83 COUNTY ROAD AGENCIES

MANY ROLES

County Road Association of Michigan
MICHIGAN COUNTY ROAD AGENCIES: WHAT WE DO...

IMPORTANT ROLES:
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
EMERGENCY RESPONSE
TOURISM PARTNER

CORE VALUES:
INNOVATION
EFFICIENCY
COLLABORATION
Michigan’s many community routes are largely maintained by 83 county road agencies.

Michigan’s 83 county road agencies are key contributors to quality of life in the 21st century.

County road agencies are responsible for 75 percent of Michigan’s road system. They also maintain highways and roads under contract for the Michigan Department of Transportation in 64 counties.

Michigan has the nation’s 4th-largest local road network, stretching from Luna Pier to the Soo to Ironwood and about 533 other cities and villages. As a “Water Wonderland,” Michigan also has 5,700 local bridges that require constant attention.

Across Michigan’s 83 counties, county road agencies employ thousands of hard-working men and women to plow, patch, paint, salt, brine, clean, mow, map, finance, grade, preserve, resurface and reconstruct 90,000 miles of roads and 31 billion square feet of public right-of-way.

We have large trucks, busy plows, long hours and big hearts for our communities.

Being responsible for most Michigan roads is a big job, and we’ve been performing it on a very modest budget for over 100 years.*

*Legislatively-required PA 51 reports indicate that county road agencies spend approximately 8 percent of annual budgets on administrative overhead.
Jim Iwanicki, PE, engineer-manager (left) of the Marquette County Road Commission (MCRC), and Matt Johnson, Eagle Mine external affairs director, inspect a section of M-112, which was built under the direction of MCRC to facilitate a major new mining facility.

COUNTY ROAD AGENCIES ALLOW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Good roads create jobs. Not only road building jobs, but jobs all across Michigan’s economy. Good jobs link Michigan’s natural resources, agricultural products and factories with value-added opportunities and global markets.

An important factor that can limit business recruitment and economic development is an under-resourced local road and bridge system. Most county roads aren’t built for today’s commercial trucks and agricultural equipment, which can reduce the state’s economic competitiveness.

Half of Michigan local roads are unpaved, and most local and county roads are in fair to poor condition.

If the apples get bruised while being transported on a bumpy road, the ripple effect spreads far beyond West Michigan.*

*Anecdote cited in Governor’s 21st Century Economy Commission, as reported by chairman Sandy Baruah at the Mackinac Policy Conference—Detroit Chamber of Commerce, June 2017.
In 2002, mineral prospectors working near Big Bay in Marquette County discovered rich deposits of nickel and copper. Over the years, the Eagle Mine Company probed the resources and made a decision to open a new underground mine—an economic boon to the Upper Peninsula.

“Sometimes it’s lost on society, that mining is the beginning of everything. It is the very beginning of the wealth generation cycle,” said Matt Johnson, Eagle Mine Company’s external affairs manager based in Champion, Michigan.

Unfortunately, the only route to begin this particular cycle was a winding 66-mile route to the mill that was partly a dirt two-track for 11 miles and an unimproved paved road for another 22 miles into the City of Marquette.

“One of the challenges we faced was how to transport ore to the Humboldt mill,” Johnson said. “Our trucks made 45 round-trips hauling a total of 2,000 tons of ore per day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

“One of the concerns of Eagle Mine was the effect of seasonal weight restrictions on the local road,” he said.

“An all-season road would allay that concern for all 365 days a year, allowing the mine to fully load its trucks.”

“We would not have a business if we had to abide by road restrictions several weeks each spring. In order to build and have successful mining operations, we had to be able to haul full loads year-round seven days a week,” Johnson said.

Eagle Mine and Marquette County Road Commission (MCRC) began to work out a public-private partnership (P3) to upgrade two bridges, build one new bridge, improve 22 miles of paved road and pave 11 miles of dirt road to a standard that would support the mine’s trucking needs.

In March 2013 the deal was struck.

