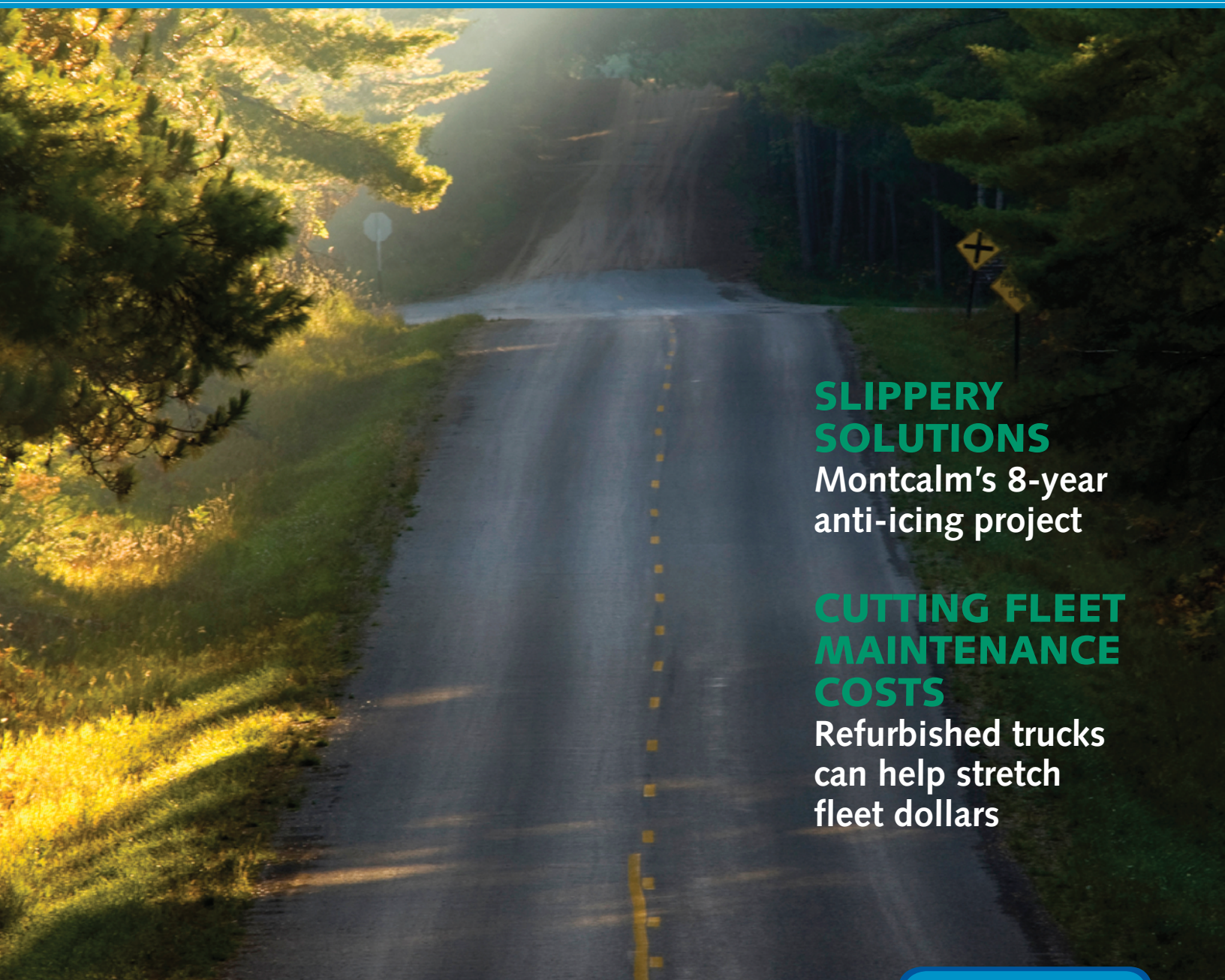


Crossroads

The Quarterly Journal of the **County Road Association of Michigan**

Volume 1 | Number 1

Fall 2015



SLIPPERY SOLUTIONS

Montcalm's 8-year anti-icing project

CUTTING FLEET MAINTENANCE COSTS

Refurbished trucks can help stretch fleet dollars



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Legislative Profile: Sen. Tom Casperson
- Member Profile: Dickinson County





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CROSSROADS

EVENT Calendar

Nov. 6 8 - 3 p.m.

CRA PR Workshop

This year's PR Workshop takes place in the middle of the lower mitten, the Doherty Hotel in Clare. Don't miss this opportunity to learn how to make the web work for your county.

For additional information on CRA Events, visit micountyroads.org

Dec. 8 8 - 11:30 a.m.

Law Symposium

The first-ever Law Symposium is set for Tuesday, December 8th. Lawyers for road agencies will discuss important cases and trends, including how to enforce road damage. Put on by the CRA Legal Issues Forum.

Dec. 8 Noon - 4 p.m.

Road Funding 101

This half-day session will cover the basics on Michigan road revenues, the MTF and formula, and Act 51 reporting. Highly-demanded by CRA members – whether it's a refresh or the first time you've learned it. A product of the CRA Education Task Force.

Crossroads

Crossroads is the quarterly publication of the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan. The 83 county members of CRA represent the unified, credible and effective voice for a safe and efficient local road system in Michigan.

The Association, headquartered three blocks north of the State Capitol, is dedicated to helping members promote and maintain a safe, efficient and local road system in rural and urban Michigan.

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→ President's Corner

Welcome to the new CRA *Crossroads* magazine! I hope you enjoy this new format and find that it provides much more than the old newsletter did.

As I said in my last article, there have been and will be many changes with CRA and this is just another example of such improvements. CRA staff has been working hard to deliver new and improved products that will make our jobs easier and make access to valuable information quicker.

Next time you see any of the CRA staff, please give them a big pat on the back!

Discussion continues on how to fund roads. Please make contact with your legislators and let them know how important it is to get this done as soon as possible.

Another construction season will be over very soon with not enough gained. It would be great if we could see increased revenues start before the end of the year so we can begin to plan projects that will have an immediate impact on our road conditions.

As I look at this year's PASER data on Antrim County's Federal Aid eligible system, I see that our deterioration trend is quickly accelerating. We are falling further behind at a faster rate than ever before. New revenues cannot come soon enough.

But of course, you all knew that and we have seen it coming for decades.

There are many other projects going that CRA and road agencies are working on. One of those includes gravel road rating. Currently, LTAP is conducting a pilot gravel road rating program involving a few county road agencies. I see great benefits of using this rating system that the folks at MTU and the TAMC have developed.



I am slowly making the rounds to most council meetings and hope to see you there. It has been very beneficial for me to see what the issues are in different areas of the state. And please don't hesitate to call me about anything.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Burt R. Thompson".

Burt R. Thompson, P.E.
CRA President
Engineer-Manager of
Antrim County Road Commission

Next Publication

The winter issue of *Crossroads* will feature a review of 2015 projects and the new technologies and innovations used during this construction season. Submit your ideas to **Monica Ware** in the CRA office today at **517.482.1189 x417** or by email, **mware@localroads.net**.

Editor's Note



Welcome to the County Road Association of Michigan's new *Crossroads* magazine, a quarterly journal developed to promote efficient and effective road administration and maintenance practices and provide a forum for the sharing of best practices.

The name is both a throwback to where we've been and a portrayal of the

strides we are making as an Association: to be more influential and effective for our members. While CRA newsletters of the past served their purpose, *Crossroads* lets us dig deep into issues facing county road agencies.

Regular features have been designed with road-related themes to provide case studies and in-depth information to the diverse staff of county road agencies and our partner organizations.

From "Bridging the Gaps" – a regular feature focusing on finance and human resources topics – and "AskMDOT" and other partner profiles, to "Innovation Alley" which looks at out-of-the-box road agency ideas, *Crossroads* offers something for everyone!

Our first issue focuses on best practices in winter operations, one of the largest components of county road agency budgets. Keeping roads safe and passable during the winter is crucial to keeping Michigan's economy going strong and ensuring a high quality of life for its residents.

The process of producing a magazine has been intense and we have been fortunate to work with a top-notch local firm and a wonderful designer on this project. Thanks so much Kathy, Nate and John for the long hours and dedication.

We also would like to thank our advertisers who, without seeing a first issue, trusted us to deliver an extraordinary product that they were willing to associate their company with and support financially.

Thanks to the tremendous support from our Associate Members, this magazine is self-supporting, even with our first issue. Please take a moment to thank them.

We look forward to hearing your feedback and ideas for future stories.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Monica Ackerman Ware".

