

ROAD REPORT

A publication of the Road Commission for Oakland County for public officials serving Oakland County

www.rcocweb.org

Multi-year budgeting:

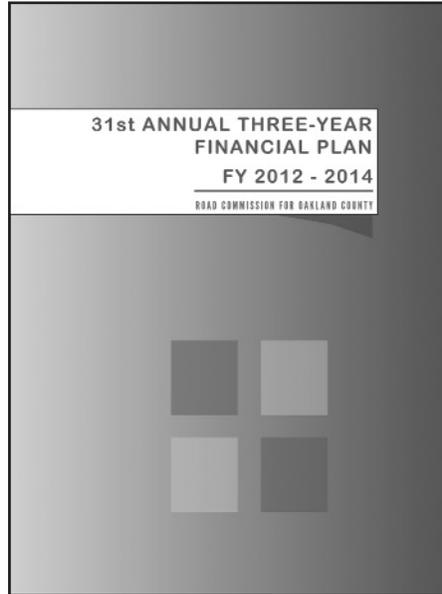
RCOC enacts 31ST annual Three-Year Financial Plan

Governor Rick Snyder recently implemented a two-year budget cycle for the State of Michigan. For the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), however, multi-year budgeting is nothing new.

In fact, in February, the agency completed its 31st annual Three-Year Financial Plan, which includes balanced budgets for the years 2012 through 2014.

"RCOC has been preparing three-year budgets since 1980," observed RCOC Managing Director Brent Bair. "In fact, I was the staff person assigned to summarize the findings for the first one back in 1980."

RCOC Chairman Eric Wilson attributed the agency's ability to maintain a balanced budget in part to the three-year budgeting process. "One of the reasons we have been able to continue to operate with a balanced budget year after year," he said, "is that we have, for more than 30 years, operated with a three-year budgeting cycle. This has allowed us to anticipate budgetary changes ahead of time, so we can be prepared when revenues or



expenses change."

Board Vice Chairman Greg Jamian noted it is fairly unusual for a governmental agency to operate with a three-year budget cycle. "It's even more unique," he added, "because we've been doing it so long."

Commissioner Ron Fowkes pointed

out that RCOC has operated with a balanced budget for all of its nearly 100 years of existence. "We take our role as stewards of public money very seriously," he said. "And this three-year budget cycle allows us to anticipate and respond to changes before they are on top of us."

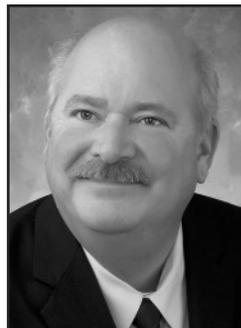
Bair explained that the process of preparing the three-year budgets has been very useful in planning future road improvements as well as such things as building improvements, equipment replacement timetables, etc. That's because the process is conducted not just by the agency's Finance Department or managing director, but by the Financial Planning Group. Over the years, this group has been expanded to include all RCOC department directors, who also are permitted to include some of their supervisory staff.

"By opening the process, we have made sure the financial situation of the agency is known to all departments. This has eliminated the perception of secrecy," **CONT'D ON PAGE 4 -- SEE BUDGET**

New RCOC Board member Fowkes no stranger to public life

Though he may be new to the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), Board member Ron Fowkes is not new to public service.

Fowkes, who was appointed to the RCOC Board by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners on Jan. 5, previously spent five-and-a-half years on the Milford Village Council, including serving as council president. He also spent three years on the steering committee for RCOC's West Oakland Corridor Study in the early 2000s.



Ron Fowkes

The new commissioner replaces former Commissioner Richard Skarritt, who retired in December after 15 years on the Board.

Fowkes also served on the Milford Parks and Recreation Commission and the Village Tree Board. Additionally, he was very involved in bringing the YMCA to Milford and spearheaded the effort to create an ice rink in the village's Central Park.

"My goal at the Road Commission," Fowkes said, "is to help in any way I can" **CONT'D ON PAGE 3 -- SEE FOWKES**

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Road Commission welcomes new county commissioners with roads orientation session

As it does every other year, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) on Feb. 17 hosted an "orientation" session for newly elected members of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. The event took place at RCOC's Traffic Operations Center, the nerve center for the agency's high-tech "adaptive" traffic-signal system.

Hosting the event were Road Commissioners Eric Wilson, Greg Jamian and Ron Fowkes as well as RCOC Managing Director Brent Bair and Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer Dennis Kolar.