Eagle Mine put $44 million for roads on the table, and the MCRC acted as construction manager to get the job done. MCRC was able to secure state funding to improve three other bridges on the route.

Three months later ground was broken—and before Lake Superior snow settled over the area in 2014, the mine was in operation.

To maintain safe driving conditions in winter, MCRC and Eagle Mine have a second ongoing P3 that uses private funds so the road commission can plow, sand and maintain the road around the clock.

Today, the Eagle Mine has 450 well-paid, skilled mining jobs, which led to a $400 million renovation and more jobs at a 60-year-old brownfield site, the Humboldt Mill, a former open pit iron ore mine and processing facility.

“Altogether, this project is creating $1 billion of economic impact to Marquette County over the life of the mine. The multiplier effect supports 2,000 additional jobs in the community,” Johnson said.

“Without the road, these 450 jobs would not exist. The Marquette County Road Commission is truly a partner in the success of the Eagle Mine,” Johnson concluded.
A 1,000-year rainstorm in northwestern Gogebic County in 2016 devastated the road and stranded families as torrential water rushed into Lake Superior. The Gogebic County Road Commission took emergency action to restore road access before winter.

COUNTY ROAD AGENCIES ARE EMERGENCY “PRE-RESPONDERS.”

Society depends on police, EMTs and firefighters, but when Mother Nature is raining down fury these traditional first responders sometimes can’t get to the emergency until county road agency “pre-responders” clear the roads first.

That often means county road maintenance operators are called from snug beds in the wee hours of the morning, grabbing chainsaws from the road commission garage and braving a dark and stormy night to get trees off the road.

Or clearing snow off a residential street for the third time in one day, so a very ill person can get to dialysis or a hospital.

Or cordonning off flooded roads until a determination is made whether the road or bridge is safe for first responders and other public travel.

In July 2016, eight inches of rain fell in Gogebic County and washed out 30 bridges and culverts, stranding 20 families living along Lake Superior. The next summer up to seven inches of rain closed 724 roads in Central Michigan, some for months.

Working in rain, sleet and snow, the county road agency team operates around the clock fulfilling its legislative charter: To operate a safe and efficient local road system in any circumstance.
Straight-line winds knocked down thousands of trees, and closed the Glen Arbor area for three days.

On a sunny, lazy Sunday afternoon in August 2015, the up-north tranquility was split by an unexpected straight-line wind shear of 80 to 100 miles per hour. It cut a swath across the Leelanau Peninsula, including Michigan’s iconic Sleeping Bear Dunes, with damage seen as far east as Kalkaska.

Tens of thousands of trees were felled, completely closing off all roads to the Glen Arbor area, including scenic Glen Lake and the popular Glen Arbor Resort, crowded with vacationers. Eight thousand people were without power, and the utility companies couldn’t get to work until the roads were cleared and made safe for travel by the road commission.

The tourism-dependent local economy came to a grinding halt.

Immediately, the Leelanau County Road Commission (LCRC) called in a full crew with chainsaws and heavy equipment to get trees off the road, working in step with the local fire department and power company.

“We had roads so full of trees you couldn’t walk on them,” said Jim Johnson, PE, engineer for LCRC. “That very night we opened up several roads beginning with M-22, the most-traveled road.” The LCRC focused the vast majority of its resources on re-opening the local roads in Leelanau County. It took a month, with LCRC assisted by Michigan State Police (MSP) emergency management personnel and its contractors, as well as work crews from the local prison.

Because it was summer, many seasonal residents were in town to clear fallen trees. And most of them stacked wood by the road and expected the road commission to take care of it, Johnson said. For six months LCRC hauled residents’ wood to county property next to a park, where it was chipped by a MSP contractor.

Altogether, the road commission hauled a couple thousand semi-loads of wood debris.

Surprisingly, the falling trees caused only minor damage to the road system. There was impact to the road commission’s fiscal and work plans, however.

“We got some federal aid reimbursement, probably 20 percent of our expenses,” said Dan Wagner, PE, LCRC managing director. “The cost of this storm was born almost entirely out of our regular budget, and we didn’t get to finish our 2015 projects.”

