

Road Report

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

Transformative Baldwin Road widening project officially finished in Orion Township

Officials with the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) and Orion Township as well as Oakland County Executive David Coulter and other county and local officials on May 4 cut the ceremonial ribbon to mark the completion of a multi-year \$55 million widening project on Baldwin Road.

The project involved widening two-miles of Baldwin Road between Morgan and Waldon roads, just north of I-75, in Orion Township. The road was widened from two lanes to a combination of four-lane boulevard and five-lane road, including the construction of five roundabouts at intersections within the project.

“This is one of the most significant projects we have completed in some time,” stated RCOC Chair Andrea LaLonde. “This section of Baldwin was previously very congested, which hurt area businesses and

made it difficult for area residents to travel to and from their homes. Now, the traffic flows much better, the road is much safer, and it looks much more attractive.”

“This project has been a true labor of love, but now that it is complete, we can reflect on the magnitude and importance of this project to our community,” Orion Township Supervisor Chris Barnett stated. “Simply put, it’s a game-changer. Our residents and businesses have been extremely patient dur-



RCOC Chair Andrea LaLonde (far right) joins County Executive David Coulter (third from right), Orion Township Supervisor Chris Barnett (fourth from right), RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar (third from left) and other RCOC, county and local officials to cut the ribbon to mark the completion of the Baldwin project.

ing this project, but now I am confident that they will reap the benefits of our new state-of-the-art corridor for decades to come. Thank you to the Orion Township Board, **CONT'D ON PAGE 3 — SEE BALDWIN**

Former Commissioner Jamian receives CRA Distinguished Service Award

Former Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board Member Greg Jamian, who retired in December 2020 after 12 years of service, has been honored with a County Road Association of Michigan (CRA) Distinguished Service Award.



The award was presented at a CRA virtual awards ceremony April 23.

While on the RCOC Board, Jamian served on the CRA General Policy Committee and was active with the CRA Urban Council, which represents the five larger, urban county road agencies in the state. He also was a board member at the Transportation Improvement Association (TIA), was an ardent supporter of increased road funding and met with leg-

islators and local officials to promote the need for additional funding.

Jamian also helped to build and maintain positive relations with local officials across the county. He was one of the RCOC Board members faced with the challenges of overseeing the agency during the dark

financial days of the Great Recession, when the agency’s funding was dropping each year.

“Greg was a tremendous advocate for this agency,” recalled RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. “He was always willing to do whatever it took to promote the interests of the Road Commission and our customers who rely on Oakland County roads.”

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RCOC to resurface 62 miles of roads this year through Preservation Overlays program

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) expects to complete 62 miles of simple resurfacing projects this year through its Preservation Overlay Program.

The nearly \$10 million program involves simple resurfacing of roads that are in fair condition with two inches of asphalt. The program provides a smooth, new road surface and extends the life of the road by five to 10 years.

The preservation overlay projects typically involve minimal milling of the road surface (grinding off sections of bad pavement) and the application of the new asphalt. They usually are completed over about a two-week

period. During the work, one lane of the road is closed, and traffic is directed by flaggers.

Motorists can expect delays during the work. The contractors for the 2021 projects are Cadillac Asphalt, of Farmington Hills, and Ace-Saginaw Paving, of Saginaw.

All preservation overlay projects are expected to be completed by fall. Work is weather-dependent, and the schedule is subject to change. For more information on the Preservation Overlay work and locations, visit the Preservation Overlays page on the RCOC website, www.rcocweb.org (then click on the “Road Projects” icon and select the “Simple Resurfacing (Preservation Overlays)” page).



A preservation overlay project underway.



The West Bloomfield Township Strategic Planning meeting was conducted virtually via Teams. This is a screen capture of the event. At the top left are RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar (left) and Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer Gary Piotrowicz. Township Supervisor Steve Kaplan (top center) is joined by other township officials.

Latest round of Strat Plan meetings underway

Every two years, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) leadership meets with the leadership of virtually every city, village and township in Oakland County. The latest round of these meetings, known as the RCOC Strategic Planning meetings, is currently underway.

These meetings are a critical means of building and maintaining relationships between RCOC’s leadership and the community leaders. They are also a chance for both parties to share with each other what is new.

For example, the communities share with the Road Commission the new development plans within their bound-

aries, which could impact roads and traffic. For its part, RCOC shares information about new agency initiatives, the status of road funding discussions in Lansing and Washington DC and the list of upcoming road projects.

The meetings are a little different this time around because the community leaders can choose to meet in person or virtually through Microsoft Teams (as West Bloomfield Twp. did in the image above).

As usual, once the meetings are complete, RCOC’s Planning and Environmental Concerns Dept., which organizes the meetings, will produce a report summarizing what both the communities and RCOC said during the meetings.

