

Crossroads

The Quarterly Journal of the County Road Association of Michigan

Volume 5 | Issue 3

Spring 2020

AROUND THE BEND: CALHOUN COUNTY'S S-SHAPED CULVERT EARNS HONORS

See who else took home awards this fall [Page 17](#)



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Cass County using soybeans to rejuvenate roads
Midland's virtual town hall meeting on road issues



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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 county 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 county road system including stewardship of the county road right-of-way in rural and urban Michigan.

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ON THE COVER:

The Calhoun County Road Department constructed an innovative S-shaped culvert on Halbert Road. The department won the Michigan Concrete Association Award of Excellence in the Structural and Transportation Category in recognition of their work.

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Next Publication

Theme for Summer 2020 *Crossroads* will cover new and innovative tools and techniques to be used in the construction season.

Crossroads' editorial team wants to hear from you! Call CRA at 517.482.1189 and share ideas for future issues.

Read **Crossroads** online!
Visit micountyroads.org/Crossroads.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



In March 2019, when **Road Commission of Kalamazoo County** manager **Joanna Johnson** handed over the reins to the CRA presidency, she warned me how fast the year would fly by. As I approach the end of my term, I look back and realize how right she was! 2019 flew by, but in the end, for many great reasons.

As with most people, it seems that the busier I get, the faster time disappears. And, as with most of our 83 county road agencies, our 2019 was about as busy as it could get. With new money coming in, and innovation and resourcefulness at peak levels, 2019 took on a new energy not seen in this state in many years. As I traveled around the state for various functions, the most notable item I found was an optimistic energy for repairing and maintaining our 90,000 miles of county roads.

In every corner of the state, counties were bursting at the seams with road, bridge and right-of-way projects. In every county I visited, projects were being built, and agencies pushed to their limits. Even as the pressure built, the optimism and vitality of the road agencies shone through. Managers, engineers and commissioners were proud to be able to take care of some "wish list" projects and ultimately serve the public in a little better capacity.

And while the funding increase of 2015 has helped, unfortunately, we have not yet reached the finish line! I am very proud to have served in this last year, as CRA staff

members have worked so hard to help all areas of the state government explore solutions. I have been amazed at their hard work, dedication and ability to navigate the maze of Lansing channels in trying to obtain a long-term funding solution. You have a very hardworking and capable staff advocating on your behalf, and I look forward to seeing what they will accomplish in 2020.

As my time as CRA president begins to wind down, I want to thank everyone from our CRA family. Thank you for what you do for our state and for your county road agencies. I was fortunate enough to visit many corners of this state in the past year, and everywhere I went, I was able to see the time and dedication our CRA members have put into our road system. The words "thank you" can be a rarity in this business, but each and every one of you continues to dedicate your time and talent to improving our roads, to the best of your ability.

I am extremely honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve in 2019-2020 as the CRA president. And so, I simply say "thank you," and wish each and every one of you a safe, productive and Happy New Year in 2020.

Thank you,

David Pettersch
CRA President
Managing Director
Gladwin County Road Commission

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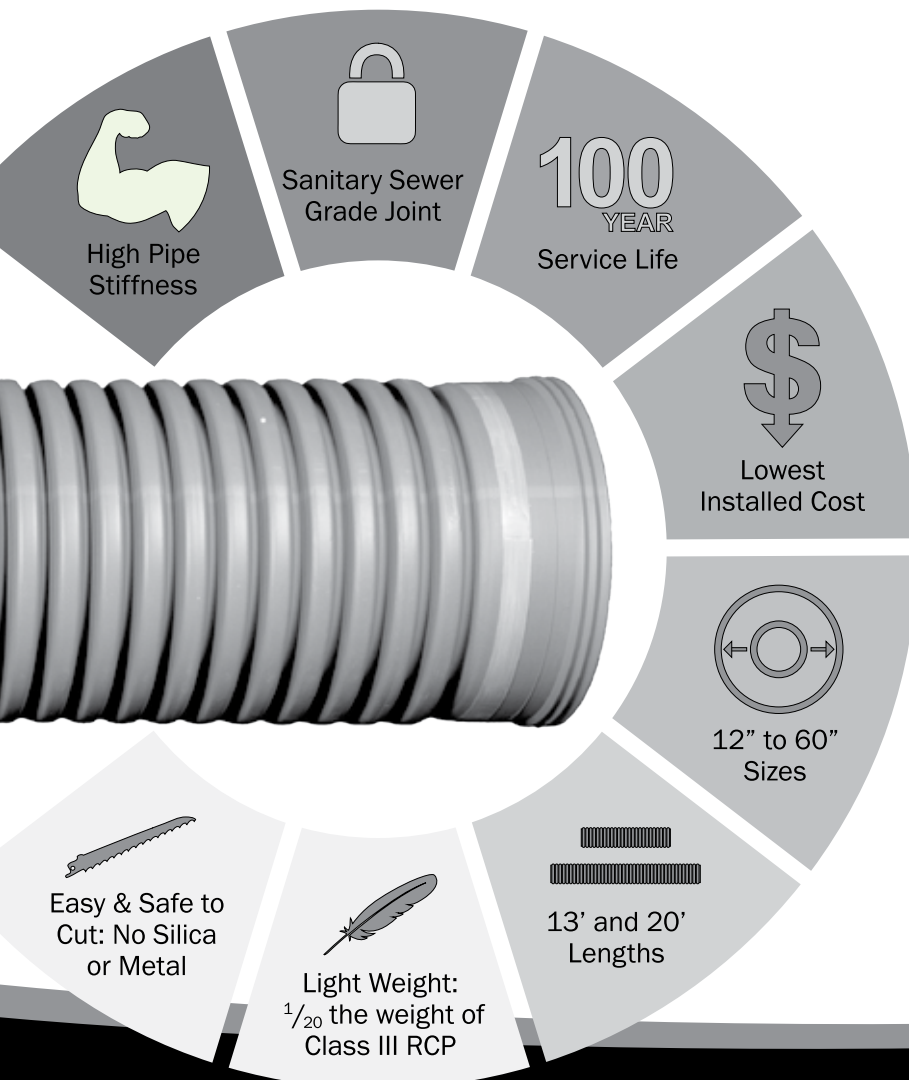
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✚ *Dennis Borchard, managing director, speaks with Travis Hare, EIT, assistant engineer.*

MEMBER PROFILE

SAGINAW COUNTY



Continuously rethinking productivity, safety and relationships

*Like many county road agencies across the state, the **Saginaw County Road Commission's (SCRC)** biggest concern isn't the roads: It's keeping open dialogue going among all of its constituents, elected officials and businesses that use the county's 1,850 miles of roads.*

*"The biggest focus since I've been the managing director the last eight years is communication," said **Dennis Borchard**, SCRC managing director and a 30-year veteran of the agency. "We put a big priority on all 27 of our townships, and we've divided up our staff into five districts, each with a foreman as the point of contact so that we respond swiftly."*

Working with townships

SCRC believes a good working relationship begins with good information. The road commission rates all of its primary roads annually, and all local [paved] roads every other year. This information is shared with all 27 townships, including at five district meetings held each February.

