

LANSING LISTENED



REPORT OF THE 2025 RCOC STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

2025 RCOC Strategic Planning process: Lansing listened; Road improvements continue

During the 2025 Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Strategic Planning meetings, Managing Director Dennis Kolar, Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer Gary Piotrowicz and RCOC Director of Planning and Environmental Concerns Brad Knight emphasized the critical need for the state Legislature and the Governor to address Michigan's road-funding crisis before the roads began to again slide into disrepair due to inadequate funding.

And, after years of debating the issue, the Legislature and Governor came together in October and did just that, passing a 2026 budget that included an anticipated \$1.7 billion in new road funding. The action came just after RCOC's leadership completed the 2025 Strategic Planning meetings.

The Strategic Planning meetings involve RCOC leaders meeting individually with the leaders of nearly all cities, villages and townships in the county every other year. The meetings allow RCOC management to receive feedback from the communities about the services RCOC provides, discuss any ongoing issues, learn about anticipated new development, identify road needs in the communities and to share information about roads, road funding and the agency.

This report provides an overview of the key messages RCOC leadership shared with the communities during these meetings. Specific details of each meeting, including feedback provided by the community leaders, are included in a second report available on RCOC's website (rcocweb.org, then click on the "About Us" tab at the top of the homepage and select "Publications", then select "RCOC Strategic Planning Reports" and choose the 2025 report).

Though the new funding was not yet a reality during the meetings, it makes sense to provide a brief overview of the funding package here, since its need was an important topic during the meetings.

The new funding will allow the Road Commission to build on the progress it has made since the last road-funding package in 2015. The Road Commission was at risk of seeing the loss of the progress made since the 2015 package took effect in 2017 if the state had not provided this new infusion of funding.

Managing Director Kolar noted that Michigan – and RCOC – were at a critical point, and the Legislature came through.

The new funding package

The additional road funding is to grow from \$1.7 billion in 2026 to about \$2 billion by 2030, according to the County Road Association of Michigan (CRA). The Michigan House Fiscal Agency estimates that RCOC will get about \$46 million in additional funding in fiscal year 2026, or about a 35 percent increase in state funding. That number is expected to grow to about \$61 million in new funding in 2027.

The package removes the 6 percent sales tax from gas and diesel in Michigan, which has long been a point of contention, since it is a tax on fuel, but none of the revenue went to roads. The sales tax will then be replaced with a 20-cent increase in the gas and diesel taxes, that will generate \$1.1 billion annually for transportation, without changing the price of fuel for consumers.

The package will also eliminate the \$600 million state General Fund contribution to transportation that was established in the 2015 package and replace those dollars by redirecting \$688 million in corporate income tax revenues annually to transportation.

Finally, the package also applies a new 24 percent wholesale tax to marijuana, that is estimated to generate around \$420 million per year that will be directed to transportation, though this amount could vary, as the tax is being challenged in court, and the impact on marijuana sales of an additional tax is unknown.

And while RCOC has not yet put together a detailed plan of how it will spend the money (and the state has not yet provided specific details about the package), Kolar and Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer Piotrowicz indicate it will be directed towards items including: culvert replacements (especially those that are currently weight restricted, meaning heavy vehicles such as school buses and garbage trucks cannot use them), resurfacing paved roads (especially those that are not eligible for federal funds), intersection safety-improvement projects, some form of contribution to subdivision street repaving and replacing aging equipment.

"This is a big deal," Kolar said. "In my 40-plus years at RCOC, this is only the third time the state has increased road funding. While it is not enough to address the total needs on Michigan's roads, it will go a long way toward continuing to improve the road system."





