

Road Report

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

www.rcocweb.org

RCOC publishes biennial Strategic Planning Report

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has published the 2023 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 2023.

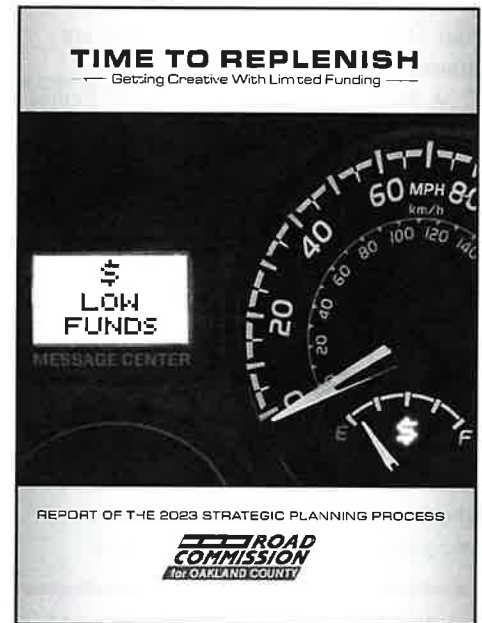
The reports are a critical tool for RCOC's planning, helping to shape future use of resources, project selection and road-maintenance strategies. Agency leadership has been conducting the Strategic Planning process with county communities since 1985.

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

Once completed, the 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: www.rcocweb.org/DocumentCenter/View/12209/2023-Strategic-Planning-Report. The direct link to volume II of the report (the detailed report of the responses of each community) is: www.rcocweb.org/DocumentCenter/View/12201/2023-Strategic-Planning-Report-Volume-II-Community-Details.



The cover of the 2023 Strategic Planning Report reflects the message conveyed in the document.

LaLonde remains Road Commission Board chair, McPherson named vice chair

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board of Road Commissioners, at its regular meeting Thursday, Dec. 14, re-elected Andrea LaLonde as Board chair and selected Eric McPherson as vice chair for one-year terms for 2024.

"I am honored to continue to serve the residents of Oakland County in this capacity," LaLonde stated. "I am proud of all the work the Road Commission accomplished in the last year, and I look forward to continuing that forward progress in 2024."

LaLonde was first elected RCOC chair in 2021. McPherson, in his second year on the Board, also expressed his desire to continue to work to improve the county's roads. "This past year, this agency made great progress in improving the roads in



The RCOC Board, L-R: Andrea LaLonde, Eric McPherson and Nancy Quarles.

Oakland County," he stated. "We are absolutely committed to keeping that momentum going for the coming year."

The RCOC Board consists of three members, with road commissioners appointed for staggered six-year terms by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. The third member is Nancy Quarles.

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Coalition pushing state for increased road funding

A group of businesses, governmental agencies and policy organizations across the state has formed a relatively new coalition to pursue increased road funding for Michigan.

The organization is known as Fix MI State. So far, the organization has done a deep dive on how Michigan currently funds its roads, what the state's road-funding shortfall is and potential ways to remedy the situation. It concluded that Michigan's roads and bridges are among the nation's worst.

A March 2023 study by Public Sector Consultants in Lansing concluded that Michigan needs between \$2.1 and \$3.9 billion per year in additional road funding to bring the roads across the state up to the standards set by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The coalition has identified how other states that do a better job of funding their roads pay for the higher level of service (a variety of taxes and fees or state general fund contributions). It is now working to educate state lawmakers about the scope of the problem and encouraging them to take action to



resolve the issues.

The organization notes that despite the fact that Michigan voters continue to rank the condition of the state's roads as a top concern, the state Legislature has not yet truly addressed the issue.

RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar praised the efforts of the coalition. "Ever since the 2015 state road-funding package was enacted," Kolar said, "everyone involved, from then Governor Snyder to current Governor Whitmer and many in the Legislature at the time, said the 2015 package was just a starting point and that additional funding was needed. Hopefully

this coalition will help to spur the Legislature to take action on the issue."

