

Road Report

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

RCOC budget grows slightly for 2014

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) 2014 budget, adopted Sept. 26, saw a slight bump compared to 2013, thanks to a slight increase in state road funding.

The 2014 budget, at \$108 million, is \$5 million greater than the \$103.1 million 2013 budget adopted in September of last year. The 2014 budget includes work on road improvement projects with a total value of more than \$47 million (many of the projects include expenses spread over several budget years).

RCOC's fiscal year runs Oct. 1 to Sept. 30.

The 2014 budget is larger than the 2013 budget primarily due to an anticipated slight increase in state-collected road-funding dollars and because of an increase in federal road funding coming to the agency.

RCOC anticipates receiving \$58.7 million in state revenues in fiscal year 2014, compared to \$57.7 million in the current fiscal year. While state revenues to RCOC were up very slightly for the last two years, those revenues had declined for the

five previous years (2007-2011) after being flat for nearly 10 years.

State revenues, derived primarily from the state-collected fuel taxes and vehicle-registration fees, are RCOC's largest source of funding and the main funding source for RCOC operations. The 2014 state revenue level will remain at approximately the same level received 15 years ago in 1999.

"This budget demonstrates our commitment to doing the most we can with the available resources," RCOC Board Chairman Greg Jamian said. He noted that federal funding, which is generally tied to specific road construction projects and cannot be used for routine maintenance operations, tends to fluctuate considerably from year to year.

"We're pleased we will receive more state-collected funding for 2014 than in 2013, but that slight increase will not offset the cost increases we have seen for materials and equipment," RCOC Vice-Chairman Ron Fowkes said. He added RCOC currently has 195 fewer staff members than in 2007, a reduction of more than 35 percent.

"Today we have fewer employees than at any time since the 1950s, when the county had half the population it has today, there were far fewer road lanes and traffic volumes were one fifth what they are today," noted RCOC Board Member Eric Wilson.

"While the years of declining budgets have taken a serious toll on the Road Commission," RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar said, "we have also taken many steps to become more efficient and to cut costs. It's true we are not able to do as much as we did in the past, but we are now using the available resources much more efficiently than ever before. That's a tribute to the commitment and dedication of the Road Commission employees."

The budget includes the 2014 Road Improvement Program, which lists all road projects planned for 2014. Among the planned projects are:

- Widening Tienken Road from 2 lanes to 3 from Livernois to Rochester Road in Rochester Hills
- Paving the gravel portion of Oak Hill

CONT'D ON PAGE 2 -- SEE *BUDGET*

RCOC booth a hit at Dream Cruise

Thanks to a squad of enthusiastic volunteers, the Road Commission's presence at the Woodward Dream Cruise on Aug. 17 was a big hit with the countless car enthusiasts who visited the agency's booth.

Despite being a little bit away from Woodward, the RCOC booth was in a heavily traveled area of Royal Oak's Memorial Park and saw a constant stream of visitors. The volunteers handed out RCOC literature as well as answered questions and discussed road issues with visitors.

"At no cost to the agency, this allowed us to have positive interactions with countless of our customers in a fun environment," stated RCOC Chairman Greg Jamian, who spent some time in the booth.



Dream Cruise volunteers in action. Volunteers included RCOC retirees, current employees and the children of several employees.

What's Inside

Dennis Kolar: The time is now 2

Road-funding videos coming 2

2014 RCOC Road Improvement Prog. . . 3

Strat Plan report . . . 4

Michigan's road-funding dilemma:

The time is now

The following is an opinion piece by Road Commission for Oakland County Managing Director Dennis Kolar

The time is now for our legislators in Lansing to take action to increase Michigan's road funding.

For years now, as our roads have crumbled, the legislators have debated road funding. Over the course of the last couple of years, and following several very in-depth studies, a consensus has formed in Lansing that, yes, our state is in dire need of more road funding.

Also for years, many legislators argued that before they would consider additional road funding, the state's road agencies had to first come to the table, improving efficiency, cutting costs and doing everything possible to stretch the existing dollars as far as possible. Well, we have all done that.

Consider that the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has reduced its staff by more than 35 percent since 2007. We have also significantly increased the amount of health insurance costs that employees bear and reduced retirement benefits for new hires among many other things.

That is in addition to all the work we have privatized over the years (when it has made good business sense), the improved efficiencies we've achieved through activities such as employee



Dennis Kolar

cross training and the increased use of technology.

In short, we have done everything the state Legislature has asked. However, while beneficial, those activities cannot replace the funding we have lost over the years or compensate for the fact that the costs of building and maintaining roads has grown dramatically during that time. That's because Michigan simply has not adequately funded its roads in a long time.