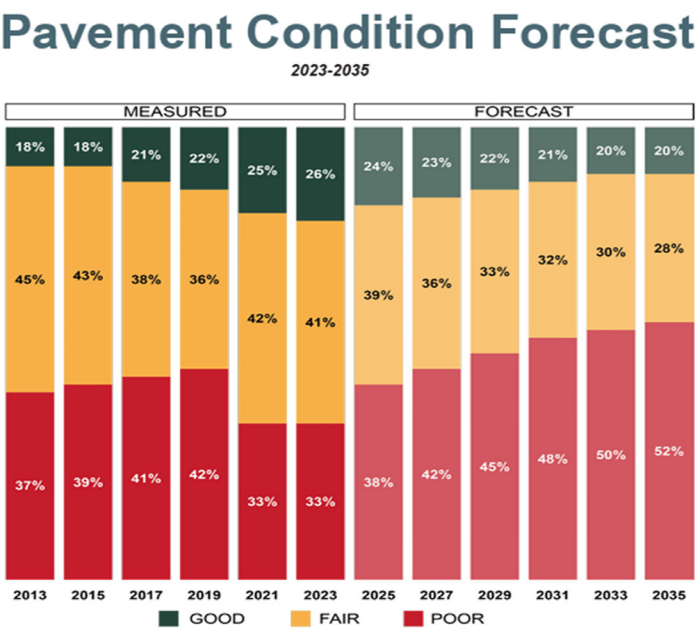
State and Local Expenditure Per Capita: Michigan's Ranking in the Nation							
Expenditures	1964	1974	1984	1992	2010	2017	2021
Health	5	8	9	12	13	15	18
Education	11	7	10	11	9	26	29
Welfare	31	5	3	7	32	31	31
Roads	43	44	42	49	50	45	38

Why was more funding needed?

The chart above shows how Michigan has compared to the other 49 states in per capita state and local spending on health, education, welfare and roads going back to 1964. As can be seen, Michigan has traditionally done a pretty decent job of funding health, education and welfare. Roads, however, have been another story.

Since at least 1964, and until the last state road-funding increase in 2017 (it was enacted in 2015, but did not begin to take effect until 2017), Michigan was among the bottom eight states in the nation in per capita state and local spending on roads. Fortunately, that number began to rise after the 2015 road-funding package, but by then Michigan was in a large hole, after more than 50 years of dramatically underfunding its roads.

What would have happened without additional funding?



As this chart above (provided by the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council's 2023 Roads and Bridges Annual Report) demonstrates, Michigan's

roads were forecast to steadily get worse after 2025 had there not been additional funding. That's because the additional funding resulting from the 2015 state road-funding package had been completely overtaken by inflation by 2025. In fact, many observers were predicting Michigan roads would fall off the "fiscal cliff" after 2025 without additional funding.

Fortunately, the Legislature heard this message and took action to prevent Michigan's roads from going over that cliff. Today, Michigan's road agencies are much more optimistic about the future of roads in the state.

Updates on RCOC issues

Troy garage restoration

In spring of 2022, a major watermain connection failed under the office of RCOC's Troy garage. The failure also damaged sanitary and storm sewers under the building. Since the building was also outdated and did not meet modern Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, RCOC management made the decision to demolish the office portion of the building and construct a new office structure in its place, connecting to the



existing garage building.

The new, improved building was completed in spring 2025, providing enhanced office and staff spaces.

Status of Oakland County discussion of taking over the Road Commission

In June of 2022, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution establishing a special committee to study the possibility of making the Road Commission part of Oakland County general government (it is currently an independent agency).

Michigan Public Act 2 of 2020 allows a County Board to transfer the powers, duties and functions of a road commission to the county by a vote of the County Board, providing that two public hearings are held on the matter.

The special committee established by the County Board included Board Chair David Woodward and Commissioners William Miller and Michael Spisz. The committee held 13 meetings between November of 2022 and May of 2024, but had not taken further action since that time, as of the publication of this report.

RCOC management believes there is a strong case for the Road Commission to remain independent. That case includes the facts that RCOC has a proven track record of strong financial management, has one of the best safety records for a county road agency in the state and that its current structure allows it to make decisions that are driven by safety and engineering concerns and not political interests. Additionally, RCOC has demonstrated that there would be no cost savings resulting from a consolidation with the County.

As an independent agency, RCOC has continued to record a traffic fatality rate on its roads that is less than half either the national or statewide rates. That is not a coincidence but is the result of decades of RCOC basing most project selection and design decisions on detailed crash data analysis, leading to far safer roads than most of the rest of the nation.

Changes to speed limit laws

Prior to the adoption of Michigan Public Act 33 of 2024, the Michigan State Police were responsible for setting speed limits on county roads with the involvement of the local county road agency. Speed limits were typically set using the 85th percentile speed method, which is a national standard mandated by state law.

The 85th percentile method recognizes that most drivers instinctively drive at a safe and comfortable

speed based on road conditions. This method has proven to minimize traffic conflicts and crashes. The method calls for rounding speed limits up to the nearest 5 miles per hour increment above the 85th percentile speed.