Monica Ackerman Ware, APR

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Member Profile: DICKINSON COUNTY

With three pilot programs, two million-dollar road projects and multiple road paving partnerships – Michigan’s “newest” county has a lot going on!

JUST THE

Facts:

Dickinson County Road Commission

Office HQ: Iron Mountain

Staff: 29 full time, 5.5 other

No. of commissioners: 5 (appt.)

Miles of paved roads:
298 = 139 primary + 159 local

Miles of unpaved roads:
219 = 45 primary + 174 local

MDOT contract: Yes
(239 lane miles)

No. of bridges: 24

Annual budget:
\$8.7 million, 2014 (\$5 million typical)

Local revenue: \$282,000, 4th year
of 5-year county-wide millage

Annual snowfall: 67.5", 2014

DCRC established: 1903

Office built: 1936

Oldest vehicle: 1976, International
single-axle

Road-kill deer count: 635

Fun fact:

Dickinson’s garage area still has the rings in place that were used to tie up horses in the early days of DCRC.

The Dickinson County Road Commission (DCRC) is located in Iron Mountain, the county seat which is tucked into a unique “notch” of Michigan land bordered on three sides by Wisconsin.

In the DCRC complex that includes an office building, garages (ca. 1930s), and an engineering building and repair shop, superintendent of operations **Jim Harris** and a staff of 29 full-time employees are working hard – like most county road agencies – to do more with less.

The staff has come up with a number of innovations to achieve efficiency and make the limited funds stretch farther. “We simply have to be creative to get the job done,” Harris said.

History of DCRC

As it turns out, Dickinson County was the last county chartered in Michigan in 1891, when the state carved out parts of Marquette, Menominee and Iron counties.

Dickinson is a relatively small county, with 777 square miles, seven townships and three cities (Iron Mountain, Kingsford, Norway) that are clustered along US-2 at the county’s southern edge. Numerous other villages are scattered across the county, which has a population just over 26,000.

Like many UP counties, Dickinson had an important role in Michigan’s industrialization and mining. It may be the birthplace of the blast furnace, developed by John T. Jones in 1908, and the US’s largest reciprocating steam-driven engine (ca. 1890) used in mining. Logging and tourism are also important to the area.



Another of the significant sites in Dickinson County is the unusual pin-connected, camelback through-truss Twin Falls Bridge (ca. 1910-11) over the Menominee River, connecting Michigan and Wisconsin. It is the only bridge of its type in

Michigan, and the only one of two in Wisconsin that remains in its original location.

The bridge was permanently closed to foot traffic in 1972, although neither DCRC nor Florence County, Wis., had the money to remove it. Perhaps that's fortuitous, as in 2012 the bridge was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. (See Carpenter Monument, sidebar.)

Having used the same office building for 69 years, DCRC itself is filled with road history. Its archived photos were used to create signs at the historic Fumee Creek Park campground, and Harris's crew found some unusual early 20th century tools when they cleaned out the basement last year. A retiree had to be brought in to identify the barbed wire puller.

Dickinson road projects

As with all road commissions and departments, funding has been increasingly restricted over the last decade. But Dickinson has worked to develop partnerships and innovative projects to improve roads.

FHWA AID GRANT. One particularly interesting project is DCRC's Accelerated Innovation Deployment grant from the Federal Highway Administration to recycle-in-place a 4.2 mile section of Pine Mountain Road. It's the secondary road into Ford Airport in Kingsford, links the important economic centers of Iron Mountain and Kingsford, and leads to Pine Mountain Resort – the only US stop of the FIS Continental CUP Ski jumping circuit.

"The road takes a lot of traffic near the Wisconsin border," noted DCRC highway engineer **Lance Malburg**, PE. "It was last paved in the early 1990s and it was failing. Lots of business interests and tourists use that road."

"Because of our regional rotation, Dickinson County only gets small urban funds every eight years and then we only get about \$475,000. The project estimate for this piece of Pine Mountain Road was just over \$871,000," Malburg said. "It was on our wish list, but was one of those things that

we were going to be unable to do without funding from a special source."

Dickinson got creative, began looking at the lesser-used AID grant and recruited the city of Kingsford as a partner on the project. They honed in on the recycled-in-place concept using a warm-mix ultra-thin surface.

Using this approach to mill down and replace the road with traditional methods would have cost \$1.2 million. Using the recycled-in-place approach, the cost was reduced 30 percent with the grant covering 80 percent of the cost, about \$697,000. DCRC's local match made up the balance.

"We wanted to support this innovation because the process is environmentally friendly in several ways including the shorter time the road is not hard-surfaced because it is pulverized and re-paved in a single operation. This reduces dust and the fear of wash-outs with the gravel base that is common with traditional road construction," Malburg said.

"Recycle-in-place also re-uses 100 percent of the existing pavement, greatly reducing the need for newly-mined and crushed stone and virgin asphalt oil," he added. "The entire process consumes about 30 percent less energy than traditional paving."

Recycle-in-place involves heating up an asphalt road section breaking up the pavement with scarifiers, adding new oil and either mixing it up in a drum or kneading it on the ground and pressing it back into a road. A special contractor from the Midwest will do the work, which should last at least 15 years in the harsh UP climate.

The project was bid this summer, and should be completed by fall. The FHWA was particularly interested in studying and following results of the technique in a northern climate, and will be monitoring results for years to come.

NEARLY \$3 MILLION JOINT VENTURE. Paperwork was concluded this past summer on a 4.9-mile section of the Quinnesec-Lake Antoine Road, which was a \$2.8 million, award-winning job.

This piece of road was very important to area residents and businesses, because

(cont. on next page)

Carpenter Memorial: Twin Falls Bridge

Dickinson County has a handful of National Register of Historic Places, one of them known as the Twin Falls Bridge. And near the foot of that bridge on the Michigan end is the humble Carpenter Monument. Gilbert Carpenter was a UP soldier in the Spanish-American war who had served



as road engineer for DCRC from 1906 to 1918. He was enlisted to build roads in Puerto Rico and Camp Grant, Ill., from 1917-18. Coming back from Puerto Rico, he died in 1918 as a result of a torpedo attack.

Carpenter Monument was dedicated in 1923, and partially funded by the Dickinson County Road Commission and the Michigan State Highway Department. It is the only site on the National Register of Historical Places nominated jointly by Michigan and Wisconsin.





Dickinson's staff mechanic and shop foreman are currently refurbishing the truck pictured above.

it links Quinnesec with Iron Mountain, connects four parks and is a major truck route for two sawmills.

"This was for us a 'complete streets' project," Harris said. "After identifying the need, we developed a joint venture with Iron Mountain and Quinnesec and the local cycling community. The importance of this route to the sawmills made the project an ideal candidate for TEDF-A funds for targeted industry development."

The project was a crush-and-shape that rebuilt all curbs and super-elevations. A bike path was added the length of the route linking the parks, a boat launch and improving tourism and recreational opportunities for residents.

It was funded with \$2 million in TEDF Category A funds, along with \$410,000 from STP, \$124,000 from Iron Mountain, and privately-raised dollars for the bike path. The road's life expectancy is 20 years.

"We are very proud that this road was an award-winner at last winter's Asphalt Paving Association of Michigan ceremony," Harris said. "Joint ventures like this let us get more projects done."

Pilot projects around the road commission

While the Legislature has continued to talk about reforms, most road commissions are already well down the efficiency path. Dickinson is no exception, with three new pilot efficiency efforts underway.

TRUCK REFURBISHMENT

PROGRAM. In recent years, DCRC has nursed its fleet of vehicles along opting to put most of its dollars into roads instead. Its efforts to keep a mechanic (who is vital to keeping plows running safely in winter) fully occupied in summer, has resulted in DCRC's annual truck refurbishment program.

"We've been working toward getting this started for the last three to four years," Harris said. "We have made this the summer job of our mechanic."

Most recently, the mechanic has stripped down a 1998 Western Star tri-axle truck used as a snowplow and for other purposes. The truck was shipped out in July for new frame rails, and will be entirely rebuilt by the staff mechanic when it comes back in.

LIGHTING IT UP. Another efficiency at DCRC was the switch to high-efficiency lighting this past summer.

Working with the local electric utility, Dickinson was able to re-light its entire shop for \$4,000 to \$5,000. The other half of the project was paid for by an electric rebate from the local utility.

"We've improved the lighting and will have savings from improved energy efficiency going forward," Harris commented.

BETTER FINANCIAL TRACKING

OF PROJECTS. DCRC finance director **Sandra Lindholm** is also putting reforms and improved financial tracking measures in place, to provide additional metrics on road projects.

"Earlier this year I began to realize that when we got involved in maintenance work such as installing culverts and crack sealing, we were not adequately capturing the cost of this work," Lindholm said. "We started a pilot project to do so by creating a 'heavy maintenance' number and line item in our financials. That gave us, for the first time, the ability to depreciate this type of preventative maintenance work."

