND COUNTY

## THE LEGAL BASIS FOR SPEED LIMITS

The primary rules governing the establishment of speed limits in Michigan are identified in a portion of state law known as the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code.

The speed limit section of the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code was drafted based on the premise that drivers should, at all times, drive at “reasonable and proper” speeds, given the conditions. The law states motorists should,

*“Drive at a careful and prudent speed, not greater or less than what is reasonable and proper, having due regard to the traffic, surface and width of the highway and of any other conditions; and no person shall drive any vehicle on a highway at a speed greater than will permit him to bring it to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead.”*

### “ABSOLUTE” & “PRIMA FACIE” SPEED LIMITS

The Michigan Motor Vehicle Code allows for “absolute” and “prima facie” (pronounced *prime-a face-ia*) speed limits. Absolute speed limits are supported by traffic-control orders issued by the Michigan State Police and are posted on signs along the road.

On roads where there is no posted speed limit, the speed limit is known as the “prima facie” speed limit. Prima facie speed limits are subject to driver judgment of driving conditions. If there is a posted speed limit on a gravel road, this is the maximum for optimum conditions, and drivers are expected to drive at lower, suitable speeds when conditions are less than optimum.

### PRIMA FACIE SPEED LIMITS

In 2017, the Michigan Legislature changed the restrictions for prima facie speed limits, allowing for the following prima facie speed limits to be established:

▶ 25 miles per hour in a business district. The law defines a business district as “an area contiguous to a highway where the total widths of the adjacent buildings in use for commercial business open to the general public on both sides occupy 50 percent or more of the total frontage of both sides for a distance of 600 feet or more.”

▶ 25 miles per hour for most roads in residential

subdivisions, including condominium developments.

▶ 25 miles per hour on a road with 60 or more vehicle-access points (side streets, driveways, private roads, etc.) within a half mile.

▶ 35 miles per hour on a road with 45 to 59 vehicle-access points within a half mile.

▶ 40 miles per hour on a road with 40 to 44 vehicle-access points within a half mile.

▶ 45 miles per hour on a road with 30 to 39 vehicle-access points within a half mile.

▶ 55 miles per hour for all other roads with no posted speed limit. This is known as the “general speed limit.”

However, any Oakland County municipality in which there is a gravel road with an unposted speed limit of 55, may request the Road Commission lower the speed limit on that road to 45. The community must be willing to pay for the cost of posting the speed limit, and the Road Commission must agree to the change.



### ABSOLUTE SPEED LIMITS

When the prima facie speed limit on a county road is considered too high or too low, the State Police, in conjunction with the Road Commission and, in townships, the township board, determines the “reasonable and proper” speed, and sets the absolute speed limit.

## DETERMINING “REASONABLE AND PROPER” SPEED

Road agencies around the country have established standardized methods for determining reasonable and proper speeds. These include engineering and traffic studies that examine such things as traffic volume, accident rates, the character of the road (whether there are sidewalks, the number of driveways, sight obstructions, etc.), pedestrian activities and potential hazards that might not easily be detected by drivers.

If these studies reveal no unusual problems, the speed-setting authority typically applies a nationally accepted rule known as the “85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed” to establish the speed limit.

### THE 85<sup>th</sup> PERCENTILE

The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85 percent of traffic is moving, based on radar checks. Studies indicate posting speed limits higher or lower than that driven by 85 percent of drivers does not significantly change the speed of those drivers.

The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile rule recognizes that the other 15 percent of drivers often drive above a reasonable speed, given the conditions. The studies suggest this 15 percent of drivers cause a disproportionate amount of the accidents and has the worst driving records.

Additionally, the Michigan State Police generally establishes speed limits in accordance with the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile.

### WHO SETS SPEED LIMITS?

State law assigns the responsibility for setting speed limits on county roads (those under the jurisdiction of the county road commission) to the Michigan State Police in conjunction with the local road commission.

In the case of county roads in townships, the State Police, the road commission and the township board must unanimously agree on the speed limit. If it desires, the township board may opt out of the process.



### SCHOOL ZONES

School speed zones are generally established for the protection of students walking to and from school.

According to state law, the speed limit in a school zone is 25 miles per hour. However, at the request of the school district superintendent, the speed can be set at no more than 20 miles per hour below the regularly posted speed limit, but not less than 25 miles per hour.

The school speed limit can only be in force from:

- ▶ 30 minutes before the first regularly scheduled school session until school starts;
- ▶ During the lunch period if students are allowed to leave the school; and
- ▶ 30 minutes after school is dismissed.

Permanent signs designating the school zone and speed limit must be posted.

### FREEWAYS

Freeway speed limits are established by the Michigan State Police in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation in accordance with state law.

*For more details about how speed limits are set, see the Michigan Vehicle Code.*