Mega-rain hits Central Michigan, closing 724 miles of roads

Who doesn’t like a little summer rainstorm? Well on June 22, 2017, such a summer storm poured out three to seven inches of rain over three hours, causing extreme damage to the roads in Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella and Midland counties.

At one point, the Isabella County Road Commission (ICRC) had 50 different roads closed, half to flooding and the other half completely washed out, according to Tony Casali, ICRC manager. None of them were safe for public travel. Downstream, Midland County Road Commission reported 105 closed roads and $13 million in infrastructure damage.

County road commission crews worked around the clock to ensure the areas were properly signed and blockaded, tested for stability and safe before being re-opened to the public — some of whom were stranded in their homes.

Weeks later, many roads were still closed as culverts had washed out and entire sections of road buckled, caved in or shifted on an unstable soil base. The area was declared a disaster zone by Michigan’s Lieutenant Governor and damage to the road system reached many millions of dollars.

Water is the number-one enemy of roads. A seven-inch rainstorm in Midland County caused this catastrophic failure of the road to occur within minutes.
Poor road conditions were threatening the livelihood of hotels and restaurants at the tip of Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula, because of damage to tourists’ vehicles and road safety concerns.

COUNTY ROAD AGENCIES ARE TRAVEL BOOSTERS.

More than 113 million travelers explore Michigan’s mittens every year, many attracted by the state’s $13 million Pure Michigan® campaign. Among them are RVers, motorcyclists and millions of drivers pursuing Michigan’s top draws: Unique vacation experiences, family fun, great sightseeing (including fall colors) and a sense of adventure.

About 326,000 Michigan jobs depend on tourism, which is the state’s third-leading economic sector. Overnight trips account for 80 percent of the tourism dollars spent in Michigan, and many of the best destinations are found on scenic rural roads maintained by county road agencies.

Having a relaxing Michigan travel experience includes having a smooth ride to your destination without damage to your car, truck, cycle or recreational vehicle.
Here’s how it’s done.

Creative road repairs preserve tourism industry around a Lake Superior coastal gem.

Great views, fall colors and adventure come together on Michigan’s famed 10-mile Brockway Mountain Drive, which runs along the northern edge of the Keweenaw Peninsula up to 1320 feet above sea level. Located just west of Copper Harbor (population: 108), the drive was constructed in 1933 in a Depression-era works program, and is maintained by the Keweenaw County Road Commission. (KCRC)

Breathtaking views of Lake Superior, the Upper Peninsula and Isle Royale, make Brockway Mountain Drive one of the Midwest’s true travel gems. It has been lauded in The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, Midwest Living, HOG magazine and NBC’s Today Show, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Bicycling magazine called it “the most beautiful bike ride in the United States.”

However, slammed by >240 inches of snow a year and suffering from inadequate road funding, the potholes and rough ride were driving recreational travelers away. With social media quickly relaying the Brockway Mountain Drive pavement conditions, tourists made other plans. Local businesses began feeling the pinch of decline.

“We were hearing from our hotel and restaurant operators that the road was so bad it was deterring some tourists from going up there,” said Gregg Patrick, PE, engineer-manager of the KCRC. KCRC came up with a plan. “With our dwindling budget, no way can we afford to fix the whole nine miles,” Patrick said. “So in 2015, we made two miles of patches with crush-and-shape and double chip seal. We made the road better for tourists and local businesses, by stretching out our funds with shorter segments of surfacing.”

Brockway Mountain Drive has been restored to drivable condition—although the need for more extensive repairs remains—and the hotels and restaurants like the Mariner North Resort have remained open.

Such stories are repeated across the state: Healthy tourism and 326,000 tourism-related jobs* are supported by visitors having a “good ride” on Michigan’s local roads.

*2014 Economic Impact of Travel in Michigan by Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics Company.

Letter from Mariner North, LLC

“My wife, Peg, and I have been in business here for 40 years so we truly understand the value to this community of the Brockway Mountain Drive.