U.S. Census Bureau data indicates that Michigan has been among the bottom nine states in the nation in per capita state and local road funding since at least 1964. That's 50 years of spending less on roads than nearly all other states.

The problem is that now that most of our legislators agree there is a problem, they cannot agree how to solve it. Nobody wants to raise taxes. I get that.

But roads are a vital, critical, elemental part of our culture and our economy. Building and maintaining roads has been one of the most basic and necessary functions of government since the dawn of civilization.

We, as a state, cannot continue to ignore this vital part of our infrastructure. The time for action is now. The longer we put off repairing our roads, the more it will cost to do so.

As we continue to defer this responsibility, we are creating a tremendous burden for future generations that will be saddled with the cost of rebuilding the roads. But the impact will be felt in the short term as well. We are rapidly approaching the point where we can no longer adequately provide basic services such as pothole patching, gravel-road grading and plowing and salting in the winter.

I implore our legislators to fulfill their responsibilities -- to ensure our transportation infrastructure is adequately funded, so that our businesses can grow and thrive, so our communities can again prosper, so our residents can travel safely and easily to work, to school, etc.

Now is the time for action. Let's not let this opportunity pass.

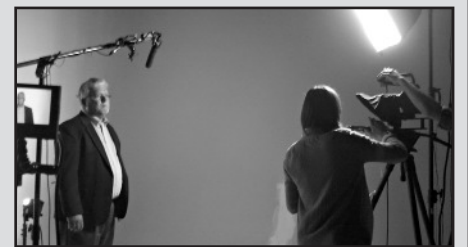
Managing Dir. to appear in road-funding videos

Road Commission Managing Director Dennis Kolar, also the current president of the County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM -- the organization representing road commissions in Lansing), this month was filmed talking about road funding for several up-coming CRAM videos.

As the president of CRAM, he serves as one of the public faces for county road

agencies in the state, especially when it comes to the discussion of road funding.

The videos are intended to make the point that Michigan's local roads are critical to the state's economy and to society. They will air in various social media environments over the coming year as the road-funding discussion plays out in Lansing.



Kolar waits while the crew preps during filming.

BUDGET, CONT'D FROM FRONT
Road from Dixie Highway to Kier Road in Groveland and Springfield townships
- Reconstructing the 14 Mile Road/Orchard Lake Road intersection on the Farmington Hills/West Bloomfield Twp. border as a modern roundabout.

RCOC Chairman Jamian explained the 2014 budget represents the agency's efforts to cut costs where possible while

impacting services as little as possible. "Again in 2014, we will not be filling any position that is vacated unless it is absolutely critical. As a result, we are calling on our employees to continually find ways to do more with less or at least to maintain the best possible level of service with fewer resources and less staff."

Managing Director Kolar noted despite the road-funding crisis, RCOC remains

committed to customer service. "We will continue to do everything we can, with the resources available, to meet the needs of our customers," he stated.

"We are charged with using the public's money to accomplish the greatest good. We take that responsibility very seriously."

The list of projects to be constructed in 2014 is listed on page 3 of the Road Report.

2014 RCOC Road Improvement Program

Below is the list of projects the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) expects to construct in 2014 as included in the recently adopted 2014 budget. This list includes only projects that will be constructed in 2014, not those where design or right of way acquisition is planned for 2014, but where construction will occur in a later year. To avoid confusion over project costs, the costs listed are the construction costs for each project, and do not include any preliminary engineering or right of way acquisition costs. For many projects, some of these costs (such as for preliminary engineering or right of way acquisition) were paid for in previous years' budgets.

