

# Road Report

*A publication of the Road Commission for Oakland County for public officials serving Oakland County* [www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)

## Jamian elected chair; Fowkes named vice chair; LaLonde is new RCOC Board member

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board has a new chairman: At its Jan. 10 meeting, the Board named Greg Jamian to that position.

Board member Ron Fowkes was named the Board's vice chairman. Also, for the first time in eight years, RCOC has a new Board member: Andrea LaLonde of Clawson.

LaLonde is an employee of the Operating Engineers 324 of Michigan where she has worked for 11 years. She participated in her first RCOC Board meeting Jan. 10.

Jamian, a resident of Bloomfield Township, is a 10-year veteran of the RCOC Board. Fowkes, a resident of the Village of Milford, has been on the Board since 2011.

"I'm really excited to be here,"

LaLonde said of the Road Commission. "Being on the RCOC Board is an amazing opportunity to serve the residents of Oakland County. I look forward to learning from my fellow road commissioners and the RCOC staff."

RCOC Board members are appointed by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and serve for six-year terms. LaLonde was officially appointed by the county board on Jan. 9. She replaces Eric Wilson, who retired from the RCOC Board in



*RCOC Chairman Greg Jamian, left, Vice Chairman Ron Fowkes, center, and Commissioner Andrea LaLonde.*

December after 12 years of service.

LaLonde is a graduate of Kalamazoo College. She is the daughter of Timothy LaLonde, a 22-year member of the  
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## 2018 saw fewer fatalities on RCOC roads compared to past three years

The number of traffic fatalities on roads under the jurisdiction of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has trended downward over the past three years, including a nearly 20 percent decline from 2017 to 2018.

For calendar year 2018, there were 23 fatalities on RCOC roads. This is fewer fatalities than any of the previous three years and well below the average number of fatalities for the last 18 years. Of the 23 fatalities, eight were alcohol and/or drug-related.

The lowest number of fatalities in recent years was 2013 when 14 traffic-related deaths were reported. Additionally, the traffic-fatality rate in Oakland County has remained approximately half the statewide and national rates for several decades.

"Safety remains the top priority for RCOC," stated RCOC Chairman Greg

Jamian. "Throughout the years, the focus on safety has guided many RCOC decisions related to road project selection, design and maintenance," he added.

Jamian noted RCOC has consistently been on the cutting edge of traffic-safety innovations such as:

- Annual safety reviews of 50 intersections and road segments with the highest crash rates to determine what can be done to improve safety (including the use of customized software to analyze crash data).
- Modern roundabouts – RCOC has the highest concentration of roundabouts in Michigan. These circular intersections have been shown to dramatically reduce traffic fatalities and serious-injury accidents. No fatalities have occurred in RCOC's 25 roundabouts since the first one was built in 1999.

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## Road-funding formula isn't the problem: It's the amount of money going into the formula

Once again this year, Michigan legislators in Lansing have introduced bills intended to change the state's road-funding formula with the goal of bringing more dollars to the higher population areas of the state. However, those familiar with the existing formulas are again pointing out that the current formulas do a good job of accounting for population – there's just not enough money going into the formula.

"The reality is that it's easier to make a scapegoat out of the formula than it is to actually provide adequate road funding," explained Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "One of the primary factors determining how much road money is given to each county in the existing formula is the number of vehicles registered in that county – that's a very effective proxy for population."

In fact, Kolar noted that RCOC staff is able to calculate how much road funding each county would receive if population were substituted for vehicle registrations. "What we see is some of the large coun-



ties, like Macomb, would actually get less funding," Kolar said.

Kolar also noted that the recent legislative proposal that all fuel tax revenues collected in a county stay in that county is flawed as well. "There are several problems with this proposal," he noted. "Not the least of which is that all the large urban counties have always helped to support the more rural counties that don't have the population base to fully fund their road systems. Given the hundreds of thousands

of residents of the large urban counties who travel to the rural areas every year to vacation, this seems justified."

Additionally, Kolar noted that many rural counties would simply be unable to maintain their roads without funding from the larger counties. "If the larger counties did not contribute anything to the rural counties, some rural parts of the state would likely have to shut down their roads or simply stop plowing snow in the winter," he observed. "That is simply the reality in Michigan and, frankly, in most other states as well."

