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FROM THE GARAGE TO WASHINGTON: Chippewa County Road Commission snowplow troubles spark federal legislation

LANSING, MI – As severe snowstorms slammed Michigan's Upper Peninsula last December, some of the **Chippewa County Road Commission**'s (CCRC) newest and most expensive snowplows were sitting idle in the mechanics' bays. For CCRC manager **Rob Laitinen**, the situation had reached a boiling point.

During one severe storm, eight of CCRC's 70 plow trucks were out of service, including six sidelined by problems with their diesel emissions systems. When an emissions fault is encountered, even newer trucks can begin losing power, or "de-rating," eventually reducing their speed to just 5%.

"Basically, the truck can just idle on the shoulder," Laitinen said. "That's all it can do."

Ironically, some of CCRC's oldest plow trucks have proven more reliable during winter storms, including a 1945 Oshkosh snowblower that Laitinen describes as "remarkable."

Fully frustrated by untimely, frequent de-rating, Laitinen took his concerns beyond CCRC. In February, he wrote to the US Environmental Protection Agency and the White House and sent a copy to the office of US Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Watersmeet).

In May, Bergman introduced the Protecting Lifesaving Operations during Winter Storms (PLOW Storms) Act, which would provide an exemption from certain federal emissions requirements for qualifying snowplows and other emergency vehicles – similar to California's working plow truck exemption. CCRC and the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan submitted letters supporting the legislation, and county road agencies across Michigan have adopted resolutions in support of the effort.

Learn more about CCRC's snowplow challenges and the push for a federal solution in the fall issue of Crossroads, the quarterly magazine of the County Road Association of Michigan, available digitally or for download at micountyroads.org/*Crossroads*.

The 83 members of the County Road Association of Michigan represent the unified voice for a safe and efficient county transportation infrastructure system in Michigan, including appropriate stewardship of the

public's right-of-way in rural and urban Michigan. Collectively, Michigan's county road agencies manage 75% of all roads in the state, including 90,500 miles of roads and 5,868 bridges. County road agencies also maintain the state's highway system in 63 counties. Michigan has the nation's fourth-largest local road system.

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