

Road Report

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

Popular Tri-Party Program doubles in size for 2016

The popular Tri-Party Program, a three-way funding initiative for road improvements on Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) roads, has doubled in size since last year.

The program began in the early 1970s to address rough gravel roads. Over time, it grew to include addressing a variety of issues on both paved and gravel roads. The program is available to every community in Oakland County.

It involves funding from three sources: The Oakland County Board of Commissioners, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) and the cities, villages and townships in the county. For a number of years, the program has been set at \$3 million, with \$1 million from each of the parties.

For 2016, the parties agreed to double the program, for a total of \$6 million available. Each year, half the money available through the program is committed for RCOC roads in townships and

One of the most popular elements of the program is that the communities get to choose the Tri-Party Program projects.

the other half is dedicated to RCOC roads in cities and villages.

One of the most popular elements of the program is that the communities get to choose the Tri-Party Program projects, so long as they meet program criteria and are on RCOC roads.

"This program has proven very popular for many years," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "One of the popular aspects of the program is it allows communities to select projects

that are important to them, but which would typically not rise high enough in the ranking to get funded by RCOC."

How much Tri-Party funding each community receives is determined by formula. For cities and villages, the formula is based on the number of miles of county roads in the city or village and the number of crashes on those roads. In townships, the same factors are used, but township population is added to the formula as well.

Eligible projects for Tri-Party funds include road resurfacing and reconstructing, drainage improvements, gravel road re-graveling or paving, signal installation, curb and lane additions and shoulder paving. Additionally, communities can choose to use Tri-Party funds as their local match for larger, federally funded road projects (for most federally funded projects, 80 percent of the money comes from federal funds, 10 percent from RCOC and 10 percent from the local community).

RCOC launches new website; new features and navigation will help site visitors get info, share concerns

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has officially launched a new website that offers site visitors a wealth of information in a clean, easy to use format.

The site, which retains the RCOC Web address, www.rcocweb.org, is designed to allow visitors to easily find the information they are looking for through a user-friendly navigation design. Information and many of the functionalities from the previous site have been migrated to the new website and updated as well.

"The new site is intended to be visually appealing while remaining clean and simple to use," explained RCOC Board Chairman Ron Fowkes. "The website is one of the primary ways we communicate



The homepage of the new Road Commission website.

with our customers, and this new site will help ensure that this communication is as productive as possible for those customers. It contains the latest in interactive Web technology, and was designed with
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ROAD COMMISSION
for OAKLAND COUNTY

RCOC Managing Director Kolar urges opposition to SB 399

Road Commission for Oakland County Managing Director Dennis Kolar wrote the following piece to express why the agency opposes Senate Bill 399.

While Michigan road agencies have yet to see any new revenue from the road-funding package enacted late in 2015 by the Michigan Legislature, there are already forces at work in the Legislature that seem to want to use some of those funds to subsidize the telecommunications industry.



Dennis Kolar

One such effort is Senate Bill 399. This bill would further hamper road agencies' ability to maintain the roads.

The bill, which has not yet been taken up by the full Senate or the House, was introduced last year. It seeks to amend

state road laws to significantly reduce county road agencies' ability to charge adequate fees and collect adequate bonds from telecommunications companies that wish to install their service lines and other hardware in road rights of way.

In effect, this bill would force county road agencies, including the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), to subsidize the telecommunications industry with Michigan road funds. We oppose this bill for the following reasons, which were spelled out by the leaders of the County Road Association of Michigan, the Michigan Townships Association and the Michigan Association of Counties:

- As legal guardians of the road rights of way, county road agencies must ensure work performed in the rights of way is performed safely; does not damage the road infrastructure or sidewalks, driveways and other utility infrastructure; and meets engineering and road-agency standards, along with all other applicable local, state and federal requirements -- all

of which takes significant road agency staff time.

- County road agencies do not profit by issuing permits, but simply cover the costs of issuing those permits, inspecting the site and work and performing related tasks. When the project is completed, funds are reconciled with the permit holder.

- Senate Bill 399 limits the fee to \$300 per permit or \$1,000 per project. Such a one-size-fits-all fee does not account for the type of work planned, nor does it consider the risks a project may pose. The bill supplants engineering-based right of way management with a "cookie-cutter" approach that puts public resources and workers at risk.

