

## WHAT IS RCOC?

The Road Commission for Oakland County oversees Michigan's largest county road system, with more than 2,700 miles of roads (including more than 750 miles of gravel roads). Only the state highway system is larger.

RCOC also maintains:

- ◆ Approximately 90 bridges,
- ◆ Approximately 1,500 traffic signals,
- ◆ Approximately 150,000 traffic signs and
- ◆ More than 230 miles of state highway.

## SAFETY FIRST

As a matter of policy, major road improvement projects are conducted by the Road Commission based on a safety ranking system. At RCOC "Safety First" is more than a motto.



## RCOC:

- ▶ Is separate from county general government and does not receive any revenue from property taxes
- ▶ Receives the majority of its funding from the state-collected gas tax & vehicle registration fee
- ▶ Has congested roads due to the tremendous growth in the county
- ▶ Receives no direct revenue from growth and development
- ▶ Pays approximately \$3 million to pave a mile of gravel road
- ▶ Pays approximately \$8 million to widen one mile of road from two lanes to five
- ▶ Is located in a state that has for years ranked in the bottom nine states in per capita road funding

**ROAD COMMISSION**  
for OAKLAND COUNTY  
31001 Lahser Road · Beverly Hills · MI 48025

## BOARD OF ROAD COMMISSIONERS

**RONALD J. FOWKES**

**ANDREA LALONDE**

**NANCY QUARLES**

**Dennis G. Kolar, PE**  
*Managing Director*

**Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE**  
*Deputy Managing Director  
County Highway Engineer*

## RCOC MISSION STATEMENT

RCOC strives to provide the public with leadership in:

- Safe and convenient roads
- Sound financial management
- Responsive and dependable service
- Respect for the environment
- Sensitivity to community concerns

## HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE ROAD COMMISSION?

### CALL OR WRITE:

DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES  
2420 PONTIAC LAKE ROAD  
WATERFORD, MI 48328  
(877) 858-4804

TDD: (248) 858-8005

OR, visit RCOC online at  
**[www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)**

**ROAD COMMISSION**  
for OAKLAND COUNTY

# GRAVEL ROADS



- ◆ Are they different?
- ◆ What about paving?
- ◆ How many miles?

## MAINTENANCE-INTENSIVE GRAVEL ROADS NEED CONSTANT ATTENTION

**FACT:** *More than 750 miles of Oakland's 2,700-plus miles of county roads are not paved, and many won't be for years.*

People call them “dirt,” but unpaved roads really are gravel (plus sand and clay).

These fragile roads can cause as much trouble for motorists as they do for the Road Commission. Drainage problems are common because many gravel roads evolved from trails or farm access lanes and were not designed by engineers.



### SUMMER MAINTENANCE

Summer means applying extra gravel, mowing for clear sight distance, ditching, cleaning culverts, grading and applying chloride. It can also mean dusty gravel roads.

For less dust and a better gravel road surface, RCOC crews spray calcium chloride brine (essentially salt water) approximately every four-to-six weeks during the summer through the agency's Dust Control Program.

Low-cost brine from the Road Commission's own wells has made the Dust Control Program self-supporting. To find out if your community pays for road chloriding (many do), call the RCOC Department of Customer Services at (877) 858-4804. In non-participating areas, residents can pay to have chloriding performed.

Grading smooths gravel roads. It also breaks up the chlorided surface and creates dust, so it's generally performed just before chloriding. A safety concern may mean grading sooner.



### WINTER MAINTENANCE

Gravel roads can be troublesome in winter. Frozen gravel surfaces cannot be graded, and snow and ice removal are difficult.

More gravel can be applied for safety. Sand is spread on curves and corners for traction (salt cannot be used — it soaks in and will not stay on the surface to melt ice). Snow plowing is performed on a priority basis similar to paved roads.

### GRAVEL ROAD PAVING

Paving solves many gravel-road problems, but lack of road funding frequently prevents paving. And, paving is more costly in Oakland County than in many other places.

The county's many lakes, streams and wetlands create soil problems that add to the price of paving, while higher property values drive up the price of necessary right of way. It now costs approximately \$3 million or more to pave one mile of a major or “mile-road-type” gravel road in Oakland County.

Although more people are moving to rural areas with gravel roads (increasing traffic and maintenance needs), those roads still serve fewer people than most paved roads. Without more funding, pothole patching, winter maintenance and safety improvements on higher-traffic paved roads will remain the priority. This means many gravel roads will remain unpaved.

This situation frustrates some ex-city dwellers. To them, “the country” has meant dust, ruts and being last for road service. They want roads paved (or maintained as if they were).

Others, however, oppose paving because they are concerned about increases in traffic speeds and volumes or the loss of trees.

Planners say gravel roads should be paved when traffic exceeds 500 cars per day (that is the point at which maintenance becomes more costly and less effective). Today, approximately 80 miles of Oakland County gravel roads carry more than 1,000 vehicles per day and should be paved today.

However, RCOC receives enough money each year to pave one mile of gravel road at an average cost of \$3 million per mile.

There are no gravel roads in newer subdivisions. For more than 30 years, developers have been required to pave subdivision streets in townships in Oakland County. Some have also paid to pave the roads leading to their developments.

Residents living in older subdivisions with gravel roads can petition RCOC to pave these roads through Special Assessment District (SAD) paving projects. Real estate developers have been just about the only other source of gravel-road paving in Oakland County.

