

Road Report

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

www.rcocweb.org

Data confirms this winter has been harder than past years

While there have not been many large snowstorms this winter, the frequent smaller snowfalls combined with prolonged periods of arctic temperatures have resulted in a winter that has challenged road maintenance crews far more than any recent past years – and is costing road agencies significantly more.

“For some people, the fact that we haven’t had storms that drop a foot of snow in one day, suggests that we have not had a hard winter,” noted Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Managing Director Dennis Kolar. “However, the numbers, and the experiences of our plow drivers, mechanics and other employees tell a far different story.”

Data collected by RCOC documents far more salt and brine use this year, far more worker overtime and far more hours devoted to salting and plowing in general than in recent past years. As of March 4 this year, RCOC had used 75,923 tons of salt, which is well above the average for the last five winters of 63,000 tons. For the same time

period in previous years (through March 4), the numbers were:

- 2025: 66,000 tons
- 2024: 47,806 tons
- 2023: 56,454 tons

The same is true for liquid brine, the naturally occurring salt water that RCOC sprays on all salt as it is spread by the salt trucks and also uses on some occasions to pre-treat roads and bridges before snow falls and to break up hard pack on the roads. As of March 4, RCOC had used 811,677 gallons of brine. For the same time period in previous years (through March 4), the numbers were:

- 2025: 507,960 gallons
- 2024: 354,955 gallons
- 2023: 577,871 gallons

Overtime hours for winter operations staff tell the same story. As of Jan. 31 this year, RCOC had recorded 22,545 hours of overtime for its snowplow/salt truck drivers and supporting staff. At the same point in



Salt trucks lined up to get refilled with salt at RCOC's Waterford garage.

previous years, the numbers were:

- 2025: 15,573 hours
- 2024: 14,211 hours
- 2023: 12,244 hours

Looking at total hours of winter operations staff devoted to salting and plowing confirms this trend. By the end of January this year, RCOC drivers had recorded 46,612 total hours (regular and overtime) **CONT'D ON PAGE 2 — SEE WINTER**

McPherson re-elected RCOC chairman

The Board of Road Commissioners for the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) re-elected Commissioner Eric McPherson as chair at its regular meeting on Thursday, Jan. 8.

James Esshaki was also re-elected as vice chair of the Board during the meeting.

While the Road Commission is an independent unit of government, and not part of Oakland County's general government, the three RCOC Board members are appointed by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

The third Board member is Tylene Henry. The RCOC Board sets policy for the Road Commission, approves the



agency's budget and appoints the agency's managing director. Board members serve for six-year, staggered terms, with appointments every two years.

McPherson is a life-long resident of Hazel Park and a business agent for the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) Local 80, where he

has been a member for 39 years. A graduate of Catholic Central High School, he has been a business representative for the organization for 19 years, is a trustee of the Local's Insurance Fund, is a building trades journeyman, has completed continuing education classes in upgrading labor, is a

CONT'D ON PAGE 2 — SEE CHAIR

What's Inside

RCOC publishes Strategic Planning Report2

Gravel roads are more challenging in spring . . .3

What road projects are planned for 2026?4

How to contact RCOC . . .4

ROAD COMMISSION
for OAKLAND COUNTY

Road Commission publishes biennial Strategic Planning report

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has published the 2025 edition of its Strategic Planning Report, which summarizes the biennial meetings that agency leaders conduct individually with the leadership of virtually every community in the county.

The report summarizes the messages shared by RCOC with communities as well as the feedback provided by each community during the meetings, which took place in 2025.

A critical tool for RCOC's planning, the Strategic Planning process helps to shape RCOC's future use of resources, project selection and road-maintenance strategies. Agency leadership has been conducting the Strategic Planning process with county communities since 1985.

"These meetings help to ensure we maintain strong relationships with our customers while also allowing us to share critical information with the leaders of every community," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "They also allow us to check the pulse of



The cover of the new Strategic Planning report.

development or redevelopment in the communities that may impact traffic and gain valuable feedback on the services we provide."

Once completed, the Strategic

Planning report is shared with the leaders of all communities in the county as well as with all other elected officials serving the county. It is also available on the RCOC website (www.rcocweb.org – select the "About Us" tab at the top of the homepage, then click "Publications" and scroll to the "Strategic Planning Reports" heading).