- Senate Bill 399 limits a performance bond to \$20,000, regardless of potential risk and damage beyond that amount, and requires that bonds be returned within 60 days after a project is complete.

This bill is a move in the wrong direction for Michigan, and we strongly oppose it. I urge our legislators to do the same.

RCOC's brine program a featured topic at national APWA meeting

Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Highway Maintenance Department Director Darryl Heid was a featured speaker at the American Public Works Association (APWA) North American Snow Conference in Hartford

Connecticut on May 22, where he discussed RCOC's brine program.

The unique program involves RCOC pumping liquid brine (naturally occurring salt water) out of the ground at its own brine wells, and then using the material to combat

ice in the winter and dust on gravel roads in the summer. The program has saved the agency tens of thousands of dollars over the last couple of decades.



Darryl Heid

WEBSITE, CONT'D FROM FRONT

the needs of our customers in mind."

- Some of the features of the new site include:
- Large graphic icons on the home page to help visitors navigate to the most requested information such as road project details, traffic maps and forms to report road issues
 - The ability to sign up for and receive alerts about a variety of types of information when it is posted
 - The ability to sign up for emergency traffic alerts
 - An easier and more efficient search process
 - Drop-down menus that are designed to make site navigation easier
 - Google Translate feature allowing visitors to see the site in virtually any language they choose

"The last redesign of the website was done eight years ago," said RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "The old website was like an older bridge that cannot accommodate today's traffic needs. We understand the technology demands for immediate information, and that was a key reason for the redesign."

Chairman Fowkes added that the new site will continue to evolve. "The website will continually evolve and has the ability to keep up with changing technology. Our Web development company, CivicPlus, of Manhattan, Kansas, has designed many websites around the region, and our staff has been working with them over the past several months to present a website that can be quickly updated and the public can easily use."

Fowkes noted the biggest challenge when designing a website is the naviga-

tion architecture. "There is a great deal of information available on the site, but we could not put the vast majority of it on the home page," he explained. "That means we have to devise a navigation architecture that is intuitive enough that people can easily figure out where to find what they are looking for. I think the new site does a good job of that."

The site breaks content into six main categories: "About Us," "Residents," "Doing Business with RCOC," "Permits," "Job Postings," and "How Do I..." The "How Do I..." category helps site visitors locate information about everything from applying for a permit to submitting a pothole report, applying for Natural Beauty Road status or to Adopt a Road and much more.

The site also is mobile-device and tablet compatible and much more social-media compatible.

RCOC launches smart-phone app; motorists can get info, file reports, more via phone

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is launching an app that allows anyone to get road project information, file a report about a road concern, send RCOC a photo and much more from any mobile device.

The app will soon be available for free from the Google and Apple app stores. To find the app at one of the stores, simply search for "Road Commission for Oakland County."

"We're excited to be able to introduce this mobile-device option for our customers," stated RCOC Chairman Ron Fowkes. "We want to make it as easy as possible for residents, motorists and businesses to contact us and share information with us. While we monitor our road system fairly closely, we simply can't be everywhere at once, and the people using the system are valuable partners in this process. This app makes that partnership even stronger."

Also available on the app are: a link to the RCOC Real-Time Traffic Map (which shows real-time congestion level on state highways and many main county roads in the county), links to RCOC's Facebook and Twitter accounts, a link to RCOC's road projects and press releases list, the RCOC calendar of events and a link to sign up for e-mail notifications about various RCOC activities.



The RCOC mobile device app front page (left) and link page.

Troops say thanks for the care packages sent by Americans Thank our Troops

Members of the U.S. Army's 948th Forward Surgical Team (FST) sent a thank you note to the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) and other groups who participated in the Americans Thank our Troops (ATOT) program.

For the last five years, RCOC has joined forces with the Veterans Committee of the Oakland County Bar Association to participate in ATOT. RCOC Vice Chairman Eric Wilson, a Vietnam War veteran, is a member of the committee.

The 948th FST, which is the same unit portrayed in the TV series "MASH," provides trauma care to military members who are wounded in combat, as well as civilians from the local area who are injured.