"The costs are monitored very closely and pinpointed in a way that our engineer can enter this data into the MDOT transportation asset management site at year-end, which will coincide with

my financial data in ADARS anytime that preventative maintenance occurs throughout the county," Lindholm said.

Each time a culvert is installed or crack sealing is performed, the labor, equipment and vouchers are charged to a 459.0000 (primary) or a 489.0000 (local) heavy maintenance number. DCRC has also set up two sub accounts: 201 for restoration of drainage; and 202 for crack sealing.

DCRC crews have been trained to help track this work throughout the year by making sure Superintendent Harris specifically indicates where the culvert installation occurred. "We have a daily sheet that the supervising person on the crack sealing crew fills out that includes intersections and mile markers that are close enough to allow our engineer to be able to pick the applicable segment of road," Lindholm added.

This pilot has allowed DCRC to depreciate culverts and crack sealing which more properly documents increased value in infrastructure assets so that it may be included in the GASB 34 accounting.

"At the end of every year, we can put hard numbers to the work that our engineer has done," Harris concluded. "This helps make sense of our infrastructure investments."

Looking down the road

As little as four years ago, the Dickinson County Road Commission went through one of the toughest financial times the commission had ever experienced. Money was exceptionally tight, invoices often were left unpaid or partially paid, the roofs were leaking and the fleet was in deplorable condition, said Superintendent Harris.

"By thinking outside the box, enduring some necessary staff layoffs and taking a conservative approach to every dollar spent, the commission's five-member board along with every soul at this road commission pulling together, our fund balance is no longer the lowest in the state," finance director Lindholm said. "It has already surpassed the recommended amount set by the Michigan Department of Treasury." --

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CASE
CONSTRUCTION



PLOWING AHEAD ---- of the CURVE ----

Innovation has always been the lifeblood of county road agency winter maintenance. Swapping snow plow routes with other counties and cities has been done for many years as a way to cut costs and provide a higher level of service.

As counties struggle with less staff and equipment, some have looked to other states and countries for answers. The City of Montreal, Canada, uses private contractors for snow removal operations in about half of their 120 sectors. The 50/50 arrangement takes into account the limited staff and fleet in the city of 1.65 million people.

Now, some cash-strapped counties are pilot testing similar agreements with private companies plowing some subdivision streets.

A tale of 2 counties

EMMET COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION (ECRC)

says using contractors to fill workforce gaps has worked "great." With 11 less truck divers than it had just 12 years ago, Emmet County experienced delayed response times to subdivisions in inclement weather.

ECRC engineer-manager **Brian Gutowski**, thinking outside of the box, decided to try private snowplowing contractors in 2007. Armed with contracts to spell out responsibilities, Emmet has secured private contractors to plow 28 miles of subdivision roads.

Emmet was fortunate to have several bidders, and has used one or two each season that met all requirements set by the road commission.

The current ECRC contractor is called only when there are 4 inches or more of snowfall in a determined period. The contractor is required to plow all designated roads by 8:30 a.m., which helps employees and students throughout the county get to work and school safely and on time.

The contractor is responsible for any damage incurred while plowing, an issue that has rarely materialized.

The road to utilizing private contractors wasn't without potholes, however. ECRC faced backlash from staff who viewed the contractors as taking money out of their pockets.

In light of dwindling resources, however, Gutowski and Emmet County Road Commission moved ahead to try the new method. Once the advantages of early road maintenance throughout the county was evident – made partially possible by hiring outside contractors – there was no looking back in Emmet County.

GENESEE COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION.

Now in its third year of use, Genesee began with a private contractor hired by the township. Originally, the township was interested in the supplemental services that could be provided by contractors. The township also wanted control of when to deploy contractors, which conflicted with GCRC responsibilities for roads.

John H. Daly, III, PhD, manager-director, GCRC, worked with the township to gain control over deployment of contractors to better integrate with the county.

TRAINING. On the first snowfall of the year, Genesee's contractors work alongside GCRC staff to fine tune operations and work out any kinks. For the rest of the season, contractors are called on when there is a heavy snowfall or weather conditions make it important to get wet snow off roads quickly.

Genesee's private contractors have 24 hours to clear snow once they've been activated. Recognizing these contractors have driveway and parking lot clients, providing a 24-hour period allows them to work subdivision streets into their routes, without GCRC having a dedicated crew on stand-by.

"PLUSES." Daly reports that GCRC has seen many advantages. Contractors are paid a straight wage without retirement benefits, which has slimmed the budget of overtime fees and operational costs.

Genesee also found that the smaller equipment contractors use was actually better suited to subdivision and cul-de-sac maintenance. Lastly, wear-and-tear on county equipment has been reduced.

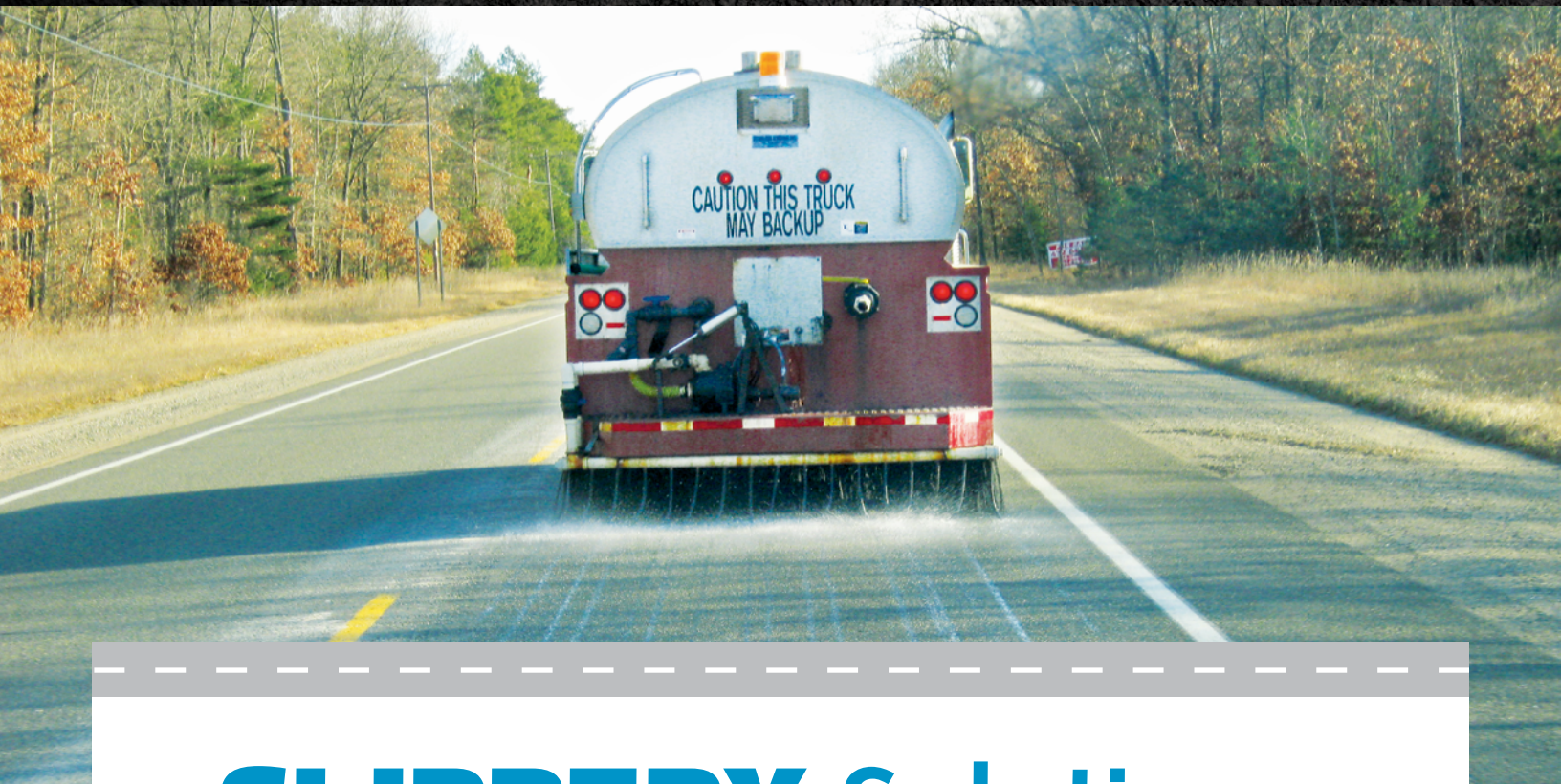
Though the learning curve was steep, Genesee County stayed the course and now uses private contractors in five urban townships.