"These meetings are where we start educating the public, the townships and the media," Borchard said. "As of six months ago, all townships have access to SCRC's GIS system so they can see history of maintenance and PASER [Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating system] ratings."

SCRC and townships mutually agree on priorities for road improvements in the coming year.

By 2022, SCRC will have completed its full asset management plan as required by Michigan law. This will help asset-driven progress in the county. "Having a road plan like this is huge to help us all think strategically," said Borchard.

On an annual basis, SCRC works "with each township individually, depending on how much money they have available to assist with local projects," he said.

Dispersing road funds among townships.
A challenge for road agencies as new

funds arrive, is to reconsider board policies that ensure transparency and fairness in road improvements across the county.

Saginaw has a formula that allocates a certain portion of the road commission's budget to each township. The formula includes SCRC's Michigan Transportation Funds (MTF) multiplied by a factor, the township's mileage and population, and that becomes the township budget allocation – which is matched 50-50 by SCRC. The road commission board has increased the factor three percentage points since 2016. Any planned local work above SCRC's annual allocation becomes 100% township responsibility.

JUST THE

Facts:

Saginaw County Road Commission

Office headquarters:	Saginaw
Staff:	72 full-time 6 temps/part-time
No. of Commissioners:	5 (appointed)
Miles of road:	
Total paved:	1,594 Primary: 244 Local: 1,350
Total unpaved:	257 Primary: 1 Local: 256
MDOT Contract:	No
No. of Bridges:	2,027
Annual Revenue Budget:	\$29,346,250 (FY 2019)
Local Revenue:	\$3,115,000 (FY 2019)
Annual Snowfall:	42 inches
SCRC established:	1917
No. of Garages:	3
Office Built:	1968

FUN FACT: Saginaw was birthplace to the creator of the current American flag. Robert Heft created the 50-star flag for a school project in Lancaster, Ohio, wheeling his B- into an A in the process. Of the 1,500 designs submitted to President Eisenhower, Congress selected the drawing submitted by the Saginaw native.

This increases work being done on the local roads, but also raises the amount of matching dollars from the township. "Some of the smaller townships have had a hard time finding the match, no question," Borchard said.

Efficiency gains for SCRC

In recent years, SCRC efficiencies include improvements to the county's primary maintenance garage. The road commission re-insulated the building, added lighting sensors and LED lighting, and got a rebate on almost everything.

Installing generators about three years ago, has also paid off in work continuity.

"About a decade ago, we had the opportunity to get a pair of generators

from FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] at no cost," said Borchard. "We never had the funds to install them. Well, we figured that out in 2016. Now when the power goes out, which seems to happen a couple times a year, we keep the staff working, and we can de-ice the trucks overnight."

SCRC has also repurposed an old trucking hub of a dry-cleaning company on the Saginaw outskirts near the road agency, which allows indoor storage of mowers, salters, sewer jets, sweepers, brush hogs and other equipment. Inside storage reduces equipment maintenance costs and delays due to damages.

Borchard, who holds a B.S. from Michigan State University and a master's degree in education and supervision from Saginaw Valley State University, noted the road agency had 100 employees when he took over the front office in 2011. Staffing dropped to 60 at one point, and is now at a more functional 72.

With fewer staff members, work levels have been maintained by outsourcing surveying, getting two-lane wing plows on all front-line trucks, adding a "swap" loader to convert a truck into different uses, buying a portable hoist for roadside fleet repairs and new equipment to enable chip sealing with SCRC's own forces.

"We have become very efficient on chip seal treatment," said SCRC's maintenance director **Dan Medina**. "We normally perform 100 miles of chip seal per year but in 2019 we achieved 170 miles in eight weeks with the new equipment.

"Getting this work done in eight weeks gave us time to get back to ditching, tree-cutting, emptying catch basins and removing berms along the road's edge to keep water off the road," Medina said.

What's new in Saginaw?

Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) System – SCRC has just upgraded its AVL to a new software module that provides the date and time of road activities, and interacts with SCRC's website.

Five miles of "Texas underseal" – This technique is new to Saginaw and consists of milling off 2 inches of old pavement, putting down a fiber mat with fiberglass shavings, adding 1½ inches of asphalt and a chip seal finish. This work was performed by a contractor and is anticipated to last for 10 years.

Re-opening a bridge closed for three years – Saginaw used its first aluminum box culvert in 2019, reopening a 26-foot Jonesfield Township bridge. The aluminum structure is lightweight and less expensive with the same strength as a traditional single-span bridge.

Upcycled scrap tires – SCRC has used an EGLE Scrap Tire Grant to incorporate old tires into the pavement of several two-lane road projects since 2000.

Red "lollipop" reflectors – SCRC has been adding red reflectors on stop signs at high-risk intersections in recent years.

Box span traffic signals – A subtle change to the way traffic signals are hung makes the lights more visible.



✚ An aluminum box culvert being installed on Chapin Road Bridge in Jonesfield Township.

Experimenting with aggregate

Anyone who thinks roads are all the same doesn't understand road agency work! SCRC is currently experimenting with the size and type of aggregate it uses in road projects, which makes a surprisingly significant improvement.

"Over the last four years we've offered our townships options when added material is needed for their gravel roads. They are able to select from 23A limestone, 23A natural gravel, and we also tried screened asphalt millings," Borchard said.

"I've always said this: How we do things here at the Saginaw County Road Commission is we treat people with respect," said Borchard, who serves on CRA's Roads+™ board. "We appreciate our people who do this work, and we have seen the morale greatly improved. From top to bottom, we are responsive to our county officials, our township officials and our board." ---



✚ An aluminum box culvert being installed on Chapin Road Bridge in Jonesfield Township.