Major Heather Posey of the team provided the following note:

Dear Americans Thank our Troops:

I would like to thank each of you on behalf of myself and the 948th FST, Camp Manion, Iraq. Your care packages have been very generous, and we share the wealth with the rest of the



The members of the Army's 948th Forward Surgical Team gathered to say thanks for the Americans Thank our Troops care packages.

camp when we receive more than we can use. It means a lot to us when people back home take the time, energy and money to ensure that we know of your support, generosity and appreciation for the military members who are deployed. Your care packages are also full of really great stuff. The chow here isn't always the best, so some supplementing is welcomed. Thanks so much!

Sincerely,

Maj. Heather Posey

Brochure boxes installed at 14 Mile/Orchard Lake

In an effort to help pedestrians understand how to use the pedestrian crosswalk beacons at the relatively new roundabout at the intersection of 14 Mile and Orchard Lake roads on the West Bloomfield Twp./Farmington Hills border, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) recently installed boxes with informational brochures.

The boxes are attached to signal poles at the intersections and contain brochures that explain how High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) beacons work. The HAWK is typically used at multi-lane roundabouts and mid-block pedestrian crossings of major roads.

A new form of pedestrian crosswalk signal, the HAWK is referred to as a "beacon" because it is only lit when it is activated by a pedestrian pushing the crosswalk button. The HAWK has a different configuration than traditional signals, with two red lights next to each other above one yellow light. There is no green light.

When no pedestrians are present, the

HAWK beacons remain unlit.

"As part of our ongoing efforts to educate the public about both roundabouts and HAWK beacons, we wanted to test the idea of placing informational brochures at the site of the HAWKs," explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "We hope the people actually using the beacons will find the information helpful."

If the brochure boxes prove popular, RCOC will consider other multi-lane roundabout locations.



One of the brochure boxes at the 14 Mile/Orchard Lake roundabout.

31001 Lahser Road
Beverly Hills, MI 48025

RCOC Spot Resurfacing program addressing some of worst pavement areas

For the second year, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Spot Resurfacing program is proving popular and effective at addressing some of the worst sections of pavement on county roads.

The program involves milling (or grinding off) the existing pavement in small, particularly bad sections of roads. Those small sections are then resurfaced.

The program, while certainly not the solution for all roads, is much cheaper than repaving a whole road and allows RCOC to focus on the very worst sections of road.

"This is a solution that works well on small sections of bad pavement in roads that are otherwise in moderately decent shape," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "It is a relatively inexpensive, quick fix for rough spots."

Kolar noted the Spot Resurfacing



RCOC's 2015 Maple Road Spot Resurfacing project in Bloomfield Township.

repairs are not likely to last as long as actually repaving a road would, but the process buys the Road Commission some time, until it can afford to resurface the road.

The process also reduces the cost of continually patching the section of road and allows patch crews to spend time on

other roads.

RCOC initiated the Spot Resurfacing program last year. In 2015, 119 locations received the Spot Resurfacing treatment, for a total of 18.16 lane miles (miles of one-lane of pavements) at a total cost of just over \$2.6 million

This year, RCOC expects to complete approximately 14.6 lane miles of spot resurfacing at approximately 100 locations at a total cost of approximately \$2.2 million.

"We are always looking for ways to cost-effectively improve the road system, and this is one of the tools in our toolbox. It allows us to stretch our limited dollars and address some of the worst road sections," Kolar noted.

RCOC posts new safety video on YouTube channel

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has posted a new short video on its YouTube channel (search "Road Commission for Oakland County" on YouTube) focusing on workzone safety.

In the one-minute, 20-second video, entitled "Safety Concerns," RCOC employees talk about the distracted drivers they have seen while working on or near the roads, and the dangers those drivers pose. The video was produced by Rachel Sweet, an RCOC intern and student at Lawrence Tech. University.

"The men and women who work on our roads are at the mercy of the drivers," stated



In the video, RCOC Construction Inspector Jim Persinger discusses the dangers of distracted drivers.

RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "As the employees in the video make clear, it's imperative that drivers are focused on the road when they are behind the wheel."

ROAD REPORT

Road Report is published quarterly by the Road Commission for Oakland County. Have a question or comment about Road Report? Call Senior Manager of Communications Craig Bryson at (248) 645-2000, ext. 2302.

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