PROJECT	FROM/TO	DESCRIPTION	COMMUNITY	COST
<u>Safety Widening</u>				
Tienken	Livernois to Rochester	widen 2 lanes to 3	Rochester Hills	\$ 6.1 million
Haggerty	N. of Pont. Trail to Richardson	add center left-turn lane	Commerce Twp.	\$ 3.5 million
Williams Lake	at Airport (intersection)	widen intersection	Waterford Twp.	\$ 500,000
Total Safety Widening: \$10.1 million				
<u>Reconstruct/Replace</u> (completely reconstruct or replace an existing road)				
Greenfield	(southbound lanes only) 8 Mile to 9 Mile		Southfield	\$ 3.1 million
Nrthwstrn Hwy/14 Mile/Orch. Lk intersection		roundabout	Farm. Hills/West Blfld.	\$11.9 million
Total Reconstruct/Replace: \$15 million				
<u>Repair, Rehabilitate and Resurface</u> (repair road base & add 3 or 4 inches of new asphalt to existing lanes)				
Avon	Adams to Livernois		Rochester Hills	\$ 3.4 million
Pontiac Lake	M-59 to Cass Lake		Waterford Twp.	\$ 1.6 million
8 Mile	Napier to Taft (complete 2013 project)		Novi & Northville	\$ 4.6 million
Joslyn	Collier to north of Pacific		Auburn Hills	\$ 1.7 million
Total Repair, Rehabilitate and Resurface: \$11.3 million				
<u>Pave Gravel Road</u> (provide paved surface on currently unpaved road)				
Oak Hill	Dixie Highway to Kier		Groveland Twp./Springfield Twp. border	\$ 2.2 million
Clyde	East of Hickory Ridge to Strathcona		Highland Twp.	\$ 1.9 million
Griswold	8 Mile to 9 Mile		Lyon Twp.	\$ 2 million
Total Pave Gravel: \$6.1 million				
<u>Bridge Replacement</u>				
	Orion Road over the Paint Creek		Oakland Twp.	\$ 1.7 million
<u>Bridge Maintenance</u>				
Lahser	over the Rouge River (between 12 Mile & 13 Mile)	epoxy overlay	Southfield	\$ 125,000
Lahser	over the Rouge River (between 9 Mile & 10 Mile)	epoxy overlay	Southfield	\$ 200,000
Avon	over the Clinton River	mill, waterproof membrane, overlay	Rochester Hills	\$ 150,000
Total Bridge Maintenance: \$475,000				
<u>Culvert Replacement</u>				
Maybee	over Sashabaw Creek		Independence Twp.	\$ 300,000
Sleeth	over Sherwood Lake		Commerce Twp.	\$ 150,000
11 Mile	over the Novi Drain		Lyon Twp.	\$ 150,000
Total Culvert Replacement: \$600,000				
<u>Overlay</u> (simple asphalt resurfacing, with 1.5 inches of new asphalt)				
Joslyn	Waldon to Clarkston		Orion Twp.	\$ 815,000
Hickory Ridge	Clyde to West Demode		Highland & Rose townships	\$ 700,000
Pontiac Trail	8 Mile to 9 Mile		Lyon Twp./South Lyon	\$ 420,000
Total Overlay: \$1.9 million				
Total cost of projects to be under construction in 2014: \$47.2 million.				

RCOC Strategic Planning report warns "The Time is Now"

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) will shortly release its biennial Strategic Planning Report, which summarizes the meetings the agency's leaders conducted recently with the leaders of virtually every community in the county. The report will highlight the conclusion that for Michigan, "the time is now" when it comes to road funding.

In fact, to convey this sentiment, this year's report includes a brochure entitled "The Time is Now." The brochure explains that the time is now for Michigan's Legislature to increase road funding -- the need is growing and Michigan's road agencies have done everything the Legislature has asked in terms of cutting costs and increasing efficiency.

The RCOC Strategic Planning process involves Managing Director Dennis Kolar and Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer Gary Piotrowicz meeting with each community's leaders to review road issues. As part of each meeting, RCOC provided an overview of the road-funding challenges the agency faces and also solicited the community's input regarding needed improvements on county roads within the community.

"The Strategic Planning meetings provide us with a broad view of road issues on a countywide basis as well as a detailed examination of each community's needs," Kolar said. "This input is critical to RCOC's process of establishing priorities and improving services. To our knowledge, we are the only governmental agency of our size in Michigan that undertakes this type of effort to maintain communications with the communities we serve."

Kolar noted the fact that Michigan's road funding crisis is growing more severe was underscored during the recent round of meetings. That led RCOC, for the fourth time, not just to put out a report summarizing the findings of the Strategic Planning process, but also to create the supplemental brochure explaining the problem.

Both the "The Time is Now" brochure and the detailed report on the Strategic Planning process will be available on the RCOC Web site, www.rcocweb.org (click on the "About Us" tab at the top of the home page, then select "Publications" and scroll to the "2013 Strategic Planning Report" category). Copies will also be provided to all local, county and state officials serving the county.

The Strategic Planning process was begun in 1985 in an effort to better gauge the needs and concerns of communities RCOC serves and to improve communications between RCOC and the communities.

ROAD REPORT

Road Report is published quarterly by the Road Commission for Oakland County. Have a question or comment about **Road Report**? Call Public Information Officer Craig Bryson at (248) 645-2000, ext. 2302 or send him an e-mail at cbryson@rcoc.org.

Board of Road Commissioners:

Gregory C. Jamian, Chairman

Ronald J. Fowkes, Vice Chairman

Eric S. Wilson, Commissioner

Dennis G. Kolar, PE, Managing Director

**Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE, Dep. Managing Dir./
County Highway Engineer**

**Have a question for RCOC? Call:
Department of Customer Services
(877) 858-4804 or visit RCOC online at
www.rcocweb.org**

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**