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⊕ Decatur Road, Cass County, 2019. The top half of the road has been treated with a soybean additive.

Cracking the case: Cass County uses soybeans to rejuvenate roads

You've heard of soymilk. You've heard of soy sauce. But did you know soybeans are being used in *asphalt*?

Soybeans are a key component of BIORESTOR®, which is sprayed on roads in liquid form and absorbed into the asphalt surface to act as a rejuvenator. It re-softens pavement that has been hardened by the asphalt production process.

The **Cass County Road Commission (CCRC)** began using this innovative technology in 2015 and has applied the road treatment every year since. Their first project – a 2½-inch overlay on a two-mile stretch of Decatur Road – was a success.

"We'd been experimenting and looking at other treatment alternatives," **Joe Bellina**, PE, CCRC chief engineer, said. "The standards are thin overlays, asphalt overlays and chip seals. We wanted to see if there were any other marketable items that would suit our purposes and give us additional longevity in our pavement life. At the same time, we wanted it to be cost effective and friendlier to the motoring public."

At two-thirds the cost of standard chip seal, the soybean-based rejuvenator was a winning solution. CCRC has already seen a reduction in cracking and raveling on the surface layer of asphalt.

"So far the product has done exactly what we hoped it would do," Bellina said. "We'll continue to evaluate as we make our secondary applications to see if this product maintains its life."

Best of both worlds

CCRC performed a series of water infiltration tests to make sure BIORESTOR® was keeping the pavement sealed and blocking water from getting in.

Bellina noted that in the first year of application, CCRC didn't see the kind of cracking they'd find in a normal surface roadway. "The cracking was far less prevalent and less water was coming back through from the underlying pavement," he said.





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According to Lisa Harris, owner of Roadway Bioseal, CCRC's supplier, BIORESTOR® is known for enhancing asphalt performance properties and longevity.

Compared to traditional sealants, the pavement rejuvenator has also performed well in terms of visual appeal.

"This road treatment is a clear substance, so it doesn't affect the appearance of the roadway," Bellina said. "It keeps the pavement a little darker than the normal oxidation process as viewed by the traveling public, but unlike seal coat or chip seal, there isn't a visible difference. I think so far it's a little more friendly to the traveling public than some of the standard procedures."

Looking to the future

The Jackson County Department of Transportation (JCDOT) is also testing out the product; after extensive research, they

began their first project in fall 2019. Like CCRC, JCDOT was looking for alternatives to the traditional chip seal.

"Our research has shown that bio-based rejuvenator helps with pavement aging and softens the binder and asphalt," **Bret Taylor**, PE, JCDOT senior civil engineer, said. "We're pretty confident it's going to work here, too."

JCDOT's goal is to treat 35-40 miles of road; in 2019, they completed 18.6 miles. The department has plans to continue the process this year.

In Cass County, Bellina is pleased with the results so far.

"Any product we can use that can cut down the cracking and prevent water infiltration into the pavement at a reasonable cost is helpful to our roads and the public as a whole," Bellina said. "If we can reduce water infiltration and lengthen the lifespan of the treatments we apply, that's all for the better." ---

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LEGISLATOR PROFILE



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE LEE CHATFIELD

Representative Chatfield, of Levering, was elected to the House of Representatives in 2014. Five years later, he was selected as Speaker of the House – the youngest Speaker in Michigan in over 100 years. He represents the 107th District, which includes Chippewa, Emmet and Mackinac counties, and parts of Cheboygan County.

He was a high school teacher, coach and athletic director before beginning his legislative career.

CRA's deputy director **Ed Noyola** and *Crossroads* recently spoke with Rep. Chatfield to discuss his experience working on transportation issues at the State Capitol.

system for building them will free up critical resources and give Michigan families the ability to drive to school and to work without worry. We need to get this done.

I look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues in the Senate and with Gov. Whitmer to find the best way forward to fix our roads and finally solve this growing issue. We need to work together to find a plan that fixes the roads without breaking the household budgets of the families we represent and that makes smart reforms so we don't have to come back again and again to fix this issue every few years.

The House has been working on a package of reforms that will make our road building process more efficient and more effective, and I am going to make sure those changes are part of any comprehensive plan we come up with going forward.

CRA: How has your view of county road agencies changed over the years and/or what have you learned about county road agencies since the beginning of your legislative career?

Rep. Chatfield: I am not a career politician by trade, and I did not have much experience working with my local road agency when I first came into office. But this is an important issue in our area and all across the state, so I made sure to get up to speed quickly. Fortunately, serving at the Capitol has given me the opportunity to work with road builders and local government officials from all over Michigan over the past few years and to see how each local community handles its own unique issues and challenges to solving this current infrastructure crisis. I've learned a lot in that time about what they need on the ground to get the job done and to get it done well.

CRA: Can you tell us about your relationships with road agencies in your district?

Rep. Chatfield: One of the hardest things about a complicated issue like

CRA: Tell us a little about your background and how you got to this impressive level in politics.

Rep. Chatfield: I've always been interested in government and public policy, but to be honest I never saw myself running for office. It was simply a personal interest and academic pursuit. But after a few years of being a father and teaching at my alma mater in northern Michigan, I began to feel like I could and should do more.

My kids were born in the same hospital I was; they attend the same school I did; they play in the same rivers and lakes I swam in; and they rode their bikes on the same streets that I did growing up. They are going to inherit my community, our Great Lakes and this entire state from us. That means a lot to me, and I want to make sure they have the best opportunities and the strongest communities possible.

My civics students and I talked about the founding fathers, our Constitution and our unique American system of

laws. I couldn't help but see how our government was falling short of the promises we've been given and how much we needed leaders to step up and be willing to serve. Eventually, my family and I decided the time was right and the need was strong enough for me to put my name forward.

This has all happened very fast, but I wouldn't trade the opportunity to serve the state I call home or make the important reforms we've accomplished for anything.

CRA: Infrastructure improvements and transportation funding continues to be the number-one topic among Michigan residents. What role do you see yourself playing in the continuing discussion about infrastructure improvements and future increased transportation revenue?

Rep. Chatfield: Michigan's crumbling roads and bridges drain away local taxpayer resources, hurt job growth and prevent cities and neighborhoods from attracting new residents. Funding our roads and reforming the complicated

road repairs and funding its multi-billion dollar budget is finding reliable data and consistent information across the many different local and statewide interests to help guide our decisions. The best way to cut through that clutter is to go straight to the local officials and industry experts who can provide me with an unbiased and no frills take on what needs to get done to fix the roads I see every day. That sort of reliable information and education on the fly is critical when we gather to build the best possible policies for our state's future.