Private contractors may not be economically sensible for many counties, and may not even be possible in other areas. Where it can be implemented, it provides another tool in the toolbox as county road agencies struggle to maintain service and safety on inadequate funds. ---



10%

Over 10 percent of all 2013 road funds went to winter maintenance, according to the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council.



SLIPPERY Solutions

Montcalm County talks about 8-year anti-icing project

Eight years ago the **Road Commission for Montcalm County (RCMC)** decided to improve the safety of its roads in winter. They added anti-icing to their toolkit for clearing roads. Results are in:

- Accidents are down by 35 percent;
- Salt use is down from 15,000 tons to about 5,000 tons; and
- Significantly less time is required to get roads back to clear pavement.

"We have to do what we can to make roads safe for travel as quickly as possible," said **Mark Christensen**, superintendent-manager, Road Commission for Montcalm County. "Anti-icing is a proactive approach to winter road maintenance. It reduces the time it takes to restore roads to clear, dry pavement. It's a tool we added, have had success with and will continue to use."

Anti-icing = Salt or Sand or

Anti-icing goes beyond what can be done with dry salt and sand. Mineral Well Brine – brine is the product MCRC applies to its roads before a winter storm.

Brine forms a bond-breaker between the pavement surface and the ice/snow, melting the snow faster and reducing chances ice will form and bond with the surface. The process is similar to cooking oil preventing food from sticking to a frying pan.

"We've seen the success of anti-icing and learned when and where it works best," said Christensen.

Montcalm tested anti-icing before rolling out the use throughout the entire county. Michigan Chloride partnered with Montcalm; the first year focusing on specific high-traffic intersections.

“After the first year of anti-icing, they showed a 20 percent cutback in slide-through accidents and rear-enders.”

– Brad Harkness,
Michigan Chloride Sales.

"We targeted intersections where people were frequently sliding through," said Brad Harkness, Michigan Chloride Sales. "They had been putting down salt in those areas, but it wasn't effective. After the first year of anti-icing, they showed a 20 percent cutback in slide-through accidents and rear-enders."

More intersections, curved roads and hills were added the second and third years. Following the third year, Montcalm had a 35 percent reduction in accidents in the targeted areas, says Harkness.

Montcalm started with one truck capable of spraying brine. This year they have seven trucks outfitted with anti-icing equipment. Next year RCMC will have 10 trucks ready for anti-icing.

"We got into the application process on a shoestring budget, outfitting an old truck to administer anti-icing," said Christensen. "As we replaced trucks, they came with the anti-icing options included."

Montcalm has cut its dry salt use substantially, dropping from 15,000 tons per year to about 5,000 tons, depending on the severity of the winter. Christensen credits much of this reduction to anti-icing.

They anti-ice the entire state highway system in the county and all major/primary roads, starting two to three days ahead of a storm, according to Christensen.

"We have the potential to anti-ice several hundred miles within the county, if we get out ahead of the storm," he explained.

Once applied to the surface, Christensen and his team have found there is up to a two-week value to the anti-icing product, if there aren't any weather events to wash it from the surface.

"We are selective on days we use it. We prefer applying it when the temperature is above 20 degrees Fahrenheit for the best success," said Christensen.

→ Montcalm County views anti-icing as an important tool in its arsenal to for winter road maintenance. For those who have yet to try anti-icing, Christensen and Harkness are willing to help share their experience.

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989-681-3221.

CRA members may wish to continue the de-icing dialogue on the Engineering list serve. ---

Montcalm County – the biggest challenges of anti-icing

Mark Christensen and his team at **Montcalm County Road Commission** have been anti-icing for eight years. They have learned a few things and conquered some hurdles along the way. Here are a few tips for road agencies on adopting anti-icing for winter road maintenance.

→ Get plow drivers on board.

It's important for plow drivers to be confident in the effectiveness of anti-icing so they will adopt the use of the product. Educate employees and supervisors on the benefits of anti-icing, allow them to see it working for themselves. Night patrol was a great education for Montcalm County plow drivers. Driving the roads, they saw anti-icing working and the roads returning to pavement without plowing.

→ Educate the community.

Getting people to understand how anti-icing works takes time. "When people see trucks spraying roads on a dry sunny day, you can get some interesting phone calls," said Christensen. "Now people in our community have witnessed what it has done for us."

→ Don't be resistant to change.

"Don't get stuck in a rut, doing the same thing just because you've always done it. Be willing to try something new, look for better options for battling winter roads. The safety of the people in our communities depends on it," Christensen encouraged.

→ It's the science.

While RCMC uses mineral well brine, the science behind anti-icing works with other products as well.



Transportation and roads, BIG issues for Sen. Casperson

In each issue of *Crossroads* we will include a conversation with a Michigan legislator, letting our members get to know the leaders in Lansing. In gaining a clearer picture of where these folks stand on particular issues, our hope is you will be more comfortable reaching out and letting your voice be heard.

Ed Noyola, CRA's deputy director, sat down with **Sen. Tom Casperson**, Michigan's 38th district serving Alger, Baraga, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon and Schoolcraft counties.



Sen. Tom Casperson

Sen. Tom Casperson – his road to Lansing

Tom Casperson grew up in the UP. He drove a log truck for 27 years for the family business his grandfather started. A fatal log truck accident in the community led Casperson to run for public office. The accident didn't involve his company, but it prompted him to work toward safety solutions for the industry.

Soon after being elected he authored the "Crib Truck Bill" (Public Act 142 of 2003), addressing the cause of the fatal log spill tragedy. Transportation and road issues have been at the forefront for Casperson, due to his background. He served in the Michigan House of Representatives for six years, 2002-2008. He was elected to the Michigan Senate in 2010, and re-elected in 2014.

He resides in Escanaba with his wife Diane and two of their four children.

Sen. Casperson shared what led him to Lansing, the biggest challenges for roads in Michigan, road blocks to appropriate funding, the battle over regulatory inefficiencies and why it's more important than ever for road agencies to be heard.

CRA: What is the number-one challenge for roads in our state?

Sen. Casperson: Appropriate funding. But it's really about how and what we do with our roads. Are we managing them as efficiently as we can? Who's better equipped at handling the roads? These are the real, important questions. I'd like to see more flexibility in who plays what role in the managing of roads. Just looking through a lens of one-size-fits-all is not meeting the demand that's out there across the entire state.

CRA: Do you see road blocks in a funding solution?

Sen. Casperson: I'm from Escanaba, 50 miles from the Wisconsin border. We see their road structure all the time. Michigan's funding system is broken. We're not unique in the challenges associated with roads, but I don't think we're reasonable with where we're at with our funding and I think other states prove that story. If you compare us to surrounding Great Lake states, we're way behind where they're at funding-wise. In Wisconsin there's activity trying to increase the gas tax because they don't feel they have enough and they're at 31 cents a gallon. We're only at 19 cents a gallon. That's pretty telling.

CRA: At the local level, we're struggling to match our portion of Federal Aid. Is there any possibility of the legislature helping locals with the match?

Sen. Casperson: That's absolutely the fight. Not enough of us legislators, in my opinion, work with county road agencies to get to the level to understand this issue.

CRA: What do you see as inefficiencies in the regulatory system, and what can changes can be made?

Sen. Casperson: I believe there are some processes that I would deem somewhat silly, like the permit process for road agency culverts; things like that may be able to be simplified. Why are our road commissions paying to do things like this when they've been doing this for years? They know what they're doing, but being treated like they don't know and now have to get permission. It makes no sense. At the end of the day, some of the inefficiencies like these need to be eliminated.

CRA: What can road commissions do to positively impact roads in Michigan?

Sen. Casperson: Engage with us. You have to make sure your voices are heard, especially when money is tight. Rural areas have different priorities than larger metro areas. Spending shouldn't be pigeon-holed in the same way. If you're throwing money at trunk lines in the UP, it really doesn't fix a whole lot. The struggles there are secondary roads. Legislators need to hear what the needs are in your area. 🗣️

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THREE WAYS TO CUT FLEET MAINTENANCE COSTS

Walk into road agencies in Michigan and one thing is immediately obvious: corrosion. Trucks working to keep roads free of snow and ice are continuously subject to a potent cocktail of chemicals that chew through steel. Adding occasional winter temperature spikes, it's a recipe for accelerated corrosion, early wear and high fleet costs.

Purchasing a new truck to replace one ravaged by heavy use is not possible for most county road agency fleet managers. Fortunately, buying new isn't the only option. Multi-use and refurbished trucks can help stretch fleet dollars. To make sure vehicles last as long as possible, diligent maintenance is required—including regular washing, careful inspection, and consistent preventive maintenance.