However, PA 33 of 2024 amended the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code to allow speed limits to be rounded up OR down to the nearest 5 mph increment of the 85th percentile. The new law states that speed limits may be set below the 85th percentile speed if an engineering and safety study demonstrates a situation with hazards to public safety that are not reflected in the 85th percentile speed, though speeds cannot be set below the 50th percentile speed.

Samsara

In recent years, RCOC has equipped more than 270 of its vehicles with “dual-facing” dashboard cameras that provide video footage looking forward over the hood and also of the driver for these vehicles. The software managing the cameras provides artificial intelligence (AI) monitoring of these cameras as well as providing vehicle-operations data, such as engine hours, malfunction-code reports, vehicle-location data, etc.

The software, provided by the Samsara company, provides video footage of RCOC vehicles as well as live footage that can be viewed by management logged into the system. The video footage has been used to document road conditions at particular times and to exonerate RCOC staff from false claims. The live feed provides RCOC staff with real-time imagery of road conditions countywide, which is beneficial in making winter-maintenance decisions.

The system has many additional safety benefits, including monitoring whether or not drivers are using seatbelts, identifying when drivers disobey traffic laws and regulations, use cell phones while driving, etc. It also notifies RCOC management immediately when a crash occurs.

Scan this QR code for a link to sample videos, showing vehicles cutting off or running into RCOC trucks and graders from the Samsara cameras.



RCOC bridge bundling

In an effort to improve efficiency and save money, in 2025, RCOC “bundled” three bridge replacement projects into a single contract. The bridges were similar in scope and located in close proximity, with all located in Lyon Twp.

This effort reduced the number of preliminary engineering (design) contracts from three to one, and provided increased efficiency in completing surveying, geotechnical work, site reviews, etc., because contractors charged with those tasks could perform similar tasks at all three sites with one visit.

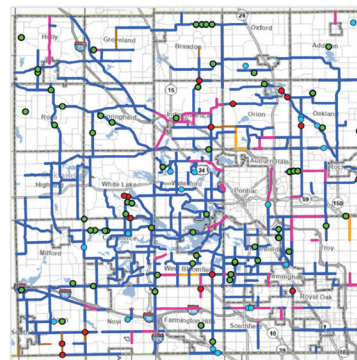
Additionally, the process resulted in a single bid process and prime contractor for all three projects. Because of the proximity of the bridges, there was also a single detour route that served all three locations.

RCOC estimates the bridge bundling process saved the agency \$300,000 to \$500,000 per bridge. As a result, another bridge bundling project is planned for 2026.

RCOC past construction

The map below shows all road and bridge projects completed by RCOC between 2016 and 2024.

As can be seen, the projects were distributed across the county and included a mix of fixes, intended to both improve road and bridge conditions as well as safety.



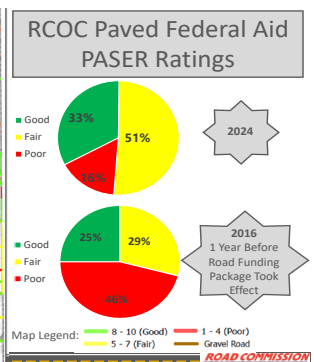
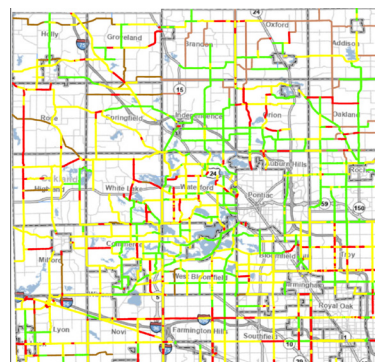
RCOC Past Construction Projects (2016-2024)

Legend			
	Project Type	Total # of Projects	Total Miles (Centerline)
●	Intersection/Roundabout	18	—
●	Bridge	27	—
●	Culvert	76	—
—	Pave Gravel	12	13.5
—	Preservation Overlay	264	533.9
—	3R	57	84.9
—	Widening	9	10.4

Road Conditions

This map shows the condition of RCOC’s paved, federal-aid-eligible roads (roads on which federal funds can be spent) as of 2024. As the pie graph shows, 84 percent of these roads were in good or fair condition as of 2024. That number grew in 2025.

