

Road Report

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

Jamian re-elected RCOC chair, Fowkes is vice chair

Eleven-year Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board veteran Greg Jamian was re-elected as the body's chair at its first meeting of 2020, on Thursday, Jan. 9.

Jamian served as chairman in 2019 as well as in 2013 and 2014. The three-member Board is the governing body of the Road Commission which is an independent unit of government and not part of county general government.

Each year, the Board elects its chairperson and vice chairperson at the first meeting of the year. Both positions are then held for the calendar year until the first meeting of the following January.

A resident of Bloomfield Township, Jamian has served on the Board since 2009. He is a former Oakland County commissioner and previously served on the Bloomfield Township Board of Trustees.

For more than 30 years, Jamian has

been president and CEO of a comprehensive home health-services company in Troy. He is a graduate of Oakland University with a bachelor's degree in economics. He has served on numerous boards over the years, including the School of Business Administration at Oakland University, the School of Nursing at Oakland University, the Manoogian Manor Assisted Living facility, the Traffic Improvement Association and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).

"I am pleased and honored to again serve as the chairman of the Road



RCOC Board Chairman Greg Jamian, left; Vice Chairman Ron Fowkes, center; and Commissioner Andrea LaLonde.

Commission," Jamian said. "I am committed to ensuring the agency continues to provide the safest and most efficient road system possible in the most economic manner possible."

Jamian also has been a strong advocate for RCOC's involvement in transportation technology. "Among local road agencies,"

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RCOC receives six federal safety grants

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) in late December was notified it will receive six federal "safety" road-funding grants, totaling more than \$1.4 million, that will enable six road-improvement projects in 2021.

The federal Local Safety Program provides funds for local road projects that are intended to address areas where there have been a concentration of serious-injury and fatal vehicle crashes or projects that include specific types of road-safety improvements.

"Safety is the Road Commission's top priority, and the receipt of these grants confirms that our project-selection and design processes are focused on the safety of the road-system users," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "Every step of our processes is driven by concern for the safety of our customers."

The six RCOC projects that received safety grants are:

- Construct a roundabout at the intersection of Sashabaw and Oakhill roads on the Brandon Twp./Independence Twp. border. Grant amount: \$600,000. Estimated project cost: \$1.5 million.
- Apply a high-friction surface treatment on three curves on Clarkston Road between Thistle Valley Lane and Pine Tree Road in Orion Twp. Estimated grant amount: \$273,069. Estimated project cost: \$303,411.
- Apply a high-friction surface treatment on a large curve on Baldwin Road west of the Baldwin/Indianwood/Coats round about on the Orion Twp./Independence Twp. border. Estimated grant amount: \$166,673. Estimated cost: \$185,193.
- Upgrade traffic signals at 45 intersections by installing reflective backplates on the signal heads (a total of 396 signal heads). Estimated grant amount: \$176,040. Estimated project cost: \$195,600.

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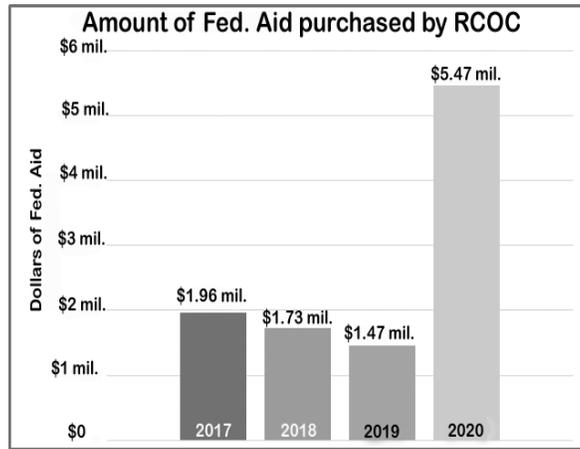
The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has led the way in Michigan in terms of purchasing federal road funding from rural counties.

Over four years, RCOC has purchased nearly \$11 million from northern Michigan counties. The funding was purchased at either 75 percent or 80 percent of its value.

“For the rural counties, using federal road funding is a difficult and expensive undertaking because there are so many hoops to jump through,” explained RCOC

Managing Director Dennis Kolar, who has been behind the agency’s push to purchase the federal dollars.

“This is a win/win for both parties – we



get additional funding and the rural counties receive state funding in exchange for the federal dollars that they can use with far fewer strings attached.”

The state Legislature enacted a law in 2016 that allowed county road agencies to “sell” federal funding to each other. To date, RCOC has been the most aggressive agency to pursue this option in the state.