CRA: What can county road agencies do to keep you and their legislators informed on recent and upcoming transportation issues?

Rep. Chatfield: No one can be an expert in every issue area, and that goes double for state representatives who are working on a dozen different things at any one time. We all need to work

together on the state budget and on road repair issues, but not everyone has a background in a related issue area. That means we have a significant need for reliable experts to provide facts, figures and perspective when decisions are being made. The simple truth is there is no substitute for personal experience and first-hand knowledge.

We rely on our local experts to share their years of knowledge and technical expertise so we can put together plans that last for years to come. Everyone with experience in road repairs should absolutely reach out to my office or their local representative and share any ideas they may have as we continue to work on this year's budget. There is no downside to having more information and more ideas to choose from.

CRA: What are your top two or three local transportation concerns (pavement,

bridges, truck weights, wetlands, gravel pits, permits, logging, local/farm roads, recreational access to roads, etc.) and why?

Rep. Chatfield: Michigan has tried raising taxes, and it has tried bonding. But our roads are worse than ever. No matter what we do, we will continue to fall further and further behind until we fix the root of the problem, which is that some of the taxes paid on gas are siphoned off to other state spending. We need to make sure every dollar paid at the pump goes to fix our roads before we simply throw more money into a system that spends it in all the wrong places.

This is simply common sense to the people of Michigan. People are stunned to find out this isn't already happening. I believe we need to fix this problem and make sure the state is using every dollar it already has for roads before we even consider going back to the people to ask for more. --

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Award SPOTLIGHT

The **Calhoun County Road Department (CCRD)** has won the Michigan Concrete Association (MCA) Award of Excellence in the Structural and Transportation Category. Each year, MCA honors outstanding concrete projects constructed the previous year.

Awards are chosen based on innovation, quality, speed of construction and/or complexity of the project.

CCRD received the award for its work on the Halbert Road culvert crossing Wabascon Creek. The road department replaced the existing culvert with an innovative S-shaped culvert. Fitting within budget and environmental constraints, the project was designed to accommodate the surrounding wetland and fit within the right-of-way. CCRD worked with Northern Concrete Pipe, Inc., and Whiteman Construction over three weeks.

"It was a dream project," said **Kristine Parsons, PE**, CCRD director of engineering. "It's nice to be a part of something so innovative. We've never done anything like this before. It's great to be recognized for a challenge you truly overcame. When a team of people works hard, we really appreciate being recognized."



+ Halbert Road before construction.



+ During construction.



+ Completed project.



Undertaking innovation

Recently, the **Ottawa County Road Commission (OCRC)** won the Innovative Idea Award at the Midwest Branch Snowplow Rodeo. OCRC was recognized for their work on the guardrail grading skid-steer attachment.



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Bottom row (left to right): Audra Morse, Michigan Tech CEE Department Chair; Cole Ruohonen; Steven Smendzuik; Rebekah Goodreau; Michigan Tech President Rick Koubek

Middle row (left to right): Sarah Lindbeck, Travis Havercamp, Max Maloney, Jason Lindbeck, Brandon Schultz

Top row (left to right): UPRB John Cima, PE, Houghton County Road Commission; Joe Cooper, Michigan Tech Financial Aid; Gregg Patrick, PE, Keweenaw County Road Commission; Kevin Harju, PE, Houghton County Road Commission; Doug Mills, PE, Baraga County Road Commission; Tim Colling, Michigan Tech CEE

Scholarship Awards

At last year's UP Road Builders Conference, 10 Michigan Technological University students received scholarships. The UP Road Builders grant these awards to students majoring in civil engineering or surveying. At left, nine recipients pose on the Michigan Tech campus.

Asphalt Paving Awards

In December 2019, two road commissions were honored for their work with the industry at the annual Asphalt Paving Awards.

The awards are sponsored by the Asphalt Pavement Association of Michigan (APAM) and the Michigan Department of Transportation. Paving projects constructed by an APAM contractor member are eligible for these awards.

Category: Projects 2,500 to 10,000 Tons

Award of Merit: Whitneyville Avenue, Kent County
Contractor: Superior Asphalt, Inc.

Owner: **Kent County Road Commission**

Award of Excellence: North Conway Road, Emmet County

Contractor: Rieth-Riley Construction, Co., Inc.-
Levering Plant

Owner: **Emmet County Road Commission**

Category: Local Agency Projects

Award of Merit: Lincoln Lake Avenue, Kent County
Contractor: Superior Asphalt, Inc.

Owner: **Kent County Road Commission**

Don't miss
CRA's IMPRESS awards
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Dickinson County Road Commission

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Road Commission of Kalamazoo County

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Terry Palmer, PE
Managing Director (*retired*)
Midland County Road Commission



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Members, with their indispensable library of road agency knowledge, are one of CRA's most valuable resources for information. The new IT Listserv helps connect IT specialists to each other.

To sign up or for more information, contact Dustin at the CRA office at 517.482.1189 or dearley@micountyroads.org. 

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#NeedHelp: CRA's new IT Listserv for cybersecurity concerns

Highway Conference breakout session
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No, really. You take the road.

Sorting out the angst of road abandonment



CRA'S Legal Issues Corner

Editor's Note: This feature by CRA Legal Counsel Mike Levine is an extension of his remarks on road abandonment during the CRA Legal Issues Forum in December 2019. We thought all CRA members would like to read more on the subject.

What happens when the road agency really doesn't need to maintain a road any longer? How can you legally get rid of the responsibilities? The situation comes up so infrequently that many road agencies are not familiar with the process.

County road commissions and departments are empowered to absolutely abandon and discontinue any county road or part of a road under their jurisdiction. Neither the Legislature nor the courts have the power to alter or abandon county roads.

Steps to follow

The procedure for abandoning a road right-of-way (ROW) is established by statute MCL 224.18. The statute contains a very detailed set of steps that must be followed in order to properly abandon a road.

Access to a public road is a property interest. Abandonment of a road that results in an abutting owner's loss of the owner's sole access to a public road is the taking of the right to ingress and egress for which the abutting owner is entitled to compensation.

At first glance, the statutory abandonment process appears complicated. It is helpful to understand that each step in the process is intended to identify all parties whose property interests may be affected by the abandonment and to provide notice to all affected parties and members of the community when a road abandonment is proposed.

