

Road Report

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

www.rcocweb.org

RCOC Board cancels contract for new admin building

At its special meeting on June 23, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board voted to cancel the contract with Frank Rewold and Sons to build a new Road Commission administration building on the agency's Waterford Twp. campus. The Board also opted not to move ahead with the previously discussed purchase of the Oakland County Executive Office Building (EOB).

At the last RCOC Board meeting, on June 12, Hubbel, Roth and Clark (HRC) architect Jane Graham, had presented the Board with an analysis of the EOB that concluded it would have cost close to \$60 million to renovate the EOB to meet the specifications of the new RCOC administration building, compared to the \$43 million price to build the new building.

At the June 23 meeting, Graham noted that the County had just recently provided drawings from the County's



The architect's rendering of the new RCOC administrative building.

2006 renovation of the EOB, which revealed the building is likely to need more hazardous materials remediation than previously thought, and that it would cost approximately \$1.5 million to connect the building to the public water system.

She noted the building is currently connected to the water system for the County complex, but this would not be allowed when the County sells the building.

"Fiscally, the new building is not the right thing to do right now," Board Vice Chair James Esshaki said when making his motion to cancel the new building contract. "We see challenging times going forward."

Managing Director Dennis Kolar noted there is never an ideal time to build a new building, but the Road Commission had saved non-gas-tax dollars for years for the building to avoid going into debt or taking dollars away from road work. "We need a new building," he said, "and the best location is our Waterford site. It makes the most sense to have everybody at one location."

It was not clear following the meeting how much cancelling the Rewold contract would cost the Road Commission or whether RCOC would consider other vacant office buildings for its administrative offices in the future, as Esshaki suggested during the meeting.

Quarles resigns from RCOC Board

After four and half years on the Road Commission for Oakland County Board of Road Commissioners, Nancy Quarles has resigned from the position.

Quarles was appointed to the Board in January of 2021. She resigned on May 22, citing her appointment by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to the state's Tax Commission. The Commission supervises the administration of property tax laws in Michigan and is responsible for the education and certification of assessing officers.

"We appreciate Nancy's contributions to the Road Commission and wish her the best in her new role," stated RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar.



Nancy Quarles

"Nancy, with her extensive knowledge of legislative procedure and public administration, was always a source of knowledge and a voice of reason on our Board. She will be missed."

RCOC Board members are appointed by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and serve for six year terms, though the Road Commission is an independent agency, not part of County general government and not funded by the County.

Prior to her appointment to the Road Commission Board, Quarles served on both the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and in the Michigan House of Representatives. She served in the state

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ROAD COMMISSION
for OAKLAND COUNTY

Road Commission seeking partners to test electric trucks for road maintenance work

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is continuing to pursue partnerships with electric truck manufacturers to determine if there is a role for such vehicles in a road-maintenance fleet.

The agency learned in April that it was not selected to receive a state grant that would have funded two electric trucks. The grant would have made RCOC the first county road agency in the state to deploy electric trucks.

The trucks were to be supplied by Oak Park-based EV truck manufacturer Bollinger Motors and would have been used by the RCOC Highway Maintenance Department.



An example of a Bollinger truck. The two RCOC would have used would have been outfitted differently.

"This was to be a test to see how well electric trucks meet our needs," explained Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "We're disappointed that we did not receive this

grant, but we are looking for other opportunities." The trucks would not have been used to plow snow, but for a variety of other tasks.

The grant application was coordinated by the RCOC Planning and Environmental Concerns Department, while RCOC Fleet Manager Steve Guerra worked closely with Bollinger Motors on the process.

The grant would have been through the state's 2025 One-Time Mobility Fund.

"We're interested in partnering with other EV companies that are in or looking to get into the heavy truck market," Kolar noted.

RCOC's Troy maintenance garage staff move into new office space

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has completed the reconstruction of the office portion of its Troy Highway Maintenance garage, located on Stevenson Highway.

The reconstruction was necessary after a water line break under the floor of the previous office portion of the building damaged the building's structure integrity. Additionally, the previous office portion, built in the 1960s, was outdated and did not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The new building provides much more efficient and comfortable office space, restrooms, locker rooms and staff lunchroom. The Troy garage serves the communities in the southeast part of Oakland



Above left, the exterior of the new office portion of the Troy garage. At right is the new lunchroom area.