By the end of 2020, RCOC will have resurfaced approximately 12 segments of rural paved roads with the purchased federal funds. Because the funds were originally designated for use in “rural” areas, RCOC must use the funds on roads in the part of the county that is officially designated as outside of the urbanized area.

“As long as there are road commissions willing to sell their federal funding, we will consider purchasing it,” Kolar said. “We can always put it to good use.”

RCOC nabs \$12 million in federal grants to upgrade Traffic Operations Center

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) was notified recently that it has been awarded more than \$12 million in federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) grants primarily to be used to operate and upgrade its Traffic Operations Center (TOC).

The six grants will be available in fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023. The TOC is the nerve center for RCOC’s state-of-the-art “smart” traffic-signal system, known as FAST-TRAC (Faster and Safer Travel Through Traffic Routing & Advanced Controls). FAST-TRAC uses vehicle-detection technology to monitor traffic at approximately 850 signalized intersections and to adjust the signal timing at those intersections in real time to best accommodate the traffic present.

The FAST-TRAC system has been documented by third-party organizations (MSU and U of M) to reduce congestion and improve safety. It is one of the largest such systems in the nation and

was the first adaptive traffic-signal system for arterial roads in the nation. At the TOC, RCOC engineers can monitor and control all the FAST-TRAC intersections including watching many of them on live video feeds that come into the center.

“The FAST-TRAC system uses the latest technology to most efficiently manage traffic,” explained RCOC Chairman Greg Jamian. “This is an example of how we are using technology to enhance the tasks we have always done. RCOC is recognized both nationally and internationally as a leader among local road agencies in deploying the latest technology.”

In addition to helping to fund the operation and maintenance of the TOC, some of the funding will be used to help pay for the cost of constructing a new TOC, which will be built at RCOC’s Waterford Township facility, likely in late 2022 or early 2023. The current TOC is located in leased space in the Oakland County Information Technology Building.

Mild winter could mean savings — if so, will go into paved road surfaces

The winter of 2019-2020 has been fairly mild compared to past winters – and that may mean a windfall for roads in the county.

Because the winter has been fairly mild, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has spent less money salting and plowing the roads than in recent past years. That means there will likely be money left over in the RCOC winter budget – though it’s too early to tell for sure.

But if there is money left over, RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar notes it will be put directly into the road surfaces. “Any money left over from the winter will be used to resurface additional paved roads this summer,” Kolar said. “We have always said any time we have extra money, it will go right into improving the condition of our roads.”

Kolar noted it will still be a couple of months before the agency is able to close the books on the winter season and know for sure if there is money left over and, if so, how much. “At this point, it looks like there is likely to be money left over,” he observed. “But, we’ve also had major storms in April in the past, and such a storm would definitely impact the winter budget.”

Coronavirus not expected to delay projects

While the full impact of the coronavirus on Oakland County is not yet known, at this point, Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) officials do not expect the virus will result in the delay of any 2020 road-construction projects.

“So far, our projects are moving ahead on schedule,” noted RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. “We currently see no reason for that to change, though, of course, the situation remains very fluid.”

RCOC continues to be a leader in connected infrastructure

When they think of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), many people think of patching potholes, plowing snow, grading gravel roads or repaving roads. However, since the early 1990s, there's been another, much higher-tech aspect of the agency as well.

NOT JUST PAVEMENT

These days, RCOC is highly involved in the "connected-vehicle" world, which involves vehicles talking to each other and to the infrastructure, as well as in the "smart" technology world in order to improve motorist safety, convenience and efficiency. "This technology is the future of transportation and mobility," explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar.

When it comes to connected-vehicle technology, RCOC has a long history of working with automotive and technology companies to test the latest hardware and software. This has ranged from working with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to make traffic-signal phase and timing (SPaT) data available to auto manufacturers and suppliers (so vehicles can receive data about the signals before arriving at the intersection) to using the latest technology to ensure RCOC traffic signals operate as efficiently as possible.

"We have an open door policy and are very supportive of emerging technology testing," noted RCOC Signal Systems Engineer Ahmad Jawad, who oversees RCOC transportation-technology initiatives.

A HISTORY OF INNOVATION

Since the early 1990s, RCOC has been on the cutting edge of traffic-signal technology, having launched the first "smart" traffic-signal system in the nation in 1992. The system uses vehicle-detection technology to monitor traffic flow and patterns and automatically adjust signal timing in real time to most efficiently meet traffic demands.

Though first introduced nearly 30 years ago (with 28 signals in Troy), the system remains one of the largest in the nation and has continually evolved to keep pace with rapidly changing technologies. A key element of the system is its ability to coordinate signals along entire corridors. It does this by connecting the entire system to the agency's Traffic Operations Center (TOC).