Careful compliance with each step of the statutory process protects the road commission from claims that an abutting owner's property interest was impaired by a road abandonment.

The petition. All abandonments must be initiated by petition signed by seven or more freeholders. A road commission may not initiate a road abandonment on its own motion or consider an abandonment petition signed by fewer than seven freeholders.

The petition must describe the road in general terms or by any name the road or that portion of the road which the petitioners seek to abandon. The petition must be accompanied by a true and correct list of the names and mailing addresses of the owners and occupants of each parcel of land abutting the road, or portion of the road to be abandoned, which must be certified under oath by one of the petitioners.

If a petition for abandonment of a road or portion of a road contains the signatures of all of the owners of record and occupants of land abutting the road, as confirmed by the records in the office of the Register of Deeds and the certified list that must accompany the petition, the road commission must act on the petition within 20 days after receiving the petition.

Additional actions are required when abandonments initiated by a petition are not signed by all owners and occupants of land abutting the road or portion of a road sought to be abandoned.

The hearing. In that situation, the road commission must set a date and location for a hearing to consider the petition and issue a written notice stating the object of the petition and the time and location of the hearing. The notice must be served on the township or municipality in which the road is located, all owners and occupants of land abutting the road and on any abutting railroad company.

Before acting on an abandonment petition, the road commission, its superintendent or an engineer employed by the road commission must view the road sought to be abandoned.

The hearing on the petition may be conducted by the road commission or a hearing officer who must report all finding of fact to the road commission.

After the public hearing, a majority of the board shall determine by resolution, on which a "yea" or "nay" vote shall be recorded,

**At first glance,
the statutory
abandonment process
appears complicated.**

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County Road Association
OF MICHIGAN

the necessity or advisability of abandoning the road as requested in the petition and whether “the abandonment is in the public interest.”

The resolution. Following adoption of a resolution abandoning a road, the resolution must be recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, notice given to the township or municipality in which the road is located and a notice of abandonment published for three successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation.

Additionally, within 30 days of adopting a resolution abandoning a road, the road commission must file a full record of the proceedings with MDOT.

The filing. In all instances when a petition is filed to abandon a road or portion of a road ending at a body of water that will result in the loss of public access, the road commission must notify the township or municipality in which the road is located, as well as MDOT and MDNR that abandonment would result in a loss of public access.

The aftermath. Once a road is abandoned, the road no longer exists as a public road and the road commission no longer has any responsibility to maintain it.

Full use of the property where an abandoned road-occupied

ROW under a highway easement reverts to the adjoining owners. The ROW of an abandoned road of which the road commission has fee simple ownership does not revert to the adjoining owners.

When a county road within a recorded plat is abandoned, owners within the plat retain rights to use the road until a court issues an order pursuant to the Land Division Act vacating the road from the plat.

Common law abandonment, sometimes referred to as abandonment by nonuse, is still recognized in Michigan. Courts apply this common law principle to decide whether a road continues to exist when there are gaps in the public record regarding the use or ownership of land that at one time may have been used as a road.

Common law abandonment is difficult to prove because both an intent to relinquish the road and external acts putting that intention into effect must be shown by the party asserting abandonment.

The abandonment section of the County Road Law is a useful tool that authorizes county road commissions to remove roads from their system that no longer serve the public and end their responsibility to maintain little-used roads. Road commissions should review their policies and procedures for road abandonments to be sure they comply with the most recent version of the statute. ---



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The virtual town hall meeting for roads: Esri-based survey promotes public involvement

In an increasingly digitalized and frenetic world, the road agency usually has a tough time getting more than a dozen people to a town hall meeting to get feedback on road issues. What if a mobile device allowed residents to give feedback at their own time and place?

Are online forums the new town hall? The **Midland County Road Commission (MCRC)** decided to find out.

When the agency began exploring the option for a full interchange at US-10 and Waldo Road, they realized one thing was missing: The public's opinion. MCRC didn't want to move ahead without hearing what residents thought. Thus came the idea of an online public survey.

Ashley Rockefeller, GIS technician, and **Russ Inman**, design engineer, took the lead on the project.

"Accomplishing a massive project for a full interchange with many stakeholders would be a big undertaking for Midland," Inman said. "We were talking internally about what's the best approach moving forward. We *thought* the community would support us, but that was just a hunch. We were looking at it from our limited perspective."

"So we started asking ourselves, 'should we pursue this?'" Inman said. "We had to determine if we wanted to allocate our time and resources to help this project along. And we thought it would be great to hear what the public thought about it."

MCRC had previously used an online survey, seeking opinions on new road sign designs. The staff learned valuable lessons from it, which helped them adjust the interchange project survey to be more successful.

Mapping the future

MCRC decided to experiment with Esri, a GIS mapping software and spatial data analytics technology. The software allows companies to track and analyze spatial or geographic data.

To capture public input on the interchange proposal, MCRC used Esri's Survey123 in their booth at the Midland County Fair. MCRC advertised the survey on a display board and encouraged residents to scan the QR code or type in a web

10 Proposed Full Interchange Waldo Road at US-10



➕ MCRC's advertisement for the interchange project survey.

address to access the questionnaire. Residents could read about the proposed interchange and share opinions.

Thirty-six people responded to the interchange survey at the fair, and when it was posted on social media after the fair, the response was truly astounding. MCRC received over 1,700 responses in one day!

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+ Survey results pinpointing the locations of the respondents.

The simple survey had only two questions: 1) Where did the respondent live? and 2) Did he or she support the project? Respondents could also leave comments. Geographic data helped plot the location of each survey respondent, which MCRC used to correlate opinions with proximity to the proposed project site.

People from 26 Michigan counties and seven states responded, showing the loyalty of respondents who had moved away from Midland. MCRC recorded 2,765 responses to the survey at the end of two months, with 95% affirming a “go-ahead” to the project.