Compare that to 2016 (the other pie graph), when only 54 percent of the same roads were in good or fair condition. The improvement was the direct result of the



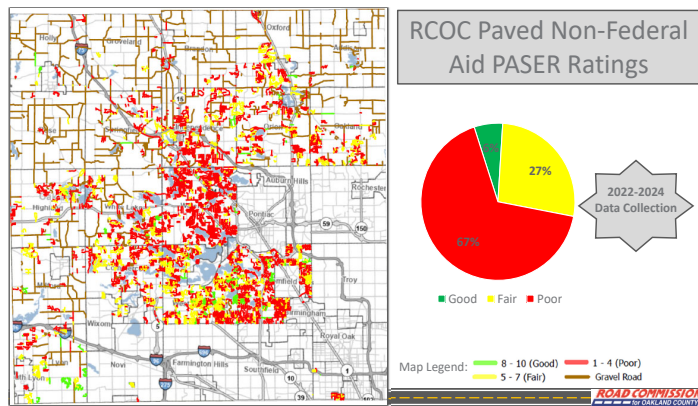
ROAD IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUE...



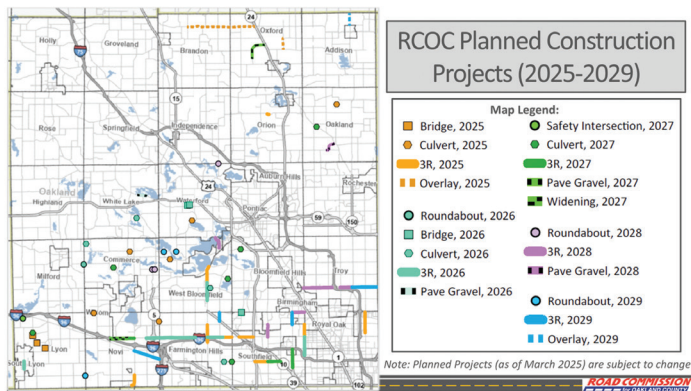
2015 state road-funding increase.

Fortunately, those numbers will continue to get better thanks to the road-funding increase enacted by the state Legislature and Governor in October 2025.

Unfortunately, the situation is not quite as good for RCOC's paved, non-federal-aid eligible roads, of which only 33 percent were in good or fair condition during the last rating, which occurred between 2022 and 2024, as the map below reveals.



So, what road improvements does RCOC plan for the future? This map below shows projects planned through 2029.



Maximizing resources

RCOC continues to maximize its resources by seeking additional funding opportunities, including:

Grants applied for in FY 2025

- **Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Implementation Grant.** RCOC is seeking this federal grant to fund safety projects identified in its Safety Action Plan.

Grants that have been or will be applied for use in 2026 through 2028:

- **Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) – Stage 2.** RCOC is seeking this federal countywide grant to

implement cutting-edge traffic-signal retiming technology that holds the promise of reducing congestion and improving road safety.

- **Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS):** Bridge and culvert replacement projects.
- **Congressional Community Project Fund (CPF):** Bridge and culvert replacement projects.
- **State House Enhancement Grants (also known as Legislatively Directed Spending):** Roundabouts, preservation overlays and culvert replacements projects.
- **State Local Safety Program:** Safety intersection project.
- **State Local Bridge Program:** Rehabilitation and replacement of multiple bridges.

Recognition for outstanding projects

RCOC continues to be a leader among its peer agencies, regularly being recognized by professional organizations for the way it approaches road improvements.

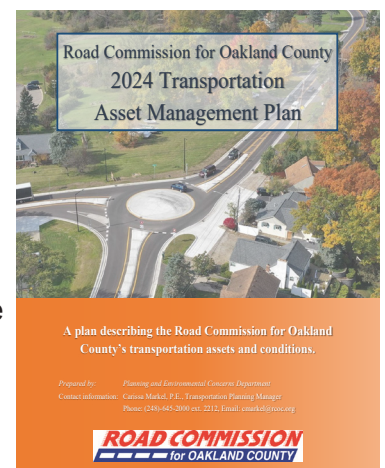
For example, RCOC received the American Public Works Association (APWA) Michigan Chapter 2025 Public Works Project of the Year Award for projects in the \$5 million to \$25 million category for its Waldon Road gravel-road-paving project, Clintonville Rd. to Baldwin Rd., which was completed in 2023 and 2024.