The direct link to the report is: <https://www.rcocweb.org/DocumentCenter/View/13801/2025-Strategic-Planning-Report>. The direct link to volume II of the report (the detailed report of the responses of each community) is: <http://www.rcocweb.org/DocumentCenter/View/13775/2025-STRATEGIC=PLANNING>.

CHAIR — CONT'D FROM FRONT
trustee of the Michigan Maritime Trades Port Council and is chair of the Oakland County Building Authority.

A resident of Bloomfield Hills and lifelong Oakland County resident, Esshaki is a real estate developer and owns and manages commercial real estate. Additionally, he owns and operates a hospitality company with establishments throughout Oakland County.

Esshaki is a past member of the Birmingham Parking Advisory Committee and the Berkley Downtown Development Authority. He currently serves on the Oakland County Building Authority and is the director of the Oakland County Michigan Fallen Heroes Memorial.

WINTER — CONT'D FROM FRONT
devoted to salting and plowing. For the same time period in previous years, the numbers were:

- 2025: 37,421 hours
- 2024: 28,532 hours
- 2023: 19,589 hours

All those additional hours and extra salt and brine come with a cost.

"Not only has this winter been challenging for motorists and for our drivers," Managing Director Kolar noted, "it will

He is the proud father of two sons.

Henry was recently appointed to the board and is a lifelong resident of Beverly Hills. She holds a master's degree in business administration and owns Ujima Services LLC, a consulting firm focused on helping organizations develop growth strategies and foster culturally rich, economically thriving communities. Henry also serves as an adjunct professor at Wayne County Community College and is the proud mother of a son who attends Adrian College.

The Board of Road Commissioners typically meets on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 1:30 p.m. at the Road Commission administrative offices at 31001 Lahser Road in Beverly Hills.

also end up costing us significantly more than recent past winters. And those are dollars spent with no road improvements to show for them."

He added, though, it is too early to say what the total additional cost of winter operations this year will be compared to past years. However, Kolar estimated if the remainder of the winter/early spring is just average, the additional cost is likely to exceed \$2 million.

Kolar also praised the drivers,



McPherson, Henry meet with Coulter at State of County

Road Commission Chair Eric McPherson, left, and Road Commissioner Tylene Henry met with County Executive Dave Coulter during Coulter's State of the County address on March 5 at Oakland University's Oakland Center in Rochester Hills.

mechanics, garage supervisors and support staff who have worked many long days and nights to keep the roads safe. "Many of our drivers, mechanics and others did not have a single weekend off during January and worked countless extended shifts – some up to 16 hours, battling the weather. Not only is that physically grueling, it is also time they are not at home with their families. I cannot thank them enough for their commitment to keeping our roads safe."

RCOC reminds drivers that gravel roads become challenging in the spring

With the arrival of spring, as the temperatures rise and the ground thaws, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) advises drivers that unpaved gravel roads can become challenging to drive.

Weather over the past few weeks, ranging from snow, rain, frigid temperatures and warmer conditions, is causing rough conditions on many of the 750 miles of gravel roads under RCOC's jurisdiction. In many places, the ground remains partially frozen below the road surface, meaning there is nowhere for water from the rain and melting snow to go.

Until the ground completely thaws, the water simply cannot be absorbed, which is causing soft and wet/muddy conditions on many gravel roads. Fully grading gravel roads under these conditions can be detrimental, so crews are adding material and spot grading where possible.

Culverts under driveways to businesses and homes should also be cleared of

leaves and debris to ensure that storm water will properly flow through ditches and reduce the potential for road flooding. It is important for motorists to be on the lookout for water over the road regardless of whether they are driving on a paved or gravel road.

For more information or to report an issue, contact the Road Commission for Oakland County at (877)



An example of a muddy Oakland County gravel road in the spring.

858-4804, via the website at www.rcocweb.org or through email at dcsmail@rcoc.org.

Spring thaw also means potholes on paved roads — but fewer than in recent past years

While the spring thaw is certainly tough on gravel roads, it also tough on paved roads, particularly those in poor condition.

In fact, it is the frequent swings in temperature, from below freezing to above freezing, that is the perfect incubator for potholes. And we've already seen plenty of these so far this spring.

However, what many people don't realize is that there are actually far fewer potholes today than there were in recent past years. That's because the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC)

has put a new surface on nearly 700 miles of roads since the last state road funding increase began to be phased-in in 2017.