The real problem is not how the state's road-funding formula distributes money, but the fact that there is simply not enough money going into the formula. "For more than 50 years, Michigan has been among the bottom nine states in the nation in per capita state and local road funding," Kolar said. "The truth is that Michigan has not invested in its roads at the same rate as most other states. Pitting one county against another is not the solution. Adequately funding all of the roads is a much better answer for our state."

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## RCOC traffic whiz Chuck Keller named CRA Urban Engineer of the Year

Chuck Keller, the traffic engineer in the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Traffic-Safety Department, has been named the County Road Association of Michigan (CRA) Urban Engineer of the Year for 2019.

CRA is the umbrella organization that represents all 83 county road agencies in the state. Keller has been an RCOC employee for 32 years.

Known as "the enforcer," Keller is responsible for ensuring that the rules laid out in the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD) are properly applied on roads under RCOC's jurisdiction. The MMUTCD is the statewide rule book for all things traffic related.

In this role, Keller is responsible for everything from deciding when and where speed-limit signs should be placed to approving or denying requests for stop signs to setting speed limits on gravel roads – all done in accordance with the MMUTCD and state law.

"Chuck knows the MMUTCD inside out," observed RCOC Managing Director

Dennis Kolar. "There are very few people in the state with a more encyclopedic knowledge of traffic-related laws, rules and regulations. Chuck is a wealth of knowledge and a true asset to the Road Commission. He is very deserving of this award."

Keller started at the Road Commission in 1987 and worked in the Design and Construction divisions of the Engineering Department before moving to the Traffic-Safety Department.

Once in Traffic-Safety, Keller served as the traffic operations engineer for 15 years and field operations engineer in the Signal Systems Division for three years. Since 2007, he has been the traffic engineer.

Prior to joining RCOC, Keller worked



*RCOC Traffic Engineer Chuck Keller, second from left, with RCOC Board members, left to right, Ron Fowkes, Greg Jamian and Andrea LaLonde.*

as a civil engineering consultant and engineering lab technician consultant for General Motors. He is a graduate of Lawrence Technological University with a bachelor's degree in construction engineering. He is a registered professional engineer (PE) in Michigan.

# RCOC doubling down on roundabouts: Six more coming in 2019

With 25 modern roundabouts in operation at intersections across Oakland County, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) boasts the highest concentration of the circular intersections in the state – and it’s about to double down on that commitment.

In 2019 alone, RCOC expects to construct an additional six roundabouts, the most it has ever added in a single year. “The data speaks for itself,” stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. “Roundabouts increase the system’s traffic capacity without widening lanes while dramatically reducing serious injury crashes and virtually eliminating traffic fatalities.”

Kolar pointed out that in the 20 years since RCOC constructed its first roundabout, there have been no fatalities in a roundabout in the county. During that same time, there have been only a handful of serious injury crashes, and most of them involved motorcycles (a side-swipe crash that might be only a fender-bender for two cars can result in a serious injury when one of the parties is a motorcycle).

The managing director acknowledged that in a few cases, RCOC has seen a slight uptick in minor, non-injury crashes at some roundabouts, primarily the result of low-speed side swipes or rear-end collisions. “While we’re not pleased to see



*The RCOC roundabout at the intersection of 14 Mile and Orchard Lake in West Bloomfield Twp.*

even non-injury crashes, and we’re taking steps to try to reduce the number of those incidents, we also feel that as a trade off for serious-injury crashes or fatalities, that’s still a good deal.”

Roundabouts help to move traffic and reduce congestion by increasing the amount of traffic that can move through an intersection. “In urbanized areas, the traffic bottlenecks are the intersections,” Kolar said. “At signalized intersections, two directions of traffic are stopped at all times. With roundabouts, all directions are flowing constantly, and that results in more traffic moving through the intersection.”

He added that traffic engineers estimate that roundabouts increase traffic flow at intersections by 30 to 50 percent. That’s a significant increase without the

cost of widening the road, he explained.

The six roundabouts planned to be constructed in 2019 are:

- ▶ Baldwin Road at the Great Lakes Athletic Club, Orion Twp.
- ▶ Baldwin Road at Maybee Road, Orion Twp.
- ▶ Baldwin Road at Waldon Road, Orion Twp.
- ▶ Adams Road at Gunn Road, Oakland Twp.
- ▶ Maple Road at Middlebelt Road, West Bloomfield Twp.
- ▶ Carroll Lake Road at Cooley Lake Road, Commerce Twp./White Lake Twp. border



## RCOC now on Instagram

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has begun using Instagram as an additional platform to communicate with the public it serves.

