

Road Report

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

Road Commission's 2022 budget means continued improvement to county's road system

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) fiscal year 2022 budget paves the way for the agency to continue the forward march toward improved road conditions across the county, boasting more than \$62 million in annual contributions toward road-improvement projects planned to be under construction in 2022 and future years.

"In each of the past years since 2017, the first year of the new road funding resulting from the state's 2015 road-funding package, we have improved the overall condition of the county roads. That will again be the case in 2022," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar.

The budget was expected to be approved by the RCOC Board on Sept. 23 and was presented at a public hearing Aug. 19. RCOC's fiscal year runs Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

The \$180 million budget represents an increase of about \$19.2 million compared to the \$161 million 2021 budget. The 2022 budget increased primarily due to increases in state and federal road funds.

RCOC anticipates receiving almost \$115 million in state road funding in fiscal year 2022, compared to just over \$102 million received in 2021. State road funding is derived primarily from state-collected fuel taxes, vehicle-registration fees and state General Fund dollars.

Fiscal year 2021 marked the final year of new, additional state road funding tied to the 2015 Michigan road-funding-increase package. The state dollars continue to represent RCOC's largest source of funding and its main funding source for operations.

The remaining revenue making up the budget comes from local community contributions (\$17.3 million) federal funds



RCOC Deputy Managing Director Gary Piotrowicz presents the list of 2022 projects at the Aug. 19 budget public hearing.

(\$28.5 million), the contract with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to maintain state highways in the **CONT'D ON PAGE 2 — SEE BUDGET**

Oakland County traffic-fatality rate remains well below state and national levels

Once again in 2020, Oakland County saw a substantially lower traffic-fatality rate on its roads than did either the state as a whole or the nation.

The county, state and national fatality rates were recently released for 2020. For the year, Oakland County's fatality rate

remained less than half of both the statewide rate and the national rate.

In fact, Oakland County has had the lowest, or among the lowest, traffic-fatality rates in the state nearly every year for decades. In part that is the result of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) making safety its top priority since the 1970s. Since that time, the agency has been a national leader in traf-



fic safety and one of the first and most aggressive users of traffic-crash data to drive traffic-safety improvements.

For 2020, Oakland County's traffic-fatality rate was 0.64 deaths per 100 million miles of vehicle travel. For the year, the statewide rate was 1.37 fatalities per 100 million miles of vehicle

travel and the national rate was 1.49.

"Despite the pandemic, we remained focused on safety on our roads," stated Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "Safety is our number-one priority, and while we are always striving to reduce the number of crashes, and even one fatality is too many, it is still

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New Road Commission video explains subdivision paving process

One of the more frequent questions the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) receives from the public is, “How do I get my subdivision street repaved?”

To help provide the answer to this question, RCOC recently produced an informational video about its Special Assessment District (SAD) subdivision paving program. The video is available on RCOC’s YouTube channel at: <https://youtu.be/BwhzmyzdrWI>.

While RCOC does not own any subdivision or neighborhood streets in cities or villages in the county, it does own all public subdivision streets in Oakland County townships. However, the agency only receives approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year per mile of subdivision street in state road funding, which is only

enough to cover routine maintenance activities, such as pothole patching and snow plowing – it is far from enough to pay for the resurfacing of the streets (or paving the streets if they are gravel). The Road Commission does not receive any property tax revenues and is funded primarily through the state fuel taxes, vehicle-registration fees and state income tax.

As a result, residents wishing to have their subdivision streets repaved must initiate an RCOC SAD program project, through which the Road Commission establishes a special tax assessment district to pay for the paving project. RCOC then designs and oversees the project on behalf of the residents.

The new video gives an overview of the process.

Strat Plan meetings done; report coming soon

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has completed its biennial series of Strategic Planning meetings with the leaders of virtually every community in the county. The agency is now in

the process of compiling a report of what was shared with and learned from the communities. The report is expected out by the end of the year and will be distributed to all public officials in the county.

BUDGET — CONT’D FROM FRONT county (\$11.9 million), state Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) grants (\$2.4 million), federal funds for traffic signals (\$2.3 million) and permit fees and other revenues (\$2.9 million).

The TEDF and federal funds are awarded on a project-by-project basis, and the amount RCOC receives from each source fluctuates from year to year.

The 2022 budget includes nearly \$62.3 million in annual contributions toward road-improvement projects planned to be under construction in 2022 and future years; \$38.3 million for road maintenance efforts such as pothole patching, gravel road grading and salting and plowing in the winter; and \$18.1 million for maintaining traffic signs, signals, pavement markings and guardrails among other activities.

The remainder of the budget is dedicated to operating expenses including customer services, vehicle maintenance, staff wages, buildings and grounds and administration.

“The Road Commission remains in a strong financial position,” reports RCOC Board Chair Andrea LaLonde. “Despite having lost revenue this year as a result of COVID-19, we are in a strong position

moving forward – at least for the next couple of years,” LaLonde added.