#1 – One chassis, many jobs

Outfitting a truck for multiple uses involves adding a hook loader assembly to a new or existing chassis, and then purchasing separate task-specific attachments for various job functions. Attachments are mounted on skids enabling them to be stored conveniently and swapped easily.

Mark Lester, product support specialist at Truck & Trailer Specialties, says multi-use trucks make the most sense when considering proactive verses reactive operational needs.

"Plowing snow is reactive; spraying a bridge deck with brine to prevent ice from forming is proactive," Lester said. "Hook loaders provide the biggest bang for the buck because when you're not using them for high-priority reactive work, you can easily swap equipment and perform any number of other operations."

KEEPING TRUCKS MOVING

The City of Farmington Hills has been using two hook loader-equipped trucks for a year, and they're adding more. "We currently use two single-axle trucks with hook-loaders and six attachments," said Bryan Pickworth, road maintenance supervisor at the city. "We have one more on order for this year and we're planning for a fourth—based on a larger tandem axle chassis—in next year's budget."



A truck equipped with a hook loader can replace several single-use trucks in a fleet. A typical hook loader assembly costs \$15,000 to \$20,000, cost for attachments ranges from \$2,000 to \$20,000. (Photo: City of Farmington Hills)

With input from city staff and after conferring with Mark Clancey, former fleet manager at the City of Wixom, Pickworth decided hook loaders were a good addition to the city's fleet. "The cost savings and increased vehicle utilization numbers in Wixom were pretty impressive, so we decided to add a couple to our fleet," Pickworth said.

Wixom outfitted a 2009 Ford F550 truck and a 2001 Sterling L-line truck with hook loader assemblies. "Equipped with hook loaders, we're able to keep the trucks moving year-round," Clancey said. "Not only that, we completely eliminated the need for additional trucks, saving us considerable money." He estimated the F550 with four different skid-mounted attachments, cost \$60,000, a fraction of what they would have spent to purchase dedicated trucks for each task.

OPTIMIZING OPERATIONS

The two hook-loaders in the City of Farmington Hills' fleet share six interchangeable attachments: a v-box with pre-wet tanks, a dedicated tanker, a dump box, a flatbed, a chip box, and what Pickworth refers to as a mobile work pod.

The work pod is a great example of an operational efficiency made possible only with the use of a hook loader.

The city's DPW superintendent came up with the idea to provide the city's concrete and asphalt crews a convenient base of operations without tying up an entire vehicle.

"It's like a shipping container mounted on a hook-loader skid," Pickworth explained. "We're going to outfit it with rakes, shovels, screeds, and everything else the crew needs, and then just drop it off at the work site. It will provide a secure, convenient place to store everything on site, while we keep using the truck with a dump box or flatbed to haul material."

In the winter, Pickworth's crew uses the hook loaders equipped with tank attachments for anti-icing before a storm. When the snow starts the tanks are swapped for v-boxes to spread rock salt while plowing.

"It's all about keeping the trucks moving and working," Pickworth explained. "If you're running a business, a truck sitting idle is not making money. In the public sector we think in terms of saving money by doing more with less. Keeping the trucks moving and working saves money."

#2 – Turning back the clock

Significant wear followed by operational breakdown is inevitable in trucks worked hard over time. Refurbishing can restore worn trucks to full operational effectiveness and may cost less than half the price of a new truck.

The refurb team at Valley Truck Parts, Inc. in Grand Rapids has been restoring worn trucks to full operational effectiveness since 2010. The practice started with two trucks from Calhoun County Road Department. Two identical 1998 and 1999 model year dual axle Volvos were the first project with

“When trucks hit 10 years or more, you end up chasing one problem after another, but these refurbs have been great. No problems at all – just like new.”

about 120,000 miles and N14 Cummins diesels. The trucks needed a lot of work—frame rails, drive trains, even replacement engines, and they were refurbished for less than half the cost of new trucks.

FLEXIBILITY IS KEY

The refurb process begins with a meticulous evaluation of the truck, involving testing the engine and major driveline components. A detailed inventory of parts, systems and components is created, and then a cost estimate can be generated.

"Frame rails and other structural components are the only non-negotiable parts of a refurb plan," explained Bob Venhuizen, Valley Truck Parts, Inc., refurb manager. "For everything else, there's usually plenty of flexibility; the final plan depends on the customer's budget and availability of replacement parts."

"Refurb plans depend on needs. If the truck will be used on a full-time basis, then new or fully remanufactured parts are the answer. If the truck is a spare, used or partially rebuilt parts can be an option," said Steve Burman, Valley Truck's outside sales manager.

Previously if a truck was more than 20 years old, the recommendation was to not consider refurbishing. "That's no longer the case," says Venhuizen, "There is access to considerable parts, systems and resources and extensive fabrication capabilities are available, so just about anything can be refurbished for less than it would cost to replace with new."

IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Branch County Road Commission (BCRC) had two trucks refurbished before the 2013 winter season—a 1998 tandem axle International and a 2002 tandem axle Volvo. Total cost for the International was \$22,000. "It basically just needed a refresh, not a full refurb," said BCRC equipment foreman, Kevin Eichler.

The Volvo needed extensive work, including frame rails, front axle, drive shafts and differentials, transmission, brake system, wheels and some cab repair. The total cost was \$83,000, compared to \$200,000 for a similarly equipped new truck. Last year, BCRC had a third truck done and a fourth is currently in the process.

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

Compared to buying new trucks, the cost savings and other benefits of refurbished trucks are almost unbelievable.

"On the first two, we basically got a new 1998 model year International and a new 2002 model year Volvo for about 70 percent less than we would have spent on new trucks," Eichler said. "Not only that, there was no learning curve for our mechanics because they'd been working on them for years."

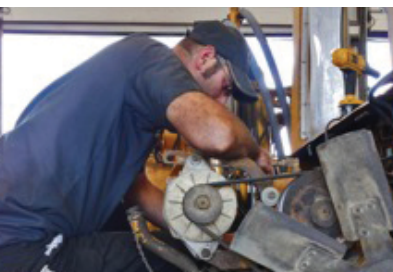
Eichler acknowledged that his mechanics and operators know the trucks aren't new, but from a maintenance perspective they treat them as if they were, "When trucks hit 10 years or more, you end up chasing one problem after another, but these refurbs have been great. No problems at all – just like new." (*cont. on next page*)



#3 – Tips from the experts

Regular maintenance is key in making trucks last -- new or refurbished. Daily washing in the winter is a critical element of routine maintenance. You're not going to prevent rust entirely, but washing a truck thoroughly after every shift will slow it down," Valley Truck's Venhuizen said.

The next maintenance step is thorough pre-trip and post-trip inspections, and keeping up with preventive maintenance. Truck & Trailer Specialties' Mark Lester advises fleet managers to supplement the manufacturer's recommended preventive maintenance schedule with their own, based on observations and experiences.



"With heavy maintenance trucks, your PM program can't be static. You have to revisit it regularly and make adjustments based on equipment breakdowns, problems, and other deficiencies that your operators and mechanics encounter during normal use and repair," he said.

During his 20-year tenure as fleet manager for MDOT's Southwest Region, Lester noticed through inspection and repair records the Class V trucks experienced battery failures after three years in service.

To prevent batteries from failing or straining other charging system components, he adjusted the PM plan. Instead of waiting for battery failure, mechanics replaced the batteries before the three-year service life cycle.

"With heavy maintenance trucks, it's much better—and less expensive—to be proactive than reactive," he said. ---

John Ryynanen is co-founder of PublicWorksTraining.com, an online tool for your public works needs



Key transitions at ... Road Commissions and Departments

Brent Shank, PE, has been hired as the new engineer-manager for the **Cheboygan County Road Commission**. Shank was previously operations engineer for the Emmet County Road Commission.

Steve Leonard, has been promoted to the superintendent position of the **Lake County Road Commission**. Leonard was most recently the road foreman as LCRC.

Todd Behring has been hired as secretary-manager of the **Montmorency County Road Commission**. Behring was a highway equipment operator at Montmorency previously.

The **Oscoda County Road Commission's** new managing director is **Steve Defour**. Defour was most recently an assistant engineer and surveyor with the Keweenaw County Road Commission.

Brent Friess has been promoted to the managing director position at the **Shiawassee County Road Commission**. Friess was previously superintendent of SCRC.

June Lee has been named interim director of the **Wayne County Department of Public Services**. Lee also serves as an assistant county executive.

... the CRA Office

The Association has hired **Kourtney Greene** as Administrative Associate.