During the session, Bair introduced the county commissioners to the intricacies of road funding, explained how major road projects are selected and introduced the commissioners to some of the agency's accomplishments. Kolar shared the list of upcoming projects with the commissioners.

"We work very closely with our colleagues on the County Board of Commissioners," observed RCOC Chairman Wilson. "We wanted to make sure that they understand how we are funded and how we operate. It's also nice to be able to sit down with them and have an open discussion."

Also on hand was RCOC Department of Customer Services Director David Czerniakowski, who explained how his department handles the 30,000-plus citizen



RCOC Managing Director Brent Bair discusses road-related issues with the new county commissioners at RCOC's Traffic Operations Center.

service requests it receives each year.

RCOC Signal Systems Supervisor Danielle Deneau also shared with the commissioners how the agency's FAST-TRAC system of "smart" traffic signals automatically adapts to changing traffic volumes in

real time, improving traffic flow and safety.

"This was a productive session," Wilson added. "We appreciate that the commissioners took time out of their busy schedules to visit our facility and learn about the Road Commission."

2011 RCOC Road Improvement Program

Below is the list of road projects that the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) expects to be constructed in 2011. The costs listed include preliminary engineering, right of way acquisition and construction.

Safety Widening Projects

- Novi Rd., 10 Mile to Grand River (widen 2 lanes to 5, build bridge over RR tracks), Novi. Est. cost: \$24.9 million
- Crooks Rd., 14 Mile to Equity (widen 4 lanes to 5); Clawson, Royal Oak & Troy. Est. cost: \$3.8 million

Total Safety Widening: \$28.7 million.

Safety Intersection Improvements

- Pontiac Trail at M-5 (construct roundabout), Commerce Twp. (constructed & paid for by township). Est. cost: \$5.1 million

Total Safety Intersection Improvements: \$5.1 million.

Major Resurfacing

- Adams Rd., South Blvd. to Auburn, Rochester Hills/Auburn Hill border. Est. cost: \$1.3 million
- Commerce Rd., South Commerce to Union Lake, Commerce

Twp. Est. cost: \$1.9 million

- Walton Blvd., east of Adams to Rochester city limits, Rochester Hills. Est. cost: \$3.2 million

- 12 Mile, Coolidge to Woodward, Berkley. Est. cost: \$666,000

- Grand River, Haggerty to Novi, Novi. Est. cost: \$3.7 million

- Crooks Rd., Banmoor to Fountain, Troy. Est. cost: \$1.4 million

Total Major Resurfacing: \$12.2 million.

Pave Gravel Road (pave currently unpaved road)

- 8 Mile Rd., Dixboro to Pontiac Trail, Lyon Twp./Salem Twp. border. Est. cost: \$2 million

Total Pave Gravel Road: \$2 million.

Bridge Replacement

- Parkdale over Stony Creek, Rochester. Est. cost: \$1.85 million

- Silverbell over Grand Trunk RR, Orion Twp. Est. cost: \$3 million

Total Bridge Replacement: \$4.85 million.

Total cost of projects to be under construction in 2011: \$52.85 million.

For quickest response, report potholes directly to RCOC

As spring pothole season approaches in Michigan, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) asks residents and motorists to contact the agency directly to report potholes and other road safety issues.

"Several websites now encourage motorists to post road safety concerns," noted RCOC Managing Director Brent Bair. "However, these sites do not share these complaints directly with the Road Commission."

If pothole complaints are called or e-mailed directly to RCOC, they are addressed as expeditiously as possible. Residents can contact RCOC's



Department of Customer Services directly via phone (toll free) at 877-858-4804 or through the Road Commission's website, www.rcocweb.org (click on the "contact us" button).

The Department of Customer

Services is staffed weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. The best way to report a non-emergency problem after hours is to file a report at the RCOC website. For emergencies during non-business hours, contact the RCOC dispatch office at 248-858-4895.

"We take the safety of motorists seriously," Bair said. "The best way to have a concern addressed on the county road and bridge network is by directly contacting the Road Commission. When using alternate methods to report potholes, there is often an unnecessary delay leading to additional frustration and potential damage to vehicles."

Some reasons to be proud of your Road Commission

As have all governmental agencies lately, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has had to make many cuts in recent years due to declining funding. However, despite these cuts, RCOC remains a leader in many areas.

Over the next few editions of the *Road Report* newsletter, we'll share some of the areas in which RCOC remains on the cutting edge. This edition will focus on two areas: transportation technology and LED lights.