County, including Troy, Royal Oak, Hazel Park, Madison Heights, part of Rochester Hills, part of Rochester, Pleasant Ridge,



Huntington Woods, Oak Park, Royal Oak Township, Ferndale, Berkley and Clawson.

RCOC construction season is underway:

17.5 miles of new paved surfaces, bridge and culvert replacements etc.

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is well underway with its 2025 road construction program, including improvements ranging from major resurfacing projects to bridge replacements to culvert replacements to bridge preventative maintenance jobs.

In all, RCOC will put a new surface on approximately 17.5 miles of paved roads, replace three bridges, perform preventive maintenance on another seven bridges and replace or repair 10 culverts.

The total cost for all the improvements is approximately \$50 million.

"This is a robust road construction

program," noted RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "Of course, the challenge of road construction is that it affects many drivers, homeowners and businesses. While we try to minimize the impact on the community as much as possible, often, there is simply no way to conduct a major road or bridge project without disrupting traffic, residents and businesses, and we thank the community for its patience as we work to improve the road system."

A full list of RCOC road projects can be found on the RCOC website — www.rcocweb.org (click on the "Road Projects" icon on the home page).

Roads fun fact

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) maintains approximately 1,500 traffic signals across Oakland County.

QUARLES — CONT'D FROM FRONT House from 1996 to 2002 and on the County Board of Commissioners from 1995 to 1996 and again from 2011 to 2020.

She holds a PhD in public administration and public affairs from Western Michigan University, a master's degree from Central Michigan University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Detroit.

As of *Road Report* press time, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners had not yet appointed a replacement for Quarles.

Attacks on Public Act 51 are misguided; problem is level of road funding

By Dennis Kolar, PE

Managing Director, Road Commission for Oakland County

Recently, there have been several public statements suggesting that the problem with Michigan's road funding is related to the law that governs the distribution of state-collected road funds: Public Act 51. This is simply wrong and is a worn out argument made by those who are opposed to increasing road funding in the state.

This argument was made recently in a Crain's Detroit Business editorial. The editorial asserted the problem with Michigan's roads is Public Act 51, and not the abundantly well documented fact that Michigan has grossly underfunded its roads for decades compared to most other states, and especially compared to our peer Great Lakes states.

The erroneous editorial was based on a recent Citizens Research Council (CRC) report on road funding. For decades, the CRC was a strong partner in advocating for additional road funding for the state. Recently, though, the organization seems to have mysteriously forgotten the history of road funding in the state for the last 25 years.

Let's take a look at Act 51 for a moment. It was originally enacted in 1951. However, it has been revised numerous times since then to adapt to modern times.

The act has a tough job: It must determine a fair way to disperse the state's road funding among all the competing eli-

gible agencies in the state. These include: the Michigan Department of Transportation, the 83 county road agencies, the more than 500 cities and villages and the numerous public transit agencies across the state (among others).

I believe the criteria the state Legislature has placed in the Act over the last 75 years does a good job of fairly distributing woefully insufficient resources among these many and varied competing needs. Is it perfect? Of course not.

But I will guarantee you that there will never be a formula, tasked with this challenge, that 100 percent of the recipients will think is completely fair. To scrap the current formula and start over, as CRC suggests, is incredibly politically naïve, and would initiate a Lansing brawl the likes of which we have not before seen. Nor do I have any confidence that the Legislature could have any hope of coming up with a formula that works any better, or that it could even hope to create a workable formula in less than a decade.

Rather, I argue that the existing formula is actually doing a good job of fairly distributing the available funds. Focusing on the formula, though, is simply a way to draw the public's attention away from the real problem. There is simply not enough money going into the formula.

Recent governors and Legislators have repeatedly spearheaded studies of the adequacy of road funding in Michigan, going back to Governor Engler, and including

Governors Granholm and Snyder and the Legislatures that served during their terms. In each case, they were determined to prove that the problem was really inefficient road agencies or wasteful bureaucracies.

However, in every single case, the objective studies documented, again and again, that Michigan simply does not spend enough on its roads, and typically no where near as much as its neighboring states.

Ohio is great example. It is a state with a similarly sized road system. And yet for the period between 1995 and 2017, Ohio spent about \$1 billion more per year on its roads. Ohio did not have a better road-funding formula, it did not use better materials than Michigan, its engineers did not have some secret road design that eluded Michigan engineers. It simply spent more money on its roads than Michigan.