In recent years, Milwaukee celebrated the Harley-Davidson Motorcycle 100 Year Anniversary. Around that time, M-26 from Copper Harbor to Eagle River, MI, was designated a “top 20” motorcycle ride in the US by HOG magazine. Consequently, we were visited by thousands of motorcycles over the following years.

Those who tried Brockway Mountain Drive immediately used whatever media to inform other bikers to stay away from [the road] because the current road conditions were too dangerous.

Before the [Keweenaw County Road Commission] made some surface repairs, the information circulating amongst Corvette clubs, antique car clubs and RVs was to stay off the Mountain Drive for fear of vehicle damage or loss of control with bikes.

We personally spoke to many individuals over the years who were concerned about the rumors, and in all honesty could not advise them to take their vehicles over the Drive.

We at the Mariner North have always contended that our product is our terrain and there is no better way to experience that than the view from the top of the Brockway Mountain Drive.”

Sincerely,

Donald & Peggy Kauppi
Owners, Mariner North Resort
Michigan can’t drive ahead if road innovation is at a standstill!

Every road agency in Michigan has a state-licensed professional engineer (PE) on staff or on contract, along with many other innovative, industrious staff. And they’re always reading about and trying new techniques. In recent years those include:

- Mortarless and LowSpan® bridges
- Single and double roundabouts
- Automatic vehicle location systems
- Paving fabric and high-friction surfaces

Looking to the future, county road agencies must fulfill the mission of a safe and efficient county transportation system and public right-of-way (ROW), which remains the conduit to people’s homes, work and play.

Road agencies must accommodate new types of technology in the public ROW, while ensuring the original ROW purpose: Water drainage and a safe zone for vehicles intentionally or unintentionally leaving the roadway. Michigan county road agencies—like those across the country—are working for fair, functional solutions to incorporate technology in the limited real estate of the public ROW.

County road agencies are highly networked and connected through professional associations and work groups, district councils, conferences, online messaging boards and communications from the County Road Association of Michigan. Best practices are frequently shared, innovative equipment demonstrated, technology reviewed, and new federal and state guidelines interpreted to benefit the county road system.

Kristin Dronchi, clerk/office manager for the Newaygo County Road Commission (NCRC), shows the automatic vehicle location system that tracks NCRC trucks to improve efficiency of operations and document activities of its fleet.
At the intersection of the Motor City and Michigan’s high-tech corridor, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is leading the charge to help self-driving cars travel the area’s 2,700-plus miles of roads for which it bears responsibility.

RCOC has been on the cutting edge of road-related technology for more than 25 years. The agency was the first to introduce an “adaptive” traffic-signal system in 1992 (the signals adjust automatically based on traffic present). Today, RCOC has the second-largest such system in the nation.

The system is not just providing safer and more efficient travel, it is also one element of “connected-vehicle” technology.

Connected-vehicle technology is allowing vehicles to talk to each other and to the road infrastructure in order to avoid collisions and improve traffic flow. RCOC is also involved in many other connected-vehicle initiatives.

For example, the agency is working with auto manufacturers and suppliers as well as the Federal Highway Administration and Michigan Department of Transportation on several initiatives to potentially share traffic-signal phase and timing (SPaT) data with vehicles, to help them anticipate when an approaching traffic signal is going to change.

Sharing data with vehicles is also one of the steps needed to enable the auto industry to move from connected to autonomous vehicles.

RCOC was a founding member and remains active in the Intelligent Transportation Society of Michigan (ITS Michigan) and the state chapter of ITS American, which is the trade association chartered by Congress to bring together public, private and academic sectors to develop and deploy advanced transportation technology.

Dennis Kolar, PE, managing director/secretary-clerk of the Road Commission for Oakland County, reviewing road conditions at the desk of Oakland’s tech-driven Traffic Control Center.
EFFICIENCY: CREATIVELY DOING MORE WITH LIMITED ROAD RESOURCES

Most county road agencies have 40 to 50 percent fewer staff than a decade ago. From 1997 through 2017, there was no significant increase in funds to county road agencies—even as costs for fuel, asphalt, steel and other materials steadily rose.