Kolar recalled that the 2015 package, which began generating increased road funding in 2017 and then was phased in over six years, is generating about \$1.2 billion in additional road funding annually. At the time it was enacted, now nine years ago, nearly all experts noted the state then needed at least \$3 billion in additional funding. That number has only grown since then.

"We are at a critical point," Kolar explained. "We have been able to make significant improvements to the road system with the money from the 2015 package. However, starting next year, in 2025, inflation will have eaten up all the buying power of the new funds, and, without additional state funds, our road system will again begin to deteriorate.

"That means we risk wasting the improvements we have seen in the last eight years. Michigan cannot afford to move backwards in terms of our roads. We have trailed most of the rest of the nation for decades in the level of investment in our roads, and we need to catch up, not fall further behind.

Video of pickup cutting in front of RCOC plow truck makes local, national media

For years, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has warned motorists to give snowplows the room they need to make the roads safe for the rest of us. On Feb. 15, an example of why that is such salient advice was captured on an RCOC snowplow dashcam.

The event occurred when RCOC driver Tim Mersino was salting on I-75 during that day's snowfall. Suddenly, a silver pickup truck came up very close on Mersino's left side.

In a flash, the pickup driver lost control

and careened in front of Mersino, bouncing off the freeway guardrail and right back into Mersino's path. There was nothing Mersino could do, as his truck bashed into the pickup truck.

Fortunately, both Mersino and the pickup driver were uninjured. The pickup driver was able to drive away, though with a few more large dents in his truck than he had previously.

Mersino was able to finish his salt run, and there was minimal damage to the RCOC truck.



Because this was such a perfect example of why motorists should give Road Commission trucks a wide berth, RCOC communications staff immediately sent the video to media with just that message. It was widely picked up, including on national TV news and the Weather Channel as well by local media.

CHAIR — CONT'D FROM FRONT

RCOC is a separate unit of government and is not funded by the County Board of Commissioners. Rather, RCOC receives the bulk of its funding from the state in the form of fuel-tax and vehicle-registration-fee revenues.

Chair LaLonde is a resident of Clawson. She is an employee of Pangea in Rochester Hills, where she is executive coordination manager, and is a graduate of Kalamazoo College. She joined the RCOC

Board in January 2019.

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 38 years. He is a trustee of the Local's Insurance Fund, a trustee of the Michigan Maritime Trades Port Council, chair of the Oakland County Building Authority, a building trades journeyman and has completed continu-

ing education classes in upgrading labor. He is a graduate of Catholic Central High School.

Quarles has a PhD in public administration and public affairs from Western Michigan University. She served in the Michigan House of Representatives from 1996 to 2002 and on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners from 1995 to 1996 and again from 2011 to 2020. She is a resident of Novi and a faculty member at Central Michigan University.

RCOC's 2024 Road Improvement Program

Spring is just around the corner. And that means road-construction season will be here soon as well.

For 2024, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has a robust program of nearly \$70 million worth of projects planned.

Below is the list of major road construction projects the Road Commission expects to conduct in 2024. The costs listed are the anticipated contractor payment amounts and do not include additional costs such as preliminary engineering, construction engineering or right of way acquisition.

Reconstruct (complete road reconstruction)

- Brown, Giddings and Silver Bell roads, Jamm Road to M-24 in Orion Twp. \$ 15 million
- Dequindre Road, Hamlin to 24 Mile on the Shelby Twp./Rochester Hills border (project conducted by the Great Lakes Water Authority as part of its ongoing water main replacement project). GLWA is paying the majority of the cost. \$ 2 million
- County Center Drive from Telegraph to east of Hospital Drive in Pontiac \$ 1.8 million

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

- Southfield Road, 11 Mile to 12 Mile in Lathrup Village \$ 5.3 million
- 12 Mile Road, Northwestern Highway to Telegraph Road in Southfield \$ 3.8 million
- Walton Boulevard, Adams to Livernois in Rochester Hills \$ 5.5 million

Concrete Slab Replacement (remove and replace concrete slabs in poor condition)

- 10 Mile Road, Evergreen to Greenfield in Southfield \$ 5.9 million

Safety Intersection Improvement

- Baldwin Road at Clarkston Road in Orion Twp. (roundabout construction) \$ 3.9 million