The latest advancement to the system has been updating the way this connection occurs. From the start, this connection was done through hard-wire telephone lines,



RCOC Signal Systems Engineer Ahmad Jawad. Photo courtesy of Driven Detroit.

which have always been problematic.

They would periodically go down, and RCOC would be at the mercy of the phone company to repair them, often meaning long waits until the lines could be restored. Additionally, following major road-construction projects, there was always a long wait for the system to return to operational status.

Consequently, RCOC hired a consultant to study alternatives to the phone lines. The consultant reviewed multiple potential technologies and concluded a public/private partnership with a cellular-technology provider would be the best alternative. As a result, the decision was made to partner with AT&T to create an RCOC-specific cellular network to connect the signal system.

A NEW MODEL

The outcome was 850 RCOC signals were connected to the TOC by a private cellular network operated by AT&T. "From the start," Jawad explained, "the objectives were to improve the communications reliability of the signal system, lower the costs, reduce the amount of staff time dedicated to addressing communications issues and ensure the system's readiness to connect to connected/autonomous vehicles and smart cities."

Additionally, since the installation of the new communications network, RCOC has deployed almost 100 closed-circuit television cameras at RCOC intersections, which provide live video feeds of the intersections to the TOC. This allows RCOC engineers to monitor the intersections in real time. An additional 100 cam-

eras are in the works.

"The new communications network is capable of bringing multiple data streams to the TOC," Jawad said. "We are positioning ourselves for the future growth in this space."

This initiative also aligns with RCOC's mission. "RCOC seeks to provide the safest, most efficient road system at the lowest cost," Jawad explained. "We have also always sought to be a national leader in the use of technology to enhance operations. These twin goals led the agency to create one of the largest adaptive traffic-signal systems in the nation in the first place and drive us to continually seek ways to improve the system."

RCOC closes buildings to public due to virus

As of March 17, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) closed all of its buildings to the public for the short term to reduce the likelihood of exposure — for both employees and the public — to the coronavirus/COVID-19.

The buildings will be re-opened to the public as soon as possible. Anyone who has business with RCOC or has a question or concern, can contact the agency online (www.rcocweb.org), via phone (877-858-4804), via e-mail (dcsmail@rcoc.org) or by fax (248-338-0675). Anyone can also follow RCOC on social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

31001 Lahser Road
Beverly Hills, MI 48025

SAFETY — CONT'D FROM FRONT

- Install centerline “mumble strips” on nine sections of roads (so-called mumble strips are similar to rumble strips, but designed to create less noise when vehicles travel over them while still alerting the driver that he or she has veered out of the lane). Estimated grant amount: \$187,257. Estimated project cost: \$208,064. Project locations:
 - Milford Road between M-59 and the Highland Twp. border in Highland Twp.
 - Duck Lake Road between Cooley Lake Road and M-59 in Highland Twp.
 - Bogie Lake Road between Cooley Lake Road and M-59 in White Lake Twp. and Commerce Twp.
 - Wixom Road between Glengary Road and the Milford Village border in Commerce Twp.
 - General Motors Road between Hickory Ridge and the Milford Village border in Milford Twp.
 - Andersonville Road between Davisburg Road and Big Lake Road in Springfield Twp.
 - Big Lake Road between the north and south legs of Andersonville Road in Springfield Twp.
 - Andersonville Road between Big Lake Road and White Lake Road in Springfield Twp.

CHAIR — CONT'D FROM FRONT

Jamian said, “we are a national leader in terms of ‘smart’ roads and connected vehicles. My goal is that we not only meet the demands of today, but that we also are positioned to meet the demands of the future.”

Jamian also was appointed by his fellow road commissioners as the RCOC representative on the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Board.

Road Commission Board member Ron Fowkes was elected the Board vice chairman. Fowkes has served on the RCOC Board since 2011.

A resident of the Village of Milford, he has frequently advocated for better roads in Oakland County. Fowkes served on the Milford Village Council from 1999 through 2006, including as its president in 2003.

The third member of the RCOC Board is Andrea LaLonde. A resident of Clawson, LaLonde is an employee of the Operating Engineers 324 of Michigan, where she has worked for 12 years. She joined the RCOC Board in January 2019.

RCOC Board members are appointed by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and serve for staggered, six-year terms.

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

Fill out a report 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 Communications Manager Craig Bryson at (248) 645-2000, ext. 2302.*

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Dennis G. Kolar, PE, Managing Director

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