RCOC Vice Chair Nancy Quarles concurred. “We have always operated in a fiscally conservative manor,” she explained. “Even during the last year and a half, when state revenues dropped due to COVID-19, we remained in solid fiscal condition,” she stated.

Board Member Ron Fowkes added the Board is hopeful that RCOC will receive some of the federal relief dollars related to the pandemic, either through the state or through Oakland County general government, to make up for the approximately \$15 million in state revenue the agency lost in 2020 and 2021. “Our gas-tax and vehicle-registration-fee revenues dropped in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic,” he explained. “The federal government has dedicated a lot of money to restoring services impacted by the pandemic. Road commissions are not direct recipients of any of that money, so it would be great if either the state or the county sent some of those dollars our way.”

Managing Director Kolar agreed. “The \$15 million we lost would have repaired a

Act 51: Not the same law enacted in 1951

It’s a recurring chorus: On a regular basis, as the state Legislature debates how to solve Michigan’s road-funding shortage, someone will suggest the problem is simply that the state law governing the distribution of those dollars – Act 51 – needs to be updated.

The argument goes like this: The law was enacted in 1951, so it must be outdated. While that may be a way to avoid discussing how to actually raise more money for roads, it is not accurate.

In fact, the law, which has been updated numerous times since 1951, is doing a pretty good job of fairly distributing the insufficient funds available for roads.

The law has been amended 93 times since being enacted; 54 of the 75 sections have been added since 1951; 45 of the sections have been amended (some multiple times); and of the 75 sections, only 12 remain in original form. This is not the law that was enacted in 1951.

Nor is the problem the way the pie is sliced. No recipient of state road dollars is adequately funded; changing Act 51 would not solve the problem.

lot of roads,” Kolar said. “If we could get reimbursed for some of that loss, we would certainly put the money to good use.”

The budget includes the 2022 Road Improvement Program (RIP) which identifies next year’s road-construction projects (see full list of projects is on page 3).

Among the planned projects are:

- Constructing a roundabout at the Avon Road/Dequindre Road intersection in Rochester Hills
- Major resurfacing of Orchard Lake Road from Middlebelt Road to Old Telegraph in Bloomfield Twp., West Bloomfield Twp., Sylvan Lake and Pontiac
- Resurfacing of 10 Mile Road, Meadowbrook to Haggerty in Novi
- Resurfacing of 14 Mile Road, Barrington to Dequindre in Madison Heights & Troy

Projects are selected using a computerized road-assessment program combined with engineers’ analysis and a review of safety data.

The budget is posted on the RCOC Website, www.rcocweb.org (click on the “Financials” button on the home page, select “Budget Summary” and click on “2021-22 Budget”).

2022 Road Improvement Program

This list includes only projects that are expected to be constructed in FY 2022, not those where only design or only right of way (ROW) acquisition work is planned for 2022. To avoid confusion over the project costs, the costs listed are the estimated total project costs which may span multiple fiscal years and not the annual contributions for each project.