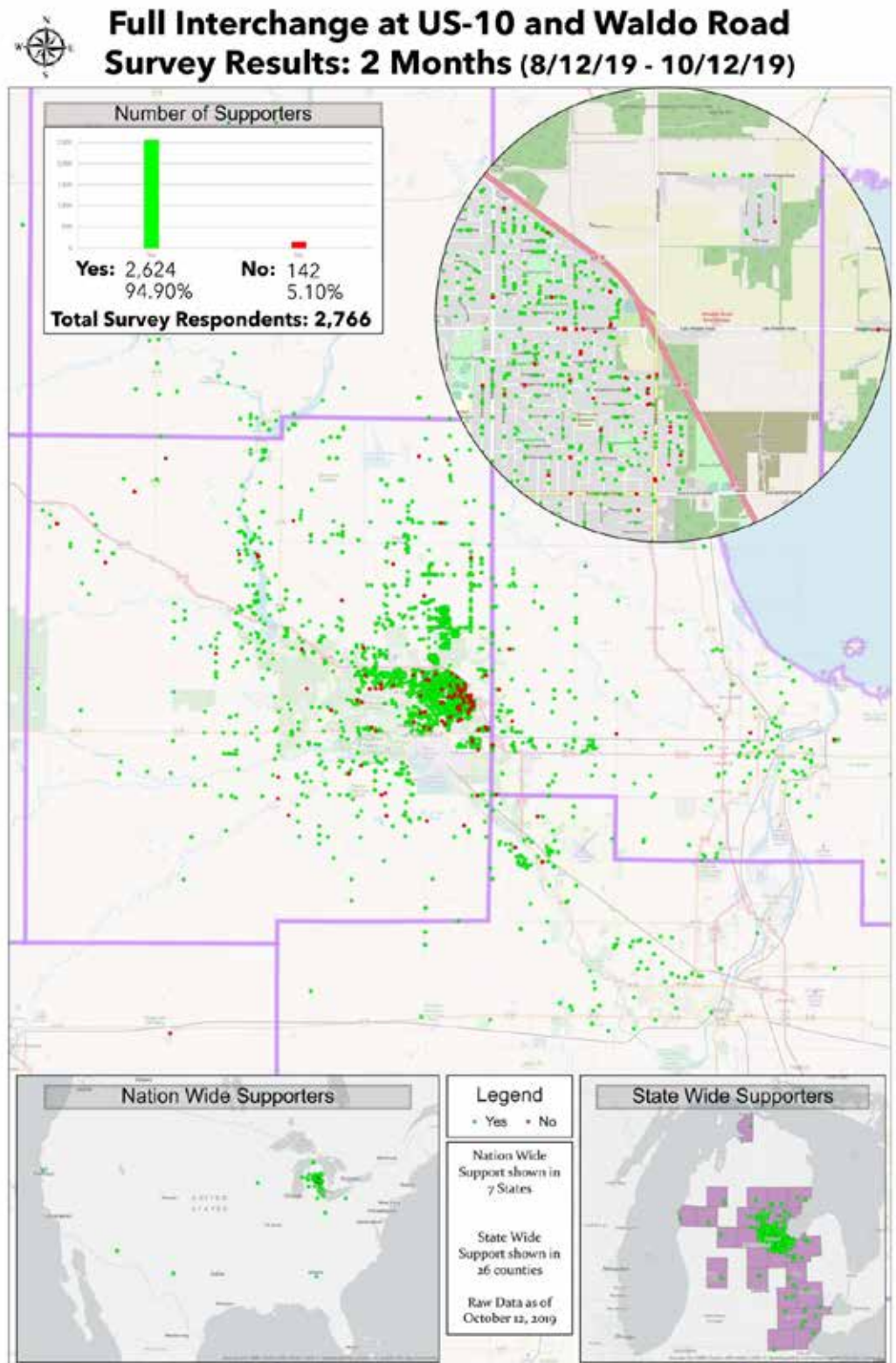
Tool in our belt

Upon reviewing the comments, Rockefeller noticed an impressive amount of positive feedback.

“People love having opportunities to share their voices,” Rockefeller said. “I enjoyed being a part of this project and am proud of how it turned out. It allowed us to really connect with residents and work together toward a common goal.”

The next step in the process is for MDOT to conduct an interchange feasibility study for the Midland area.

“I think the survey system is going to be a tool in our belt now that we’re going to use more often,” Inman said. “When you’re exploring long-range plans and projects, it’s a great way to get the public involved. It’s key to get that support and actually listen to the public.”



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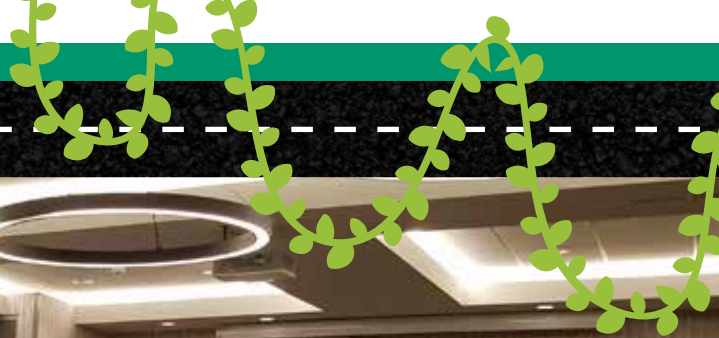
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Ask...

the Michigan Invasive Species Program



+ Christina Baugher, aquatic invasive species biologist, MDNR, presents at the Invasive Species Workshop, held in Mt. Pleasant in October 2019.

MDNR, MDEGLE, MDARD and county road agencies are teaming up to tame invasive species

Time and again, put a challenge in front of a county road agency and it sets a new bar for excellence. Take the **Barry County Road Commission (BCRC)** and its fight against invasive species in the right-of-way (ROW). In summer of 2017, the Barry, Calhoun, Kalamazoo Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (BCK-CISMA) came to BCRC to look at how the two agencies could form a partnership to identify areas where invasive species had taken root in Barry County.

The two agencies set up a contest. BCRC truck drivers were trained to identify a few key invasive species, report sightings to the BCRC office and BCK-CISMA staff verified reports. Road commission staff was divided into teams, and the team with the most sightings that summer would win a party.

The winning BCRC team filed over 75 sightings of weedy invasives. Other BCRC teams together filed dozens more, enabling BCK-CISMA to develop an action plan and begin securing grants and other funds to address the problems.

"This is exactly the kind of partnership we look to help cultivate, and exactly the kind of program we look to support," said Joanne Foreman, communications coordinator for the Michigan Invasive Species Program (MISP), a cooperative program from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (MDEGLE), the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD).

Return of the Invasive Species Management Workshop!

April 2, 2020 | Treetops Resort, Gaylord

The story about Barry County Road Commission from this article was originally told at the Invasive Species Workshop held in October 2019. The event is coming back by popular demand this April in Gaylord.

Invasive species experts will present resources available to road agencies including community management efforts through CISMAs and available grants for control.