... MDOT

MDOT – **Mark Van Port Fleet, PE**, has been named new deputy director for MDOT. He is a 35-year veteran of the state transportation department, most recently as deputy chief engineer and director of the Bureau of Highway Development.

MDOT – **Tracie Leix, PE**, has been appointed Manager of the Local Agencies Program Section, replacing **Larry Doyle**, who has been promoted to Manager of the Davison Transportation Service Center. A Michigan Tech graduate, Leix has most recently been focused on statewide safety programs. She has presented the Toward Zero Deaths campaign at several CRA Council meetings in recent months.

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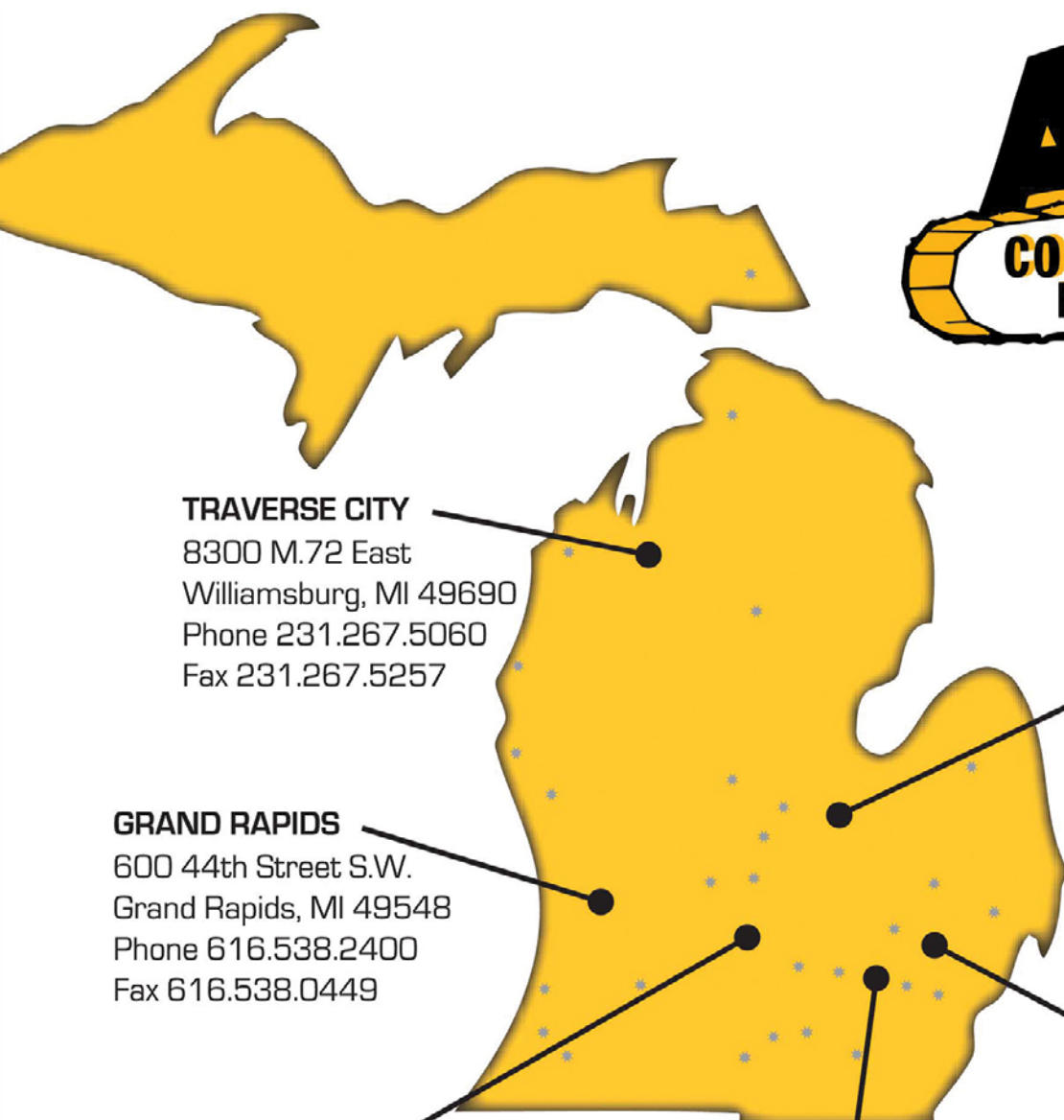
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CRA'S Legal Issues Forum

Advancing the understanding of new case law

The Legal Issues Forum (LIF) of the County Road Association of Michigan is a collaboration of Associate Members representing the legal interests of county road commissions and county road departments across Michigan. LIF meets three times a year to discuss cases impacting county road agencies.

The Supreme Court addressed an apparent conflict in the law from two Court of Appeals (CA) opinions.

→ In *Hunter v. Sisco*, CA ruled a person may not recover noneconomic tort damages available under No-Fault when filing a claim against the government under the motor vehicle exception. Since the exception only allows recovery for "bodily injury" and "property" damage, and because courts have construed the provision narrowly, recoverable damages were limited to those associated with physical injury. Thus, "pain and suffering" and "emotional distress" damages, ordinarily recoverable under No-Fault, were not available.

→ To the contrary, in *Hannay v. MDOT*, CA ruled a person could claim such excess tort damages (e.g. wage loss, lost earning potential). The Court of Appeals affirmed the trial court's award for lost wages and for lost future potential earnings damages because the plaintiff claimed she was unable to complete her education.

When both cases – with opposite conclusions – were published, the conflict in law became apparent. Both were appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court. The Supreme Court initially declined to hear *Hunter*. It agreed to hear *Hannay*, then reconsidered *Hunter* after it became evident resolving both cases was necessary.

The Supreme Court's opinion released last December is surprising in many respects.

For nearly 40 years, the Supreme Court has narrowly construed exceptions to governmental immunity to include only damages clearly identified under GTLA. However in this case, the Court reasoned that since the common-law definition of "bodily injury" prior to the 1964 passage

Earlier this year, LIF chairmanship transferred to **Dianne Hersey**, general counsel for the **Road Commission for Oakland County** – the only county road agency with in-house legal staff.

Case Review. – by **Carson J. Tucker, JD, MSEL, Law Offices of Carson J Tucker.**

One of the cases reviewed at LIF's June meeting was the Supreme Court's long-awaited opinion in *Hannay v. MDOT* and *Hunter v. Sisco*.

Both cases involved government-owned vehicles in motor vehicle crashes. In *Hannay*, the plaintiff was injured in an accident with a MDOT snowplow. In *Hunter* the plaintiff was injured when his vehicle was struck by a City of Flint dump truck.

Both plaintiffs sued, claiming their injuries entitled them to tort damages above the minimum "threshold" benefits available in Michigan's No-Fault Automobile Insurance Law (MCL 500.3101, et seq.). However, where government-owned vehicles are involved, the additional layer of the Governmental Tort Liability Act (GTLA) (MCL 691.1401) presumptively limited a person's causes of action and recovery of damages to the more narrowly construed confines of the "motor vehicle" exception to governmental immunity (MCL 691.1405).

Under this provision, someone injured by negligent operation of a government-owned vehicle may only recover "bodily injury" and "property" damages, previously interpreted to exclude non-economic tort damages such as "mental anguish" and "pain and suffering".

→ **NEW MEETING FORMAT:** Hersey and CRA director Denise Donohue are introducing technology to the LIF, making meetings accessible to more county road agencies' legal advisors.

"We're doing two things to bring technology to the table," Hersey said. "First, we've adopted video conferencing technology, which allows participation from anywhere in Michigan, with no travel time. And we're scanning the agenda packets and e-mailing to all LIF members."

"This allows remote participants to fully join in and in-person participants to print only what they choose," Hersey said.

→ **SYMPOSIUM:** Another change is sharing more knowledge from the LIF. In addition to *Crossroads* articles, the first Legal Issues Symposium is scheduled Tuesday morning, **December 8, 2015**, at the Mt. Pleasant Comfort Inn.

The half-day Legal Issues Symposium, aimed at Board members and Managing Directors, allows time to explore some topics in depth.

of GTLA included pain and suffering and noneconomic damages, and since common law had not been explicitly overruled by the Legislature in passing GTLA, the term continued to mean that such damages are recoverable to claimants under the motor vehicle exception to immunity.

Thus, "tort damages" available to individual claimants under No-Fault are also available to claimants who can prove such injuries and damages in actions against the government.

Because the term "bodily injury" exists in other exceptions to governmental immunity, this opinion will provide an opportunity for those seeking to expand the narrowly construed exceptions to the government's liability.