Doing more with less and on a tight budget has been a way of life.

Advantages of participation in the County Road Association of Michigan are the networking and educational opportunities to county road agencies across the state. They share knowledge and ideas among all types of road agency staff from finance directors and superintendents, to engineers and commissioners.

Sharing seasonal employees in Newaygo County.

A challenge faced by many county road agencies in tight fiscal times is finding properly licensed snowplow operators to quickly address winter conditions, yet being unable to keep them employed the rest of the year due to minimal road improvement projects.

The Newaygo County Road Commission (NCRC) found a creative solution by partnering with the Newaygo County Drain Commission, according to NCRC manager Kelly Smith.

Because the drain commission staff does most of its work in spring through early fall, a few of its employees were being laid off every fall. NCRC trained three drain commission staff and helped them attain the Commercial Driver Licenses (CDL) needed to drive snowplow trucks and other heavy equipment.

Now NCRC gets the same three trained employees back every year, the employees have more job stability, and the county saves significant funds by not having to pay full freight for laid-off employees’ salaries and benefits.

Extending the partnership, in summer the drain commissioner often uses NCRC to maintain some of its ditches and culverts and to do site design work—providing another income stream to help balance the road commission’s bottom line.

The arrangement is a step above privatizing in that it maintains consistent, qualified, trained employees. It’s a win-win-win for the county, the road commission and the employees.
St. Clair County Road Commission’s public-private partnership (P3) in the garage.

With its own take on maximizing available resources, in 2009 the St. Clair County Road Commission (SCCRC) began considering the possibility of having a commercial mechanic service take over its on-site fleet management in a leading-edge public-private partnership (P3).

“We knew we had some efficiency issues within our shop,” said Kirk Weston, SCCRC managing director. “The main thing we wanted was better availability of our fleet.”

Weston initiated collaborative discussions with the county commission, the sheriff’s department, the drain commissioner’s office and county parks department. Ultimately, all five agencies agreed to find a fleet management contractor to service everything from large road commission equipment to police squad cars, lawn mowers and other light equipment.

SCCRC led the effort and put out a call for proposals. All involved parties conducted public interviews, settling on First Vehicle Services (FVS) in January 2010.

Through the transition to a privatized mechanic service, SCCRC retained all of its garage staff, as they were already CDL licensed.

Savings for the road commission have totaled upwards of $1 million over the last seven years, Weston reported. “We rolled those dollars back into our fleet and onto the roads.”

“We pay a flat rate with First Vehicle Services, so if there’s a snow call out we don’t experience the overtime costs associated with it,” Weston said. “And with their parts availability, if we have a truck down at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, by start time the next day they have it ready to go.”

“When we staffed our own garage, I would walk over there two and a half hours after a storm started, and it was full of yellow vehicles,” Weston said. “Today when I walk out into the garage, there is never a backlog of vehicles.”

“These guys are doing a good job for us on preventative maintenance. That way we’re able to work on the roads when the work needs to be done and better serve the drivers in St. Clair County.”
The 2018 County Road Association of Michigan Highway Conference brought together over 1,100 road agency staff, commissioners and stakeholders to learn, network and see new products and technologies to improve county road management.

COLLABORATION: FOR BETTER RESULTS

Michigan’s 83 county road agencies are very involved in community relations. First, it’s good business.

Second, state law requires that Michigan Transportation Fund dollars may be expended for construction purposes on county local roads only to the extent that the dollars are matched by money from other sources. That requires everyone to work together.

Road agencies also share best practices and ideas among themselves on a regular basis, which helps advance good ideas across the state. County road agencies have nine CRA District Councils that meet quarterly, several standing committees to address specialized needs of county road agencies, “neighborhood groups” (like the “Frugal Five”) of managing directors, several annual statewide meetings, and one statewide association: The 100-year-strong County Road Association of Michigan.