Master Right of Way Plan to be updated this year

It’s not something most people have heard of, but it’s an important document that effects every community in the county, and the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) will update it this year.

Known as the Master Right of Way Plan, the document identifies the desired right of way (ROW) width along every primary road under RCOC’s jurisdiction. ROW is the land RCOC owns along a road and suggests the width to which a road could someday be widened.

The ROW width is related to the intended development along a road. If a road is expected to be residential, it is likely to need a narrow ROW (meaning the road is likely to remain two or three lanes).

If the property along the road is zoned, commercial or industrial, the community may want a larger ROW.

“The Master Right of Way Plan reflects the ROW width the community would like to see, not what it is today,” explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. He noted RCOC Planning staff will review the current plan with the community to determine if changes are needed.

“This ensures the community’s desires for each road are known by RCOC before any discussion of improving a road,” Kolar said. “Because community perspectives and priorities can change over time, it’s important to periodically update the plan.”

RCOC staff will contact each community this year to review the current plan and discuss any desired changes. Once updated, the plan will be submitted to the RCOC Board for approval.



Above, RCOC Chair Andrea LaLonde (center) leads the April 22 Board meeting. At left is Vice Chair Nancy Quarles. At right is Commissioner Ron Fowkes, while Managing Director Dennis Kolar (far right) looks on.

RCOC Board returns to in-person meetings

After being conducted virtually since April 9 of last year, the RCOC Board returned to in-person meetings on April 8, as the state executive order allowing virtual meetings expired.

For the foreseeable future, the meetings will be conducted in person, with safe social-distancing precautions taken.



Governor joins RCOC chair to patch potholes

Governor Gretchen Whitmer, above center, was joined by Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Chair Andrea LaLonde, left, to patch potholes on RCOC roads on April 16. The pair patched the roads near the General Motors plant in Orion Township. Chair LaLonde reports that the experience was positive, and that she had a good talk with the governor while the two were slinging patching material.

BALDWIN — CONT'D FROM FRONT the Corridor Improvement Authority and our residents and businesses for your support to see this vision to completion.”

In addition to widening and completely reconstructing the road, the project involved extensive aesthetic enhancements, including numerous pocket parks, landscaped plazas, extensive landscaping throughout the project, retaining walls, decorative street lighting and signs and pedestrian pathways.

“This project addressed one of the more congested two-lane roads in Oakland County,” stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. “It introduced the latest safety and traffic management elements while creating a walkable district. This is the one of the most significant transformations of a road we have undertaken in many years.”

Kolar also thanked area residents and businesses for their patience during the construction of the project. “We realize that the community experienced inconveniences during the construction phase, and we thank them for their patience,” he stated. “I think the long-term benefits of this project will outweigh the inconveniences experienced while we worked on the project.”

Kolar added that the project is expected to have significant economic impacts on the community for years to come. “The real estate along this corridor is now much more valuable because it is much more accessible,” Kolar said. “That is beneficial both for the immediate community and for the county as a whole.”

The project was paid for with a mixture of federal, state and local dollars, including more than \$5 million in federal road funding, \$38 million in Michigan Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) dollars (a combination of state and federal dollars) as well as contributions from Orion Township and RCOC.

All the landscaping and pathway costs were covered by Orion Township.

The design for the project was identified through an extensive, multi-year public-involvement process outlined by the federal government and known as an “environmental assessment,” which took into account the needs of all current and anticipated future road users, residents, businesses and other community stakeholders.

The contractor for the project was Dan’s Excavating of Shelby Twp.

For the latest Road Commission project info or traffic alerts, visit social media platforms

During road-construction season, road projects can change quickly, and previously announced plans can give way to unexpected situations. At the same time, utility lines can break unexpectedly, emergency utility repairs can be needed or any number of other situations can result in unexpected road or lane closures.

The challenge is often finding out about these occurrences before you get stuck in the resulting traffic jam on your way to work, school, the grocery store, etc. One way the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) attempts to share this often-late-breaking news is via its social media platforms.

“We can post information on social media, and have it available



The RCOC Facebook page.

to the public much more quickly than almost any other way of sharing information,” explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. To that end, he encourages anyone interested to follow RCOC on Facebook (search Road Commission for Oakland County), Twitter (@oaklandroads) or Instagram (oaklandroadsmi).

Need an update on RCOC projects? Check the Road Commission website

Anyone needing an update on the status of a Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) road project can check the RCOC website (www.rcocweb.org).

As in past years, this year RCOC is producing a weekly press release listing the status of all projects currently underway. The press release is sent to area media and posted on the website, typically each Friday.

The release is a good way to

check the latest project schedules, road closures, detour routes, contractors, project start dates and more. The press release is posted in the “News” section of the website, which is accessible from the homepage.

If you don’t see the release listed under the “News” heading on the homepage, click on the “view all” button at the bottom of the News section and search for the release on the News page.

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. 2202.

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