“With more and more people receiving news and information from social media, it’s important that we have a presence on the most popular platforms,” RCOC Senior Communications Manager Craig Bryson noted. “While we have been on Facebook and Twitter for years, we know that Instagram reaches a slightly different demographic.”

RCOC Instagram posts include pictures showing the status of RCOC road projects or activities as well as agency press releases and traffic alerts.

To find RCOC’s Instagram account, go to Instagram and search for “Road Commission for Oakland County.” Those who do not subscribe to Instagram can visit the “Social Media” page on the RCOC website ([www.rcocweb.org/481/RCOC-Social-Media](http://www.rcocweb.org/481/RCOC-Social-Media) – under the “About Us” tab at the top of the homepage), where they can view sample posts from the various RCOC social media platforms.

## STATS — CONT’D FROM FRONT

- Wider white edge lines (widened from four inches to six inches to improve visibility and durability).
- Paved shoulders which help prevent “run-off” accidents when cars inadvertently swerve off the road – without paved shoulders it is far more likely the cars will lose control.
- Numerous technology innovations, such as:
  - Operating one of the largest systems of high-tech “adaptive” traffic signals in the nation (signals that detect the number of vehicles present in each direction and automatically adjust signal timing in real time to best meet the traffic needs at that moment),
  - Being among the first agencies to adapt LED bulbs in traffic signals,
  - Continued work with the Federal

- Highway Administration and the auto industry on “connected vehicles” that will allow cars to “talk” to road infrastructure, etc.
- Road-project safety audits, in which a cross-disciplinary RCOC team studies proposed projects to ensure all safety concerns are addressed.
  - Pavement rumble strips that alert motorists when they travel out of their lanes.
  - Detailed winter-maintenance guidelines that spell out how many snowplows/salt trucks should be used in every type of situation and when they should be deployed.
  - And much, much more.
- “For everything we do, we are continuously considering ways to improve safety. We take safety very seriously, and motorists can join the effort by eliminating driving distractions such as cell phones,” Jamian said.

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St. Clair County Road Commission, and grew up in Fort Gratiot Township in St. Clair County.

Prior to working at the Operating Engineers, LaLonde worked for Midwest Steel in Detroit for eight years.

Jamian has served on the Board since 2009. He is a former Oakland County commissioner and previously served on the Bloomfield Township Board of Trustees.

For more than 30 years, Jamian has been president and CEO of an integrated health-services corporation in Troy. He is a graduate of Oakland University and has served on numerous boards over the years.

Jamian previously served as the RCOC chairman in 2013 and 2014.

“I am pleased and honored to again serve as the chairman of the Road Commission,” Jamian said. “In this role, I am committed to ensuring the agency continues to provide the safest and most efficient road system possible in the most economical manner we can.”

Jamian also has been a strong advocate for RCOC’s involvement in transportation technology. “Among local road agencies,” Jamian said, “we are a national leader in terms of ‘smart’ roads and connected vehicles. My goal is that we not only meet the demands of today, but that we also are positioned to meet the demands of the future.”

Fowkes served on the Milford Village Council from 1999 through 2006 and was its president in 2003. He is continuing to serve as the RCOC representative on the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.

**RCOC to the rescue:  
Electrical crew puts out car fire**

It was Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) electrical division staffers Eric Oberts and Bob James to the rescue recently when a car burst into flames at the intersection of Telegraph Road and Dixie Highway in Waterford Twp.

Resident Brent Barger reports he was sitting at the intersection when the car in front of him erupted in flames, causing three female passengers to jump out. “Luckily, a Road Commission crew pulled up with a fire extinguisher and started putting it out,” Barger said.

“We try to help the community where we can,” noted RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar, “especially when it’s an emergency.”

**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](http://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. 2302.*

**Board of Road Commissioners:**

*Gregory C. Jamian, Chairman*

*Ronald J. Fowkes, Vice Chairman*

*Andrea LaLonde, Commissioner*

*Dennis G. Kolar, PE, Managing Director*

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

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[www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)**