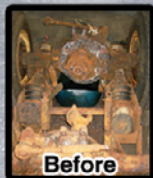
It will also lead to additional and more strenuous litigation efforts against the government. And, it will result in larger payouts by the government for damages claimed under GTLA, whether through settlements or judgments. It will take legislative change to curtail the effects of this ruling.

One bright spot is the Supreme Court reversed the CA affirmation in Hannay of the trial court's allowance of speculative "future earnings potential" damages.

As mentioned, the Plaintiff claimed entitlement to future earnings as a dental hygienist, even though she never finished her educational certification for that job. The trial court held that but for the motor vehicle accident, the plaintiff would have been accepted into a "dental-hygienist" program, would have graduated from that program, and would have been employed at least 60 percent of the time at the rate of \$28 per hour. ---

OCT
23

The next Legal Issues Forum meeting is
10 a.m. on Friday, October 23,
at the CRA office in Lansing.



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Getting the e-word out!

It's no surprise that newspapers are no longer the largest – nor most influential – news source. Today, information appears on Facebook before a journalist even crafts the lead paragraph.

Network TV stations are losing eyes to YouTube, where if it's not caught on video, it didn't happen. Information dissemination is changing rapidly, and those who don't adapt are quickly being left in the dust.

By embracing the fast-paced nature of the Internet, CRA has become a stronger Association. Communication is quick, yet well timed – widespread, yet precise. And CRA wants to bring these benefits to its members.

In June, CRA's Public Relations Committee discussed the need for every county road agency to have a solid web presence, which is essential to communicate with local residents, elected officials and others.

Today's technology allows everyone to have an inexpensive, attractive and well-designed website and to create a social media presence on a very tiny budget.

Mark your calendar. This fall's **PR workshop** – set for **November 6** – will focus in part on web-competence. It will explore how to leverage the website through social media, and bring attention to issues that affect your county.

Having a website and social media presence like Facebook, in addition to working the traditional media ensures road agencies will connect with more young voters. After all, this year the "millennial" generation outnumbered each preceding generation in the workplace for the first time!

Times are changing, and county road agencies' communication strategies need to be changing with it. See you in November. ---

Fun facts:

- In 2007, **41 counties** had an official website. **Today, 79 county road agencies have a website.**
- **43** county road agencies have a social media presence– and some have as many as **6,800 followers.**
- More than **46,000** people have liked a county road agency's Facebook page.

Ask MDOT



Some things never change. Winter in Michigan is always going to pose a brutal challenge to road maintenance agencies but the way we respond to that challenge is changing – rapidly.

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) continues to work with county road agency partners to innovate new methods and develop new strategies to keep roads clear and safe when the winter weather gets nasty. Here are some of the winter maintenance best practices we're working on:

- MDOT is investigating the use of tow plows by county road commissions to increase efficiency. A tow plow can clear two lanes simultaneously, cutting labor, equipment and fuel costs while increasing the level of service for the motoring public. The cost of a new tow plow is \$93,000. With regular maintenance, the tow plow has an average service life of 30 years, compared to a 10-year average for a standard plow.
- MDOT also supports the safe use of wings on plow trucks for clearing more snow per pass. Wings extend the plow's reach, allowing a driver to clear about 14 feet in one pass instead of 9-10 feet. Using the wing plow, crews can clear both the travel lane and shoulder in one pass, thus reducing the number of passes needed to clear the road during and after a winter snow event. Last winter, MDOT and county road commissions in the Upper Peninsula began using wing plows to clear active lanes of traffic, as well as shoulders. When the wing was deployed, motorists were alerted by additional flashing lights mounted over the wing plow.
- Another area MDOT is exploring is the greater use of automatic vehicle location (AVL) and global positioning systems (GPS) to better manage winter operations. MDOT has installed AVL/GPS on all of its plows and some counties also use the technology. The issue is standardization. With multiple systems in use, MDOT and counties are collectively researching how to expand the deployment of this technology while coordinating its use.

- Road agencies in Michigan spend about \$30 million each winter on salt, so even a small savings in the quantity applied to roadways can add up. With this in mind, MDOT is encouraging best practices to boost salt use efficiency during winter maintenance.

MDOT is encouraging its drivers to drive slower when possible while applying salt so more stays on the road. Other "sensible salting" solutions include setting application guidelines for winter conditions, using weather stations to better target areas that will benefit most from salt, and pre-wetting the salt so it sticks to the road and starts working faster.

Beyond these technical advances and procedural improvements, MDOT is looking at ways that maintenance contracts can drive increased efficiencies. **One idea along these lines is performance-based maintenance (PBM).**

PBM contracts would focus more on reaching desired outcomes – maintaining a roadway at a certain measurable level of quality, for example – than on inputs (time and materials) or outputs (quantity of work produced).

MDOT and County Road Association of Michigan (CRA) representatives are meeting to investigate how performance-based aspects could possibly be incorporated into county road agency winter maintenance contracts with MDOT. MDOT is also developing a maintenance rating system that MDOT will be using to help manage and plan maintenance work. This is being shared with CRA leadership.

Working together with the counties on a variety of fronts, MDOT will continue to improve the way we respond to winter's annual snowy, icy attack on Michigan roads.

If you have questions or innovative winter maintenance practices that you've implemented that you'd like to share with MDOT, please contact me at geibm@michigan.gov. ☞

- Mark Geib, MDOT Engineer of Operations Field Services



Mark Geib,
MDOT Engineer of
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Meeting MDOT

New RTF COORDINATOR STEPS IN

Jim Koenig has been with MDOT for three years, and has just begun a deep dive into the complex and currently muddy waters of the Rural Task Force (RTF) program.

Yet he has confidence that through much discussion and the new RTF Oversight Board process, the program can function smoothly for local road agencies.

"I like knowing that I have a chance to improve this situation," Koenig said. "I like people and I like to work together with people. My goal is to make a difference."

THE KOENIG FILE. Koenig holds a B.S. degree in geography from Eastern Michigan University, and a master's degree in city and regional planning (MCRP) from Ohio State University.

His career as a planner has included over five years with Navteq (now Here) a traffic data consultant in Detroit, and most recently four years as a transportation planner for Wilbur Smith Associates in Lansing. At Wilbur Smith he handled environmental impact statements, traffic studies and public outreach.

Since joining MDOT as a transportation planner in 2012, he's served as MPO program manager for the Bay City-Saginaw-Midland hub. Koenig was selected earlier this year to take on the vacant RTF coordinator position, and also coordinates MDOT's small urban program and the Flint MPO.

When it comes to re-inventing RTFs, Koenig approves of the new RTF Oversight Board. (CRA's voting members are **Jim Iwanicki**, **Marquette**, and **Wayne Schoonover**, **Mason**.)

"To go forward, we have to understand the past, acknowledge what worked and what didn't ... to make it a stronger and better program," he said.

"I feel like I'm coming into the game in the fourth quarter," Koenig said. "I not only need to be the quarterback and run the game, but I have to get into the locker room and review tapes of the first three quarters. I need to learn all that, discuss the issues and re-invent the program in the real world."

REGIONAL PLANNER

INVOLVEMENT. Koenig will bring his background as a planner into the RTF coordinator position to improve the role of regional planning agencies (RPA) in the RTF process.

MDOT first hired RPAs in 2012-2013 primarily to have a presence at all RTF meetings and to answer questions, Koenig said. However, many road agencies report that RPAs merely facilitate meetings and have not yet become a valued resource.

"Going forward, it will be very important to do more training with the regional planning agencies," said Koenig, who hopes to attend as many 22 RTF meetings as possible.

"One of my goals is to hold individual and joint RPA programs to train and get them all on the same page ... to help them understand how they fit into the process and for MDOT to have a succession plan" when the positions turn over, he said.

MPOS AND RTFS. While he has lots of experience with MPOs, Koenig



Jim Koenig, MDOT - RTF Coordinator

recognizes the two entities are not the same. "When MDOT receives federal funds, we have two different processes – metro and statewide programs. The requirements are very similar," he said.

"We want the rural areas to mimic MPOs by having a statewide approach, a statewide TIP and a statewide long-range plan, for example," he said. "Yet we cannot compare rural and urban programs; that's not an apples-to-apples comparison."