CRA is also affiliated with the Roads+™ political action committee to search out and promote quality candidates for Michigan legislative offices who will advocate for good local roads and support county road agencies.
**HERE’S HOW IT’S DONE.**

*Road commission meets with townships, participates in business fairs*

The Kent County Road Commission (KCRC) likes to build positive intergovernmental relationships, even while it rebuilds Michigan roads to keep Kent County moving.

“Residents don’t see ‘primary’ or ‘local,’ they just see roads,” said Steve Warren, managing director of KCRC and 2017 president of the County Road Association of Michigan. “That’s why KCRC is committed to investing in both systems.”

Through its local road matching program, KCRC partners with each of its 21 townships to select local projects for the upcoming construction season based on the principles of asset management and available township contributions.

Communication with townships is an ongoing process throughout the year that includes visits and field trips to individual townships as well as annual KCRC events like its fall Township Dinner and spring Township Picnic.

Ongoing coordination also occurs between KCRC and the cities and villages within Kent County through the Metro Public Works Committee. KCRC hosts monthly meetings to coordinate road improvement projects, explore best practices and develop mutual aid strategies.

Getting the most “bang for the buck” is vital, and KCRC increases purchasing power for area transportation agencies, local units of government, and other institutions by serving as the administrative buying agent to garner lower unit pricing through higher volume buying.

KCRC also collaborates with other rural road commissions to enhance their efficiencies in several ways. For one, administering federal aid jobs can be burdensome to rural agencies. That’s why KCRC partners with rural road commissions like Montcalm and Newaygo in the new statewide Federal Aid Exchange Program. This exchange allows the rural agencies to exchange their federal aid with an urban agency like KCRC, receiving less restrictive funds to complete projects with less expense and red tape, and lets KCRC use the exchanged dollars to expedite completion of larger federal aid projects.

“Our focus on intergovernmental communication and collaboration results in a winning strategy for KCRC, our partners, and the residents and businesses of Kent County,” Warren said.

**Trusted in the community.**

Local government partners support county road agencies! In 2015, a 360° CLOSUP Public Policy Survey by the University of Michigan looked at the relationships between county road agencies and their local government partners.

As much as we’d like to hit 100 percent approval with all partners, this data reflects a very good job using minimal funds to address competing interests in often difficult circumstances.
As Michigan’s second-largest industry, agriculture and implements of husbandry depend on local roads. Ag equipment also places significant demands on a system with crumbling roads and inadequate bridges and culverts.

Agriculture, Michigan Farm Bureau and County Road Commissions Go Way Back!

In the late 1800s, townships were responsible for the development of Michigan’s road system. With no dedicated road taxes, development depended on local volunteers—and even the occasional Road Bee Day held in mid-June. The uneven advancement of the road system and differences between neighboring townships created havoc for farmers trying to bring goods to market.

Today’s formidable Michigan Farm Bureau organization was created in February 1919, in large part to help develop Michigan’s rural roads, so that the agricultural sector of Michigan’s economy could reach the market hubs, cities and railroads.

The Michigan Association of Road Commissioners and Engineers (now the County Road Association of Michigan) was created just two years earlier. At the time, about 56 counties had voted to create a road commission.*

Maintaining Michigan’s network of local roads, bridges and culverts remains an important aspect of county road agency work.

*From A History of Michigan Roads, co-authored by Dorothy Pohl, CPA, managing director/clerk of the Ionia County Road Commission, and Norman Brown, Michigan Department of Transportation.
In 2015 the Michigan Legislature passed a landmark 12-bill transportation package to address Michigan’s crumbling roads and bridges. The bill included fuel tax increases as well as tax parity on diesel fuel; a modest increase in vehicle registration fees; expansion of the Homestead Property Tax credit; the first charges on alternative fuel vehicles; a new Local Pavement Warranty Program that all county road agencies, cities and villages must adopt; and revenue directly appropriated by the Michigan Legislature from income tax revenues and deposited into the Michigan Transportation Fund.