The roads that received those new surfaces were the roads that were in the worst shape, and, therefore, had the most potholes. The roads seeing the most potholes today are the ones that have not yet been resurfaced.

Given the new state road-funding package passed by the state Legislature and Governor in 2025, many of those roads will be resurfaced in the coming years.



Road agencies still waiting for details of 2025 state road-funding package

While Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) officials remain pleased that the Governor and state Legislature approved a road-funding package in October of 2025, they are still awaiting the details of when the agency will receive the new funds.

So far, the Michigan Department of Transportation and the State Treasury Department, the two state departments responsible for collecting (Treasury) and distributing (MDOT) the new funds, continue to work on estimations of when the dollars will be available.

Fortunately, the state's estimates of how much new revenue RCOC is expected to

receive remain fairly consistent, at about \$46 million in 2026 and \$71 million in 2027. However, the state has also informed road agencies that they will lose some revenue in 2026, as a result of the road-funding legislation's switch of revenue from state personal income tax to state corporate income tax.

Because the corporate income tax contribution to roads is not expected to begin until 2027, but the personal income has already been shifted away from roads, RCOC expects to lose \$24 million this year, for a net increase of approximately \$22 million.

The state expects to know more later in the year about when the new revenues will be paid to RCOC.

Work Zone Awareness Week is coming

National Work Zone Awareness Week – a week set aside to draw attention to road-safety concerns in road construction zones – is April 20 through 24 this year.

The week was established by the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) with support from the US Dept. of Transportation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and others.

RCOC expects to hold a press conference to recognize the Work Zone Awareness Week. Stay tuned for details.

RCOC's 2026 Road Improvement Program

Below are the road projects the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) expects to construct in 2026. Not included are simple resurfacing projects, known as preservation-overlay projects.

Repair, Rehabilitate & Resurface (repair road base & add 3 to 4 inches of new asphalt)

- 12 Mile Road, Orchard Lake to Autumn Ridge in Farmington Hills \$ 3.4 million
- 12 Mile Road, Novi to Farmington in Novi and Farmington Hills \$10.8 million
- Greenfield Road, Lincoln to 12 Mile in Southfield, Berkley and Oak Park \$ 4.2 million
- Novi Road, 8 Mile-9 Mile (2-year project started in '25) in Novi /Northville \$ 6.8 million
- Pontiac Trail, 9 Mile to CSX railroad tracks in South Lyon & Lyon Twp. \$11.6 million

Intersection Improvements

- Wixom/Duck Lake/Sleeth (construct roundabout), Milford & Commerce twps \$ 2.2 million

Pave Gravel

- Pontiac Lake Road, Margie to Kingston in White Lake Twp. \$ 5.8 million
(start 2026, finish 2027)

Bridge Replacements

- Deerhill Street over Deer Lake Creek in Independence Twp. \$ 1.5million
- Edgeorge Street over the Clinton River in Waterford Twp.
- Emburke Street over the Clinton River in Waterford Twp. \$ 2.9 million
(Edgeorge and Emburke bridges will be bid as one project)

Bridge Rehabilitations

- 14 Mile Road over the Rouge River in Franklin and Bloomfield Twp.
- Franklin Road over the Rouge River in Franklin and Bloomfield Twp.
- Inkster Rd. over Rouge River in Bloomfield Twp. & West Bloomfield Twp. \$ 3.2 million
(all three bid as one project)

Culverts

- 10 Mile Road over the Rouge River in Farmington Hills \$ 1.5 million
- Avonlea Street over the Huron River in White Lake Twp. \$ 1.8 million
- Heatherwood Street over the Huron River in Commerce Twp. \$ 850,000
- Walnut Lake Road over the Rouge River in West Bloomfield Twp. \$ 1.7 million
(includes simple resurfacing of Walnut Lake between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt)
- Bonnie Briar St. over Pontiac Lake Canal in White Lake Twp. \$ 100,000

Total annual construction costs for projects to be constructed in 2026: \$ 58.35 million

Contacting RCOC

If your constituents need information about a road project or want to report a pothole, traffic-signal concern 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**

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. 2202.*

Board of Road Commissioners:

Eric McPherson, Chair

James Esshaki, Vice Chair

Tylene L. Henry, Commissioner

Dennis G. Kolar, PE, Managing Director

Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE,

Deputy Managing Director/

County Highway Engineer