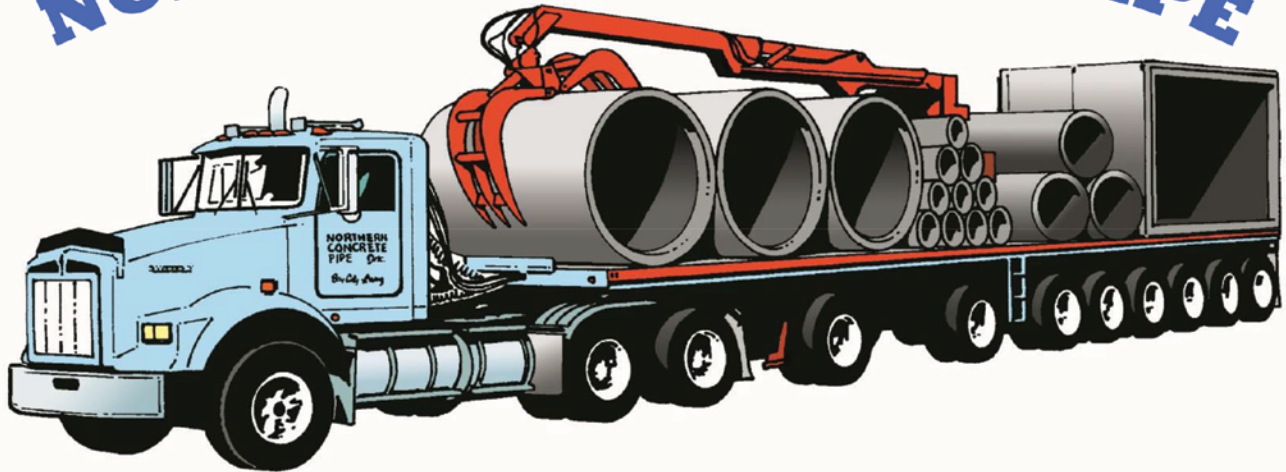
When the statewide RTF program was adopted in 1991, it was because Michigan wanted to give more authority to the local units of government, Koenig said. "It lets Rural Task Forces and regional planners make decisions locally and more transparently in the local community."

And that local dialogue is what Koenig values about being a planner. "Planning forces people to work together. It's better than the state telling people what to do."

Simply put, "my goal is to make a difference" in this program, said Koenig in wrapping up the interview with *Crossroads*. "I drive these roads, too. And I know that Michigan never wants to leave obligation dollars on the table." 🚗

Jim Koenig may be contacted at MDOT's Lansing headquarters at: koenigj@michigan.gov and 517-373-1881.

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Bridging the Gaps

GASB 68, bringing pension liabilities front & center

GASB No. 68 – the new standard approved by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) to improve financial reporting for governments providing employee pension benefits has gone into effect for employers with fiscal years ending June 30, 2015 or later.

Ultimately the new accounting requirement is aimed at making sure the “cookie jar” isn’t empty when retirees dip into it for pension benefits. Similar to the predictions about the underfunding of Social Security, state pension plans are also underfunded. Some plans estimated to be only 30 percent funded.

GASB 68 changes how governments report pension liabilities for defined benefit plans, putting shortfalls in pension funding front and center on financial statements. Prior to GASB 68 government entities were only required to report a liability when payments to the pension fund were less than the required amount. GASB 68 provides greater transparency, requiring governments to report a “net pension liability” on their balance sheets.

GASB Chairman Robert H. Attmore described the new standard as a more faithful representation of the full impact of pension obligations.

“Among other improvements, net pension liabilities will be reported on the balance sheet, providing citizens and other users of these financial reports with a clearer picture of the size and nature of the financial obligations to current and former employees for past services rendered,” said Attmore on GASB’s website.

Reporting the pension liability will reduce the net assets of most government entities. This requirement is considered a big step forward toward greater accountability in government financial reporting. However, there is concern about the potential impact on bond ratings, causing an increase in the cost of governments’ borrowing ability.

GASB 68 was approved in June of 2012. It is now being implemented for many organizations. **Mary Herman**, finance and office manager, **Marquette County Road Commission**, talked about the process of implementing this new standard on Marquette’s financial statement.

“This new standard is an effort to make government entities match more apples-to-apples what private industry is already reporting,” explained Herman. “It is important to recognize the liability. This puts it right up front and makes it clear.”

Herman believes it may be a real eye-opener for many board members, seeing the actual cost of benefits and the liabilities they create. GASB 68 will recognize the challenges municipalities face in addressing these liabilities.

“This topic has been around for awhile ... the challenge is, as we reduce our full-time workforces we reduce the number of people paying into the pension plans. When that happens, an additional amount of liability is transferred to the employer,” Herman said.

In reporting the liabilities, trends will be more obvious. GASB 68 will show if anticipated interest earnings have been met or not.

“Assumptions made by actuaries really impact pension plans,” said Herman. “When those assumptions are not met, we’re left figuring out how to meet the obligations. It’s particularly challenging for road commissions without any additional revenue since 1997.”

“It’s important we as employers are careful not to make promises we can’t keep or really can’t afford, said Herman. “GASB 68 will be helpful in that regard.” ---

3 tips to implement GASB 68

Marquette County Road Commission’s finance manager Mary Herman shared these tips to getting GASB 68 done.

1. Take time to thoroughly review implementation guides offered online. Check with your pension provider for helpful guidance materials. Keep in mind, this information will be reported in the government-wide statements in the audit each year.
2. Take advantage of worksheets, templates and the many tools available to make the process easier, and work with your auditor, especially during the first year of implementation.
3. Do your homework and be prepared to answer questions about the new reporting standard and the information now included on financial statement.

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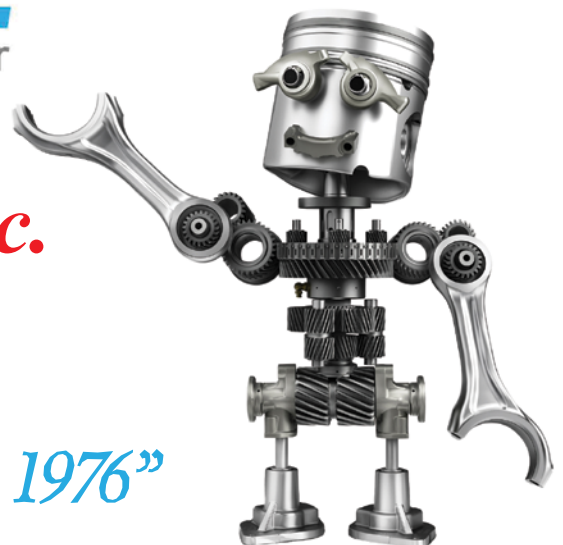


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Are You a Resource for State Legislators?

As the Michigan Legislature returns and discussions on road funding continue, CRA, the media and the public will continue to turn up the pressure for a road funding solution.

While good communication with lawmakers has always been important, it's now more important than ever for county road agencies and other transportation advocates to have positive relationships with members of the Legislature and focus on being a resource to their elected officials.

Many counties have coordinated meetings with the State Representatives and State Senators who serve their area for coffee and conversation. **Otsego County Road Commission** recently invited their state senator and state representatives for a tour of their facility and helped the legislators understand the road, bridge, equipment and other needs in Otsego County.

In some rural areas multiple counties sometimes work together to host meetings.

Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw and Ontonagon County Road Commissions regularly meet jointly with Rep. Scott Dianda (D-Keweenaw) on road commission issues. This type of joint meeting makes it convenient for legislators with large districts to learn about and become advocates for road issues.

These meetings are a great way to build relationships and open dialogue with legislators when there is not an "ask" involved. Counties meeting with legislators have found success with:

- Preparing data on the county's road and bridge conditions, age and condition of equipment, and employee staff levels;
- Providing information on steps taken to keep benefit costs down, pay down retirement and health care liabilities, and other reforms and efficiencies instituted by the agency;
- Bringing in local economic development, tourism or agriculture representatives to help reinforce the county road system's needs; and
- Coordinating a state of the county roads event to share annual report data, needs and progress with county residents.

If your county or organization focuses on serving as a resource for legislators, they will want to know where you stand on transportation issues that come before the Legislature. While the main issue on everyone's agenda now is road funding, these meetings will eventually provide a great opportunity to report progress made and how road agencies are using new funds.

Building relationships and making it a priority to be a resource for your elected officials will open up doors that will benefit your county road agency for years to come. ---



From left: Rob Laitinen, Superintendent-Manager, Chippewa CRC; Jim Iwanicki, Engineer-Manager, Marquette CRC; State Sen. Tom Casperson; Craig Kelso, Engineer-Manager, Schoolcraft CRC; and Bernie Lund, Commissioner, Schoolcraft CRC.

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→ **CRA** How's That Again?

"C-R-A." That's how to pronounce the County Road Association's new acronym. Three short letters: "C-R-A."

For the last year, the Association has been moving away from "CRAM," as the acronym used. While it's snappy and memorable, it's often first seen as hostile or uncivil, even. One chain of radio stations said, "For most groups we use their initials on the second mention of an interview. Of course with you – with CRAM – we can't do that."

The name of the organization is still the County Road Association of Michigan, but it's pronounced "C-R-A," for short.



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