The crown jewel of the package was $1.2 billion in new road funding, that gradually increases from 2017 through 2021, and thereafter is indexed to inflation. While it is half what the experts said was needed to improve roads, the dollars will assist in slowing the deterioration of Michigan’s 122,000 miles of local roads and state highways, and 11,000 bridges.

It will require decades to return the road system to mostly “good” rated roads.

Michigan road revenue comes primarily from fuel tax and vehicle registration fees, about $2.7 billion in nearly equal amounts. These funds are historically Constitutionally dedicated to the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF). However, half of the new dollars ($600 million) in the 2015 package is legislatively appropriated from income tax revenue and moves directly into the MTF.

The MTF is a complex formula that addresses a complex multi-modal transportation system. It distributes funds not only to roads and bridges, but also public transit, rail transport, recreational travel and aeronautics, and provides administrative fees to multiple departments of state government.

County road agencies may receive extra dollars for rural all-season roads, mitigation and congestion, forest roads, economic development and job creation roads, and above-average snowfall. The County Road Association can provide additional information on the MTF if needed.


### WHERE IT GOES.

After the specific program deductions described above are made in the MTF, the balance is run through the “internal formula” and divided:

- **39.1% – Michigan Department of Transportation**
  (10,000 road miles + 4,700 bridges)
- **39.1% – County Road Agencies**
  (90,000 road miles + 5,700 bridges)
- **21.8% – Cities, Villages**
  (22,000 road miles + 700 bridges)

**Totals Statewide:**
- 122,000 miles of road
- 11,000 bridges (approximately)

COUNTY ROAD ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN.

CRA’s mission is to help our members promote and maintain a safe, efficient county road and bridge system, including stewardship of the county road right-of-way, in rural and urban Michigan.

For 100 years, the County Road Association of Michigan has served as the only statewide association dedicated to serving the needs of Michigan county road agencies.

Based near the State Capitol in downtown Lansing, CRA provides advocacy, education and communication resources to all 83 county road agencies, and assists with telling the stories of local roads and county road agencies.

Although the responsibilities of county road agencies vary, they are professionally staffed with talented, committed men and women who take seriously their responsibility to ensure a safe, efficient county transportation infrastructure system, including management of the public road right-of-way.

Together, Michigan county road agencies manage 75 percent of all roads in the state and 52 percent of the state’s bridges. County road agencies also maintain the state’s highway system in 64 counties, under a contract negotiated by CRA and MDOT.

Resources
CRA is governed by a 17-member board, which includes representation by road commissioners and road commission management drawn from four Sectional Associations across Michigan.

CRA has several standing committees that address specific road agency needs:
• General Policy
• Commissioners
• Education
• Engineering
• Finance and Human Resources
• Legislative Review
• Negotiating
• Public Relations
• Superintendents Association of Michigan (SAM)

A key contributor to a seamless county road network is communication and cooperation among neighboring counties, regional planning organizations, and a variety of stakeholder organizations.

CRA has nine District Councils that meet quarterly to share ideas and build relationships:
Blue Water Highway Council
East Central Council
Great Lakes Council
Paul Bunyan Council
Seven County Council
Southeastern Council
Southwestern Council
Straits Area Council
Urban Council

Counties have also come together to create road commission-specific self-insurance services through two related organizations: The County Road Association Self-Insurance Fund (CRASIF) and the Michigan County Road Commission Self-Insurance Pool (MCRCSIP).

CRASIF is focused on a road commission-specific workers’ compensation program authorized under the State of Michigan Workers’ Compensation Agency. The MCRCSIP program insures general, auto and trunkline liabilities; public officials errors and omissions; property and equipment damage; employee fidelity; and employment practices.

WHAT IS A “PE”?

Every county road agency is required to have a professional engineer (PE) on staff or under contract. These individuals are licensed by the State of Michigan and must meet significant ongoing education requirements. PEs are by nature driven to consider new technology while making safety of the traveling public their top priority.
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