<u>Repair, Rehabilitate & Resurface (repair road base/add 3 to 4 inches new asphalt)</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Orchard Lake Road, Middlebelt to Old Telegraph in West Bloomfield Twp., Sylvan Lake, Pontiac, Bloomfield Twp.	\$ 1.8 million
• 14 Mile Road, Barrington to Dequindre in Madison Heights and Troy	\$ 4.9 million
• Novi Road, 9 Mile to 10 Mile in Novi	\$ 3.3 million
• 10 Mile Road, Meadowbrook to Haggerty in Novi (includes replacement of two culverts & addition of center, left-turn lane)	\$ 7 million
• Mann Road, Floretta to Clintonville in Independence Twp. (includes culvert replacement)	\$ 700,000
• Holcomb Road, west township line to Clarkston Village line in Independence Twp.	\$ 900,000
• Maybee Road, Dixie Highway to eastern township line in Independence Twp.	\$ 2.8 million
• Pontiac Trail, Green Lake to Haggerty in West Bloomfield Twp.	\$ 2.6 million
• Orchard Lake Road, 13 Mile to 14 Mile in Farmington Hills (partial reconstruct, partial boulevard, add roundabout)	\$ 8.5 million
<u>Roundabouts</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Waldon Road at Clintonville Road in Independence Twp.	\$ 2.5 million
• Elizabeth Lake Road at Oxbow Lake Road in White Lake Twp.	\$ 900,000
• Elizabeth Lake Road at Teggerdine Road in White Lake Twp.	\$ 975,000
• Avon Road at Dequindre Road in Rochester Hills	\$ 4.7 million
<u>Pave Gravel Road</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Currie Road, 8 Mile to 9 Mile in Lyon Twp. (includes construction of two roundabouts)	\$ 4.4 million
<u>Safety Shoulder Widening</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Frembes Road, Hatchery to Dixie Highway in Waterford Twp.	\$ 250,000
<u>Simple Resurfacing</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Groveland Road, Barron to M-15 in Groveland Twp.	\$ 800,000
• Maple Road, Coolidge Highway to Rochester Road in Troy	\$ 1.7 million
• Rochester Road, Tienken to Lakeville in Rochester Hills & Oakland Twp.	\$ 3.7 million
<u>Concrete Slab Replacement</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Novi Road at 10 Mile in Novi	\$ 750,000
<u>Bridge Replacement</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Avon Road over the Clinton River in Rochester Hills	\$ 2.9 million
• Hatchery Road over the Clinton River in Waterford Twp.	\$ 2 million
• Cooley Lake Road over the Huron River in Commerce Twp.	\$ 1.8 million
• Maloney Street over Clear Lake/Long Lake in Oxford Twp.	\$ 2 million
<u>Bridge Preventative Maintenance</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Tienken Road over the Stony Creek in Rochester Hills	\$ 175,000
• Parkdale Road over the Stony Creek in Rochester	\$ 175,000
• Novi Road over the CSX railroad tracks in Novi	\$ 200,000
• Grand River Ave. over Kent Lake in Lyon Twp.	\$ 200,000
<u>Culvert Replacements</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Pontiac Trail over the Norton Drain in Commerce Twp.	\$ 800,000
• Pine Valley Way over the Rouge River in Bloomfield Twp.	\$ 300,000
• Cass Lake Road over the Cass/Otter Canal in Keego Harbor	\$ 850,000
• Orchard Lake Road over the Rouge River (north of 10 Mile) in Farmington Hills	\$ 970,000
• Fish Lake Road over the Shiawassee River (south of Grange Hall Rd.) in Holly Twp.	\$ 1.6 million
• Fish Lake Road over the Patterson-Holly Drain (South of Grange Hall Rd.) in Holly Twp.	\$ 650,000
<u>High-Friction Surface Treatments</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Hickory Ridge Road north of Clyde in Highland Twp.	\$ 100,000
• Grange Hall Road at Joann in Holly Twp.	\$ 275,000
• Elizabeth Lake Road, North Pinegrove to Hickory Lane in Waterford Twp.	\$ 250,000
• Cooley Lake Road, Fleet Street to Lake Vista Street in Waterford Twp.	\$ 125,000
• Cooley Lake Road, South Pine Grove to Lamothe in Waterford Twp.	\$ 120,000
<u>Railroad Crossing Improvements</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
• Hogback Lake Road at the Grand Trunk Western Railroad in Rose Twp.	\$ 500,000
Total annual contributions for projects to be constructed in 2021:	\$ 69 million

**SAFETY - CONT'D
FROM FRONT**

heartening to see that our roads remain very safe compared to others across the state and nation. That is the result, in part, of all the hard work done by everyone at RCOC.”

Unlike many parts of the country, the number of traffic fatalities in Oakland County dropped from 2019 to 2020. However, the fatality rate increased slightly, because traffic volumes dropped in 2020 due to the COVID-19 situation.

“While our fatality rate increased slightly for 2020 because traffic volumes were down everywhere,” Kolar explained, “our actual drop in the number of traffic fatalities contrasts with many areas of the country that saw increased traffic fatali-

ties despite the traffic drop.”

Kolar added that RCOC’s safety efforts are paying off. “Virtually everything we do is driven by an interest in safety,” he said, “whether it is how we select the projects we do each year, how we design those projects, how we prioritize our road maintenance activities, etc.

“Every RCOC employee contributes, in one way or another, to helping to keep our roads safe. These numbers confirm that what we are doing is making a difference.”

In fact, if Oakland’s roads experienced the same fatality rate as the national rate, another 60 to 70 people would die on the county’s roads every year. “That’s a big deal,” Kolar said. “That’s 60 to 70 families that don’t have to bury a loved one.”

Steps in a road-construction project

The most visible part of a road project is the construction phase – when the contractor is on site constructing the project. Many people may assume that the project starts shortly before the heavy equipment rolls onto the job site. That is rarely the case, though, and planning and other phases often take years of activity behind the scenes before a contractor can start work.

What must happen prior to a road project starting? First there is often considerable effort in the project selection process, before a road is chosen to work on, and before the scope of the project is identified.

In fact, there are a number of steps, from project selection and design to funding and right of way acquisition to bidding, etc. that go on behind the scenes. To learn more about the steps in a construction project, visit the “Steps in a Road Construction Project” page on the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) website: <https://www.rcocweb.org/166/Steps-in-a-Road-Project> (or go to the RCOC website homepage, www.rcocweb.org and then select the “Residents” tab at the top of the page and click on “Steps in a Road Project” from the pull-down menu.

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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