Tickets include donuts, snacks and a lunch opportunity to network with a local CISMA and build relationships!

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Crossroads recently chatted with Foreman about MISP, what it does and how it's working with county road agencies across the state.

Crossroads: Joanne, can you tell us how the MISP is structured and give us a broad overview of what it does?

Foreman: MISP brings together the specialists from MDEGLE, MDNR and MDARD that focus on invasive species on land and in the water, from the management and regulatory sides. Those specialists coordinate invasive species management efforts across the state.

We partner with all kinds of local agencies and other state departments, including MDOT. Invasive species cross jurisdictional boundaries; by supporting collaboration across local, regional and state organizations and agencies, the program cuts across those divides. It's really based in the idea of partnerships.

Crossroads: How does the program work with county road agencies?

Foreman: Because the program is a statewide effort, our desire is to work with all agencies across the state who touch land or water. With road agencies having control of the road and right-of-way, we can help through our Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) to develop a holistic approach to management, bringing together road agencies, landowners, and state and local land managers to tackle invasive species issues in a particular area.

Crossroads: What kind of funding solutions are available to county road agencies through the Michigan Invasive Species Program?

Foreman: Largely, our funding efforts work on a regional level through CISMAs. So, the approach that we strongly encourage is for county road agencies to work with CISMAs to focus on invasive species regionally. We offer \$3.6 million annually through the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program where we fund CISMAs, research and outreach projects with organizations such as universities, local governments and non-profit organizations.

Crossroads: Tell us a little about the Invasive Species Management Workshop CRA held in collaboration with MISP last October.

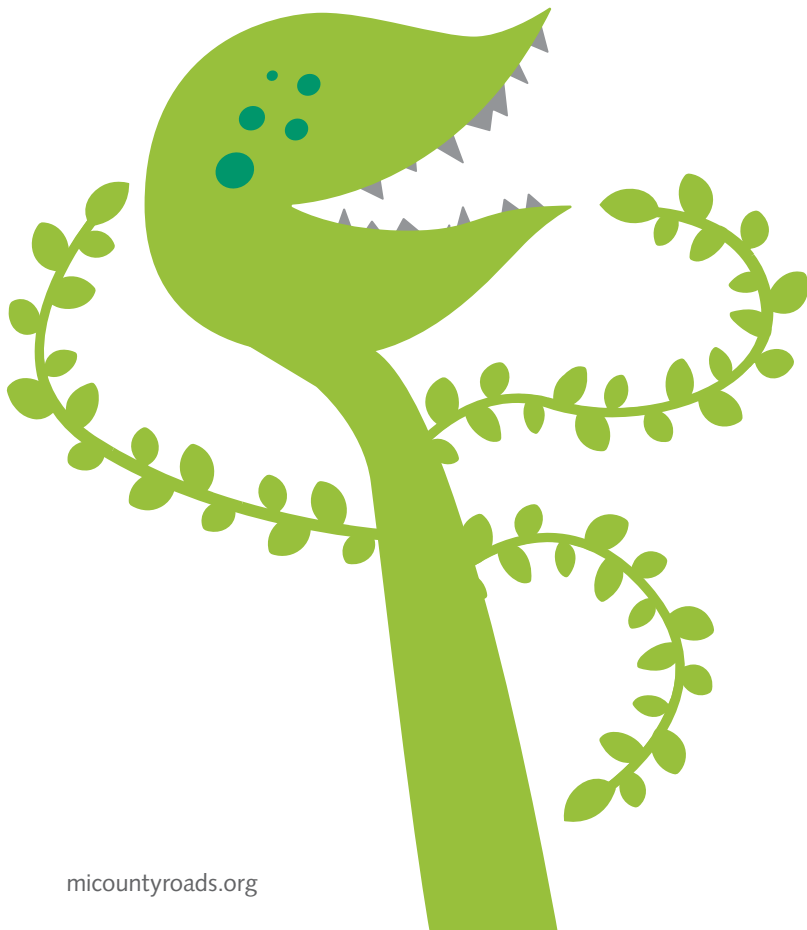
Foreman: That workshop offered the opportunity to introduce MISP to road agencies and introduce road agency representatives to CISMAs in their area. The fantastic part about that workshop was listening to how CISMAs are partnering with county road agencies to address invasive species management more efficiently and effectively at a local level.

Crossroads: What kind of feedback have you received from CISMAs and your office about the workshop?

Foreman: We've received very positive feedback, and interest from those who were not in attendance to meet and work with their county road agencies and attend the next workshop. Very, very positive!

Crossroads: Anything else you'd like to add?

Foreman: Invasive species are a growing issue in Michigan and they are affecting a lot of our infrastructure. Connecting road agencies with CISMAs allows everyone to benefit from the funding we have and keeps everyone informed on the latest scientific research and best practices in battling invasive species. This issue isn't going to go away by itself, but by engaging all the partners involved, we can make real progress. ---





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A tale of two mixes: Wexford County tests foamed asphalt and emulsion cold-in-place recycling

Ice cream and custard. They're different in many ways, but overall, they serve the same purpose – to satisfy the sweet tooth. The **Wexford County Road Commission (WCRC)** thinks differences are worth exploring, but instead of desserts, they're comparing what *roads* are made of.

Learning together

WCRC's latest innovation is their cold-in-place recycling technology, which compares two stabilizing agents – foamed asphalt and emulsified material – that are used for the same purpose. The process involves grinding up existing asphalt and mixing it with one of the stabilizing agents. When the foamed asphalt or emulsified material is added to the ground-up asphalt, it creates a layer of stabilized material that substantially increases pavement strength.

WCRC collaborated with J&N Construction on the cold-in-place recycling process, with J&N bids for each product virtually identical in cost. The partnership resulted in 2½ miles of freshly paved asphalt.

For WCRC and J&N Construction, using both methods on the same project was a new experiment. J&N had completed foamed asphalt jobs in the past, but this was the first time the company had combined it with emulsion. The two worked together to compare the methods and note differences – a learning process that benefited both organizations.



How does it work?

To create **foamed asphalt**, steam is added to superheated asphalt, which causes the asphalt to expand and foam up, allowing work crews to blend it with the pulverized asphalt.

Emulsion uses a product similar to that used for chip seal; the material is essentially asphalt, water and an emulsifying agent, which is blended with the pulverized asphalt.