Bridges

- Avon Road over the Clinton River in Rochester Hills (preventive maintenance) \$ 220,000
- Livernois Road over the Clinton River in Rochester Hills (preventative maintenance) \$ 220,000
- Pontiac Lake Road over the Clinton River in Waterford Twp. (bridge replacement) \$ 3.6 million
- Farr Road over the Huron River in Commerce Twp. (bridge replacement) \$ 1.7 million
- 11 Mile Road over the Novi-Lyon Drain in Lyon Twp. (bridge replacement) \$ 1.7 million
- Parkdale Road over the Stoney Creek in Rochester (preventive maintenance) \$ 220,000
- Novi Road over the CSX railroad in Novi (preventive maintenance) \$ 220,000
- Grand River Ave. over Kent Lake in Lyon Twp. (preventive maintenance) \$ 220,000

Culverts

- Indianwood Road over Lake Orion in Orion Twp. (replacement) \$ 2.4 million
- Eastways Road over a tributary of the Rouge River in Bloomfield Hills (replacement) \$ 600,000
- Long Lake Road over a tributary of the Rouge River in Bloomfield Hills (replacement) \$ 600,000
- Cedar Shores Road over the Cedar Lake Canal in White Lake Twp. (culvert lining) \$ 250,000
- South Commerce Road over tributary of the Huron River in Commerce Twp. (replace) \$ 850,000
- Old Dominion Road over tributary of the Rouge River in West Bloomfield Twp. (liner) \$ 400,000

Gravel Road Paving

- Waldon Road, Clintonville to Baldwin in Independence & Orion twps. (continuation of project begun in 2023 – total project cost is \$13.2 million) \$ 7.5 million

Projects carried over from 2023

- Middlebelt Road over the Shiawassee Drain in Farmington Hills (culvert replacement) \$ 500,000
- Grand River Ave., Napier to Wixom in Wixom, major resurfacing (includes extending center left-turn lane); started in 2023, will be finished in 2024 \$ 5.3 million

Total annual contributions for projects to be constructed in 2024:

\$ 69.7 million

Note: This list does not include the Road Commission's Preservation Overlay Program projects, which have not yet been finalized for the year. Preservation overlay projects are simple resurfacing projects involving limited milling of the existing surface followed by the application of approximately two inches of new asphalt. The projects are simple and relatively quick, and cost approximately \$320,000 per mile.

ROAD COMMISSION for OAKLAND COUNTY

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A truck being loaded with salt in anticipation of the start of the storm.

January storm response cost nearly \$2.7 million

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) response to the snow-storm that blasted Oakland County with up to 10 inches of snow and sub-zero temperatures between Jan. 12 and 16 cost nearly \$2.7 million.

In part that was the result of the amount of snow that fell, but, also, was because of some additional challenges that accompanied the storm. The storm started with temperatures in the 30s and the initial precipitation oscillating between rain and snow. This ensured the roads were covered with slush.

Then, as the sun went down on Jan. 12, the temperatures plummeted to the single digits, turning the slush into hardpack. At the same time, the snowfall increased, dumping 6 to 10 inches of snow on the county.

Overnight on Friday, Jan. 12, with temperatures hovering around 1 degree, the wind picked up significantly. The result was that those roads that were plowed were quickly re-covered with snow, blown onto the road by the gusting wind, with temperatures that prevented salt from working.

At that point, the most crews could do was blade the snow off which, in many cases, left a layer of hardpack. The howling winds quickly turned this hardpack into ice. There was virtually nothing that could be done about the ice overnight.

On Saturday morning, as the sun came up and temperatures rose slightly, crews resumed salting and made progress throughout the day, though the salt was working much more slowly than normal due to the temperatures, with highs of about 10-12 degrees. Zero-degree temperatures again Saturday night, combined with a dusting of snow Sunday and Monday mornings, only compounded the problems.

"Despite the challenging weather – we haven't seen a storm like this one since December of 2010, our crews responded appropriately," noted RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "They worked grueling shifts and provided the best service possible given the weather and the fact that our aging trucks were breaking down more frequently due to the harsh conditions."

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.

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