A. Transportation Technology

RCOC has long been a national leader in this area. Here are five examples:

1. Has the second largest system of

"adaptive" (smart) traffic signals in the nation. RCOC has 675+ intersections equipped with this technology that automatically monitors traffic volumes and flow and continually adjusts traffic-signal timing to best meet the traffic needs at that moment.

2. Was the first road agency in the nation to use video-imaging vehicle detection technology for traffic management.

3. Has the largest deployment of video-imaging vehicle detection for traffic management in the world.

4. Is one of the only local road agencies in the nation involved with the Federal Highway Administration in the

testing of "IntelliDrive" (technology that allows vehicles to communicate automatically with each other and with the infrastructure).

5. Is a partner with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in several national transportation technology tests, including along Telegraph Road, a public/private partnership with a Japanese company and a test with a Taiwanese company.

B. LED Lights

RCOC was one of the first Michigan road agencies to widely use energy-efficient and long-lasting light-emitting diode (LED) lights in its traffic signals.

FOWKES, CONT'D FROM FRONT
to instill a sense in our elected officials that the basic infrastructure -- roads and bridges -- is critical to the safety of our shared constituency as well as to our current and future economic viability."

Acknowledging he is fairly new to the intricacies of the Road Commission, Fowkes noted, "it sometimes takes me a while to learn, but I do work hard, and I hope to develop a sense of RCOC's history."

He added that his role as a road commissioner should be helpful in conveying the importance of roads and bridges to local officials. "An appointed commissioner can approach the elected officials to discuss funding options much easier than an elected official could in today's poor economic climate," he stated.

In fact, Fowkes believes the relation-

ships with those elected officials is critical to the agency. "I'd encourage everyone to take an active role in getting to know their elected officials," he observed. "It doesn't cost anything, and the democratic process is fascinating to witness and to become involved in."

And while he has not been directly involved in roads, Fowkes is no stranger to the equipment used by the Road Commission. "In my younger years, I ran heavy equipment in a gravel pit," he explained. "That's why I lost some of the hearing in my left ear."

These days, Fowkes owns and operates Sealrite Window Company and Sealrite Inspections Company. Through the window company, he sells the windows his brother and sister-in-law manufacture at a factory in Brighton. The company was

founded by his father in 1972.

Fowkes and his wife, Barbara, the executive director of Spectrum Community Services (a statewide organization providing services for special-needs and developmentally disabled clients), have been married for 38 years. They have two adult daughters and two grandsons.

"I'm very family oriented," he admits.

Obviously committed to the role of public servant, Fowkes does not shy away from the constituents he serves. "My phone number is listed and has been throughout my political career. If something comes up, the public shouldn't hesitate to call me," he states.

Road Commission Board members serve for six-year terms. The Board is responsible for setting agency policy and overseeing the agency.

Potholes: We've got an app for that

According to MSNBC, there's now a new smart phone app that can detect potholes while you're driving -- without you having to do anything but drive.

The app is reportedly being developed by the City of Boston, and is known as "Street Bump." According to the MSNBC story, the app would use the GPS and "accelerometer" functions of smart phones to identify when a car hits a pothole, and where the pothole is. That information would automatically be relayed to the city.

The accelerometer determines the direction and acceleration of a phone's movement. The phone would simply have to be resting on a dashboard or setting in a car's cup holder; no action would be needed on the part of the driver.

Of course, the benefit would be that those in charge of the roads would more quickly know where patching is needed.

The story notes that the city plans to make the app available to other cities once Street Bump has been perfected.

BUDGET -- CONT'D FROM FRONT

Bair said. "The departments basically explain their needs, and the group divides up the available funds. Knowing the needs of all departments, the group must collectively prioritize funding within the agency. It's a very healthy and open process."

The first year of each three-year financial plan becomes the baseline for preparing the next year's RCOC budget. Agency department directors are required to compare their budget submissions each year to the previous year's financial plan and reconcile any differences. Future years are adjusted as needed in subsequent financial plans as revenues, costs and needs change.

"Of course, having a great budgeting process does not change the reality of declining revenues," Bair added, noting that RCOC's two main sources of operating revenue, the state-collected gas tax and vehicle registration fees, are projected to continue declining in the current financial plan.

Following an August public hearing, the final annual budget is approved by the three road commissioners at the second regularly scheduled Board meeting in September of each year. RCOC's fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30.



**31001 Lahser Road
Beverly Hills, MI 48025**

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

(click on "Contact us")

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.

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Gregory C. Jamian, Vice Chairman

Ronald J. Fowkes, Commissioner

Brent O. Bair, Managing Director

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www.rcocweb.org