This project involved paving two miles of gravel road, construction of a roundabout at the Waldon/Clintonville intersection, realignment of a 90-degree turn, drainage improvements, replacement of three large culverts and more. Click on this QR code to see a time lapse video of the construction of the Waldon/Clintonville roundabout:



Transportation Asset Management Plan

Several years ago, the state Legislature mandated that all county road agencies must submit a transportation asset management plan (TAMP) to the state every three years. The plan provides an inventory of all the agency's assets (roads, bridges, culverts and traffic signals) and their current and desired conditions.



The identified gap between the current condition of the assets and the desired condition of the assets is the need on the RCOC system. RCOC submitted its most recent asset management plan to the state in 2024.

The 2024 RCOC Asset Management Plan concludes that RCOC would need nearly \$150 million per year in additional funding to improve and maintain its roads to the desired condition. The new state road-funding package will help move RCOC toward this goal but will not allow the agency to fully reach that level.

The future: Road-usage charge (AKA mileage-based user fee)

Most road-funding experts agree that the fuel tax is an outmoded way to pay for roads. Fuel taxes – when taxes on both gas and diesel are considered – are Michigan’s largest source of road funding.

The fuel taxes are considered outmoded because as internal-combustion-engine vehicles become more fuel efficient and as electric or hybrid vehicles grow to make up a larger portion of the nation’s vehicle fleet, fuel-tax revenues will continue to decline (as they have been doing for years).

Most transportation-funding experts agree the long-term, sustainable solution to this problem is to find a way to generate revenue for roads that is unrelated to the type of propulsion a vehicle uses, such as the road-user charge (RUC), also known as a mileage-based user fee (MBUF), which would charge a flat fee per mile traveled.

While many other states have been studying this alternative method of funding roads for years, the Michigan Legislature recently set aside \$7.8 million to conduct its own study. Additionally, the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) was authorized in the last



federal transportation bill, to spend \$50 million over five years to conduct a national RUC pilot program.

RCOC supports both the state and federal studies and pilot programs to move the RUC/MBUF conversation forward. However, some questions must be addressed before such a system could be implemented, such as how would a vehicle’s mileage be tracked? What would the cost per mile be? Stay tuned as the state study and the federal test and pilot program progress.

The latest in drone technology

While RCOC has been using drones for a number of years, not long ago, the agency purchased a new drone with light-detecting and ranging (LIDAR) technology.

LIDAR uses laser scanning to create three-dimensional “point clouds” (a collection of data points in a three-dimensional coordinate system representing the surface of objects or terrain) allowing for precise height and volume measurements and a variety of other field applications.

Here are some of the applications for which RCOC uses its LIDAR-equipped drone:

- Before, during and after road-construction aerial project photos and videos
- Three-dimensional modeling
- Measurement of material stockpiles (such as recycled-asphalt piles)
- Road/bridge project inspections
- Environmental surveys
- Storm-water management



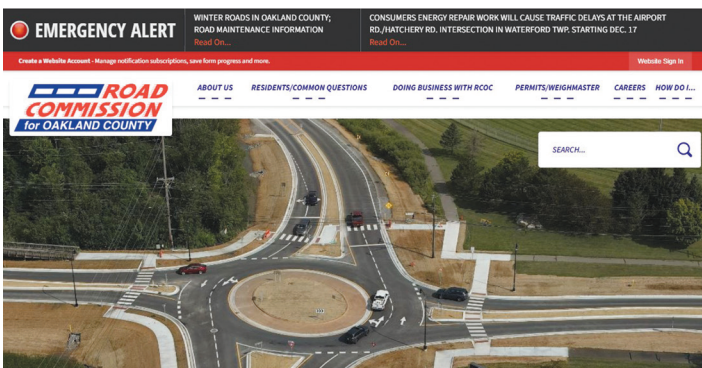
Full Strategic Planning Report Available Online

This report summarizes the key messages shared by RCOC leaders with the leadership of Oakland County communities during the 2025 RCOC Strategic Planning meetings. The second part of the Strategic Planning process involves receiving input and feedback from the county’s communities.

That data is used by RCOC to plan and focus its road maintenance and construction operations and to help determine the best allocation of resources.

The input provided by each community as part of this process makes up the second volume of the 2025 RCOC Strategic Planning Report, which is available on the RCOC website (www.rcocweb.org). The document can be found in the “Publications” section of the website, in the “RCOC Strategic Planning Reports” subsection. The direct link to the document is: <http://www.rcocweb.org/DocumentCenter/View/13775/2025-STRATEGIC-PLANNING>

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