



COUNTY ROAD ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

417 SEYMOUR - P.O. BOX 12067 - LANSING, MI 48901

TELEPHONE 517.482.1189 - FAX 517.482.1253

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, March 16, 2010
Contact: Monica Ware, Public Relations Specialist
E-mail: mware@localroads.net

COUNTY ROAD ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS

LANSING, Mich. - Today, the County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM) announced awards presented at their Annual Highway Conference. CRAM presented awards for Best Practices, Merit, Distinguished Service, and the CRAMmy Awards recognizing excellence in Public Relations.

Best Practice Award

Best Practice Awards are presented to road commissions for developing programs to make their operations more efficient and cost-effective. The 2009 Best Practice Award was presented to the Huron County Road Commission for their collaborative efforts to meet the needs of the community while preserving the county road network.

Forced with the challenge of accommodating 100' long loads as trucks carried in components of 78 turbines to wind farms, HCRC developed creative solutions to mitigate damages to the road system.

"The road commission used common sense and innovation to face an unprecedented challenge," Association Director, John Niemela said. "Intersections and culverts were modified, language barriers overcome, and the project was completed on schedule.

In order to mitigate damages caused by the heavy loads, two separate bonds were required. A \$25,000 renewable bond was used for road repair and maintenance along the routes. The routes were inspected daily with damages billed against the bond. The road commission will hold a separate \$100,000 bond for five years to cover any additional damages related to the project.

"As the Governor's Transportation Funding Task Force noted, *efficiency has become a standard operating procedure at agencies across the state*," Niemela said. The effort of the Huron County Road Commission is another impressive example."

(MORE)

CRAMmy Awards for Public Relations

The CRAMmy Awards were designed to share successful communication and public relations techniques among the 83 county road agencies. They are presented annually to recognize the importance of providing road-related information in unique and memorable ways.

“We had eleven great submissions this year,” Niemela said. “It is obvious road commissions have prioritized communicating with the public and operating in an open and transparent manner- concepts that should be embraced at all levels of government.”

The following counties were recognized with CRAMmy Awards:

- **Huron County Road Commission-** received a CRAMmy for efforts to educate the public on the need to renew their county-wide road millage. Huron County residents supported the millage renewal by a 75 percent margin.
- **Oceana County Road Commission-** received a CRAMmy for developing a PowerPoint presentation explaining their winter service operations. A newsletter summary was distributed to target audiences and a press release sent to communicate what they could and couldn't do, the time it takes in relation to requests for assistance, and improve working relationships with other governmental agencies. The education resulted in fewer angry calls and greatly improved inter-agency cooperation.
- **Road Commission for Oakland County-** received a CRAMmy for efforts to educate local officials and opinion leaders on the serious nature of the funding crisis. RCOC created a six-page brochure that spells out the funding situation facing Oakland County roads. The crisp, clear format resulted in something that had not happen in the past- people not only read the document, they requested additional copies.
- **Van Buren County Road Commission-** received two CRAMmy Awards. The first was for their efforts to communicate with county residents using social media. The road commission uses Facebook to update residents on the status of projects and crews. More than 400 people now follow the road commission's activities on Facebook. They received a second CRAMmy for their publication, *Transportation Partners*, designed to educate local and state officials on the duties of the road commission, and the townships' role in establishing and maintaining a safe and efficient road system.

(MORE)

Distinguished Service Awards

The Distinguished Service Award is presented to those who have dedicated their time and service to the advancement of the county road system. **Ron Wohlford, Wexford County Road Commission Finance Director**, and **Jerry Byrne, Director of Maintenance and Local Construction for the Kent County Road Commission** were recognized for their key role in the negotiation of the three most recent State Trunkline Maintenance Contracts.

“Sixty-five counties are under contract with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to maintain the state trunkline,” Niemela said. “Wohlford and Byrne have worked diligently to ensure a fair deal for contract counties that provides the best possible level of service to Michigan residents with the revenues available. This task has become much more difficult in recent years as costs of salt, fuel and other materials have skyrocketed while revenues continue to decline.”

Merit Awards

Merit Awards recognize the volunteer efforts of CRAM members who dedicate considerable time and effort to provide educational opportunities for the membership. The following individuals received Merit Awards:

- **Robert Peterson, Director of Engineering, Ingham County Road Commission** was recognized for his leadership as chair of the CRAM Engineering Committee;
- **Brian Wendling, Managing Director of the Saginaw County Road Commission** was recognized for his leadership as chair of the 2009 Superintendent’s Seminar; and
- **Michele Zaverucha, County Highway Engineer, Tuscola County Road Commission** was recognized for her leadership role in organizing the 2009 Engineers’ Workshop.

“The volunteer efforts of these leaders are essential to the educational mission of our Association,” Niemela said. “They deserve our heartfelt thanks for their service to our state.”

The County Road Association of Michigan represents the interests of Michigan’s 83 county road agencies that collectively manage more than 75 percent of all roads in Michigan. For more information on Michigan’s county road commissions, please visit our Web site at www.micountyroads.org.