Forging a new trail

In 2019, WCRC completed its first project on Mackinaw Trail between M-115 and the south county line, a highly traveled commercial trucking road. They laid one mile of foamed asphalt and 1½ miles of emulsion material.

To compare durability, WCRC is testing both the emulsion and foamed asphalt methods on a road with the same traffic pattern.

"Upon comparing the two mediums, we've learned that both emulsion and foamed asphalt have their advantages," **Karl Hanson**, PE, county highway engineer at WCRC, said.

"The foamed asphalt was slightly easier to construct and less susceptible to weather during construction. It develops structural strength from creating spot welds between the aggregate to achieve its strength. The appearance is more like a darker colored pulverized base.

"The emulsion stabilized base coats; the particles are similar to how hot mix asphalt (HMA) is made, creating the same appearance as regular HMA. The emulsion product reacted the same as HMA when it was milled. The test of both products will come over time as we evaluate long-term performance under the same loading."

Another key difference between foamed asphalt and emulsion is the time period between when the material is applied and when it can be paved over. Foamed asphalt sets within two to three days while emulsion takes at least a week to set.

These kinds of observations have allowed WCRC to think strategically about how they will apply materials in the future.

"The cold-in-place recycling method is an example of how WCRC is dedicated to innovation in the industry," Hanson said. "Exploring new ideas is an important part of what we do, and testing these processes is a way for us to grow and set an example for others in the field. We look forward to seeing the results in the future." 🚧

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CROSSROADS EVENT Calendar

March 10-12

2020 Highway Conference and Road Show

CRA's annual conference kicks off this March in downtown Lansing and includes keynoter Eric McElvenny, 27 educational breakout sessions and Michigan's largest transportation-focused indoor heavy equipment trade show, the Road Show!

REGISTRATION LIVE!

April 19-21

Commissioners Seminar

The Commissioners Seminar returns to Traverse City in 2020 for 2½ days of educational programming and networking opportunities for commissioners to learn and grow with their peers. Managing directors are invited!

REGISTRATION LIVE!

May 19-21

Finance & Human Resources Seminar

The can't-miss finance and human resources event of the year heads to beautiful Bay City in May. Expect presentations on the latest in finance and management for county road agencies.

To register and for details on all CRA events, visit www.micountyroads.org/events.



Key transitions at...

...Road Commissions and Departments

Lauren Aitch has been appointed commissioner for the **Eaton County Road Commission**.

Daniel Armentrout, PE, is now director of engineering at **Saginaw County Road Commission**.

Daniel Bishop is now managing director at **Van Buren County Road Commission**.

Elli Blonde has been hired as communications administrator for the **Road Commission of Kalamazoo County**.

William Carlson has been appointed commissioner for the **Marquette County Road Commission**.

Skylar Cudney is now civil engineer at the **Calhoun County Road Department**.

Justin Kelenske is now managing director at **Leelanau County Road Commission**.

Steve Koski has been appointed commissioner for the **Baraga County Road Commission**.

Jon Myers has been hired as managing director of the **Midland County Road Commission**.

Andrew Nichols is now maintenance superintendent for the **Muskegon County Road Commission**.

Dewayne Rodgers has been hired as manager of the **Clare County Road Commission**.

Paul Spitzley is now managing director at **Ionia County Road Commission**.

Derek Wawsczyk is now managing director at **Newaygo County Road Commission**.

Leroy Williams is now manager of the **Lake County Road Commission**.

...CRA

Rachael Cieslik has joined CRA as communications specialist. She was previously senior communications specialist at Olivet College and has a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University.

Mile Markers

Melvin Black has retired as commissioner for the **Muskegon County Road Commission** after 10 years of service.

Dave Hall has retired as commissioner for the **Marquette County Road Commission** after 13 years of service.

Dianne Hersey has retired from the **Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC)** after 32 years of service. Hersey originally retired from RCOC in 2008 after 27 years. She returned in 2014 as RCOC Legal Department general counsel, retiring again in December. Hersey was chair of the CRA Legal Issues Forum.

Terry Palmer, PE, has retired as managing director of the **Midland County Road Commission** after five years of service.

Dorothy Pohl, CPA, has retired as managing director of the **Ionia County Road Commission** after 27 years of service. Pohl served on the CRA board of directors as secretary/treasurer for 16 years.

Kelly Smith has retired as managing director of the **Newaygo County Road Commission** after 34 years of service. Smith served on CRA's board of directors and as chair of the General Policy Committee and Legislative Review Committee.

Do you have a staff member you want recognized in *Crossroads*? Contact Dustin Earley at 517.482.1189 or dearley@micountyroads.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE



Road funding: Here we go again!

2020 road funding efforts led me to Google the phrase "here we go again."

It's found in no fewer than eight albums dating back to the Kingston Trio (1959), about 20 individual recorded songs, two TV series and a 1942 film. We all use the phrase in everyday speaking, usually with humor.

So, there's nothing new about either the phrase or the return to resolving long-term road funding in Michigan.

Maybe 2020 will prove providential – the time our leaders get a clear, agreeable vision on the next steps.

Pundits agree that if House and Senate leaders and Governor Whitmer can't find a solution for new revenue by April, the election cycle will take over and we'll be on hold again.

And that would be unfortunate! Because by 2021 all new road funding from the 2015 package will be in the bag, and only inflationary increases will follow. While the roads and bridges continue to deteriorate, and MDOT roads benefit from the \$3.5 billion recommended by Governor Whitmer and approved by the

Michigan State Transportation Committee on January 30.

As your voice in Lansing, CRA will always work hard to provide the facts to help leadership evaluate their options. We're presently surveying all 83 county road agencies to assemble data on gains made on counties' 90,000 miles of roads in 2019.

When we reported on the 2018 progress last year, we saw that about 800 more miles of roads had been improved in the second year of new dollars than in 2017. But with a goal of improving 13,500 county road miles per year (15% of the system), we have a long way to go and not enough gas in the tank.

Polls that say the public won't pay more for roads probably reflect a built-in bias that voters don't want taxes. But at the same time, fixing roads remains the citizenry's top goal.

CRA's data shows that people do support new road funding when they believe it will go to roads. Since 2016, 99% of the township or county road millage renewals and 70% of new township or county road millages were approved. That's a total of 384 road millages approved by voters.

Call me silly, but I believe this group of Lansing leaders will get the job done. Then we can get on with ours.

Denise Donohue

Denise Donohue, CAE, APR

CRA Director | ddonohue@micountyroads.org

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