That means it resurfaced more roads more often than Michigan. This is not rocket science. It is road construction and maintenance.

We in Michigan know how to build and maintain roads as well as anyone in the nation. Give us the adequate resources to do so, and we will give you a road system that remains largely in good shape the majority of the time.

It's time we stop trying to take the public's eye off the real problem by making diversionary arguments, such as flawed criticisms of Act 51, and address the real problem: Adequately fund Michigan roads.

RCOC saves time, money by bundling three similar bridges into one contract

Traditionally, a bridge replacement project would be designed, bid and constructed as a standalone project. However, Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) engineers recently realized they had an opportunity to save money and time by combining three similar bridge-replacement projects into a single "bridge bundling" project.

The three bridges are similar in design, cross the same body of water, are within close proximity and all had a similar time horizon for replacement. "It made sense," explained RCOC Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer Gary Piotrowicz. "We recognized there were cost savings and efficiencies to be had by bidding the three bridges as a single project."

The bridges in question include the Spaulding Road, 12 Mile Road and

Martindale Road bridges over the Novi-Lyon Drain in Lyon Township.

All three bridges had been approved for funding from the state's Local Bridge Program, one in 2025 and the other two in 2026. Consequently, RCOC asked MDOT to move the funding for the Martindale and Spaulding bridges from 2026 to 2025, so they could be bundled.

Helping in the design process, each of the replacement bridges will be a precast concrete box span, two at 23 feet long and the third at 27 feet.

The efficiencies accomplished through the bundling process include:

- A single preliminary-engineering contract.



- A single MDOT construction contract.
- A simplified process for consultants (survey, geotechnical engineering and site review).
- Combined meetings

for all three bridges (with EGLE, utility companies, contractors, etc.).

- A single detour route for all three bridge closures.

The bundling also saved money. The construction contract for the three bridges came in 40 percent below what the projects likely would have cost individually.

RCOC saved approximately \$50,000 by bundling the consulting services required for the bridges. It appears the project will save \$300,000 to \$500,000 per bridge.

ROAD COMMISSION **for OAKLAND COUNTY**

**31001 Lahser Road
Beverly Hills, MI 48025**

RCOC Board meetings time changed to 1:30 p.m.

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board of Road Commissioners has changed the time of its twice-monthly board meetings.

Previously, the Board met at 9 a.m. Thursday mornings, typically the second and fourth Thursday of every month (though in some months, it is the first and third Thursday).

Starting with the June 12 meeting, the Board meetings start at 1:30 p.m. The

change was made to accommodate Board member schedules.

The meetings take place at RCOC's administrative offices at 31001 Lahser Road in Beverly Hills. A full Board meeting schedule can be found on the RCOC website, www.rcocweb.org (see the calendar on the site home page).

Board meeting agendas are posted in the "Agenda Center" on the website. RCOC Board meetings are open to the public.

The beat goes on:

No new developments yet on road funding in Lansing

Though there remains widespread agreement that Michigan needs increased road funding, there remain differences between Democrats and Republicans in Lansing on how to accomplish the increase.

"Unfortunately, the two parties have not yet found the common ground needed," Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Managing Director Dennis Kolar noted of discussions of road funding at the

state capitol. "The Republicans want to increase road funding without increasing any taxes, and the Democrats believe some tax increases are needed to back fill the potential hole in the state budget resulting from redirecting \$3 billion per year to roads."

Kolar encourages legislators to continue conversations on the topic. "I suspect there will be a bit of compromise on both sides," he said. "I think we're getting closer."

RCOC Strategic Planning meetings underway

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Strategic Planning meetings are now underway.

For the biennial Strategic Planning process, top RCOC administrators, planners and engineers meet with officials of virtually every city, village and township in Oakland County. The Road Commission has conducted the Strategic Planning process every other year since 1985 to ensure the community officials play an active role in setting Road

Commission strategy for coming years.

"These meetings provide a clear understanding of the needs and priorities for all Oakland County communities," RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar noted. "They reflect our philosophy of open communication with our customers."

The Strategic Planning meetings are expected to be completed in August. Once they are completed, RCOC will compile a report summarizing the information gathered at the meetings.

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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