



County Road Association Best Practices 2003-2010

County Road Association of Michigan
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What is CRAM?

The County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM) has represented the interests and concerns of Michigan's 83 county road agencies for more than 90 years. From seasonal roads to seven-lane highways and beyond, county road commissions are responsible for the majority (75 percent) of Michigan's road system- representing more than 90,000 miles and 5,700 bridges- the fourth largest local road system in the nation. In addition, 64 counties are under contract with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to provide maintenance on the state trunklines in their county.

In Michigan, all counties are served by a county road agency. In all but two counties this is the county road commission. In Wayne and Macomb Counties, the county roads fall under the jurisdiction of a special county department, the Department of Public Services and County Road Department respectively.

Best Practices

CRAM has long prioritized the sharing of best practices among road commissions. One of the internal goals established in the Association's Strategic Plan is to improve county road operations and management by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and information. The creation of an annual award program that recognizes county road agency's best practices has provided a platform to regularly share this information amongst road commissions.

Each year CRAM seeks nominations for both the Best Practice and CRAMmy Awards. The Awards are presented at the Annual Highway Conference and all nominations are shared with the membership.

Amidst calls from legislators and the Snyder Administration for local government efficiency and the sharing of best practices, they need to look no further than their local road commissions. For years, county road agencies have used innovations and efficiencies to help them stretch limited transportation revenues; which led the Transportation Funding Task Force to conclude in 2008, that "efficiency has become a standard operating procedure at agencies across the state.

Best Practice Award

The Best Practice Award program was launched in 2003 as a way to encourage county road commissions to share their best practices with other agencies. Although many examples have been submitted, countless others exist but were not submitted because the road agency considered them to be standard operating practices.

Today's road commissions use common sense and innovation to face unprecedented challenges. Each of the programs submitted for consideration represents insightful planning, creative problem-solving, and a dedication to stretching limited funds.

The CRAMmy

CRAM recognizes best practices in public relations with the CRAMmy Award. The CRAMmy's were started by the Public Relations-Education Committee in 2001 as a way to share creative tactics and successful PR campaigns with other road commissions. The format was changed slightly in 2010 to bring the nomination process more in line with award programs administered by the Public Relations Society of America.

The number of entries submitted each year makes it obvious that road commissions have prioritized communicating with the public and operating in an open and transparent manner- concepts that should be embraced at all levels of government.

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Nominations for the 2010 Best Practice Award
Awards presented at the 2011 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Cass County- Management Operations Review (MOR) Process
 Emmet County- Energy Audit Review and Compliance
 Muskegon County- Address High Worker Compensation Utilization
Other Nominations: Monroe County- Establishing Work Groups

**CASS COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION'S
MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS REVIEW (MOR) PROCESS**

As the county agency mandated by state law for construction, reconstruction and maintenance of roads, the Cass County Road Commission is directing all of its focus on customer service.

With the ongoing reduction in state funding for roads and resulting downsizing in personnel, the road commission has been challenged to implement management practices that require greater operational efficiencies for less money. While road commission employees numbered 60 a few years ago, continued reductions in revenue have cut it nearly in half as it cares for 772 miles of paved roads and 242miles of gravel roads in a county of 52,000 residents.

Three years ago, the Cass County Road Commission implemented its Management Operations Review process (MOR) to more effectively address concerns that residents have about their roads.

The results of the program, which is fast becoming integral to all aspects of the agency's operation, show that the road commission has become more operationally and financially efficient even with the significant loss of personnel.

The essence of the program is that while service requests (potholes, snow removal, etc.) cannot be avoided, customer service is enhanced when those customer concerns are addressed more rapidly. When MOR was implemented, only 16 percent of calls were being completed within 31 days of the request's initiation. Today, 83 percent are being completed within the 31 days.

Calculations reveal that less time is spent to complete ongoing individual customer service requests. This is despite the fact that the requests themselves increased from 709 in 2007 to 1296 in 2010, for an 83 percent increase in the number of requests.

Financially, the savings over three years is \$607,338. In 2007, each request cost \$942.99 to process. In 2010, despite the increased number of requests, the cost was \$642.12.

The results have been so significant, that the role of the MOR committee is being expanded to track nearly all work that the road commission undertakes. Thus, the process actually drives the total road commission operation.

The MOR Process Committee tracks customer service requests through a sequence that includes the type of service request, the equipment needed, a description of the request and how it will be completed (See Appendix A). Charts are kept from year to year showing the number of calls by month, the types of requests, the township in which the calls were initiated, and the length of completion time. (See Charts A, B, C and D).

The list of options is comprised of fifteen types of requests.

When the MOR process had been in effect for a year, the committee made adjustments in the way requests were answered. Citizens making the request were referred to as 'customers' and each request was placed on a "first in, first out" basis. Three to four persons were assigned as a crew to complete the requests within a 31-day response time.

This has resulted in not only higher customer satisfaction, but greater daily work efficiency among the crews throughout the county. While traveling to the locations of the request, the crews document other road issues in the county requiring attention. These issues are placed on an "internal service request list" and are addressed when all MOR service requests are up to date.

Not only has MOR been a learning tool for the road commission staff, personnel have realized better time management and higher productivity.

Through time, the information gained has led to more detailed analyses such as the geographical area where requests originate, the time of year, any impact from weather-related incidents and improvements made from the previous year. For time management purposes, the county is divided in half with foremen designated for work orders for the east and west halves. Specialty equipment and personnel are brought in when necessary.

Driven by the data arrived at from the MOR process a brush crew was created and boom mower and skid steer were purchased to clear brush in preparation of the annual primary roadside spray program. Such work protects the road commission's 8,000 acres of right of way as they bear on the safety of the traveling public. This allows the road commission's equipment to be used for preparation of snow removal or ditching projects as needed. This crew works in conjunction with a newly formed tree-removal crew of jail inmates from the Cass County Sheriff's Department. This project has helped eliminate unnecessary service requests on downed trees that previously interfered with road travel.

The road commission management has initiated three-year plans with individual townships and MOR data is shared in that process to help determine future local needs. The Cass County Road Commission's management has found it valuable in its relationships with township officials to be able to define each township's citizen concerns (down to the individual street) and relay this information to the township board of trustees. As a result of this cooperation, township contributions to road upgrades have gone from \$833,535 in 2007 to \$1,311,616 in 2010 for a 57 percent increase.

The communication between the road commission and the public also has been enhanced by the agency's website, which includes a service request form that is sent directly to the MOR committee coordinator. Voicemail and fax options also are available 24 hours a day. Additionally, residents can ask to be added to the road commission's countywide e-mail list through which road briefs, road closures, and other important information is distributed as it becomes available.

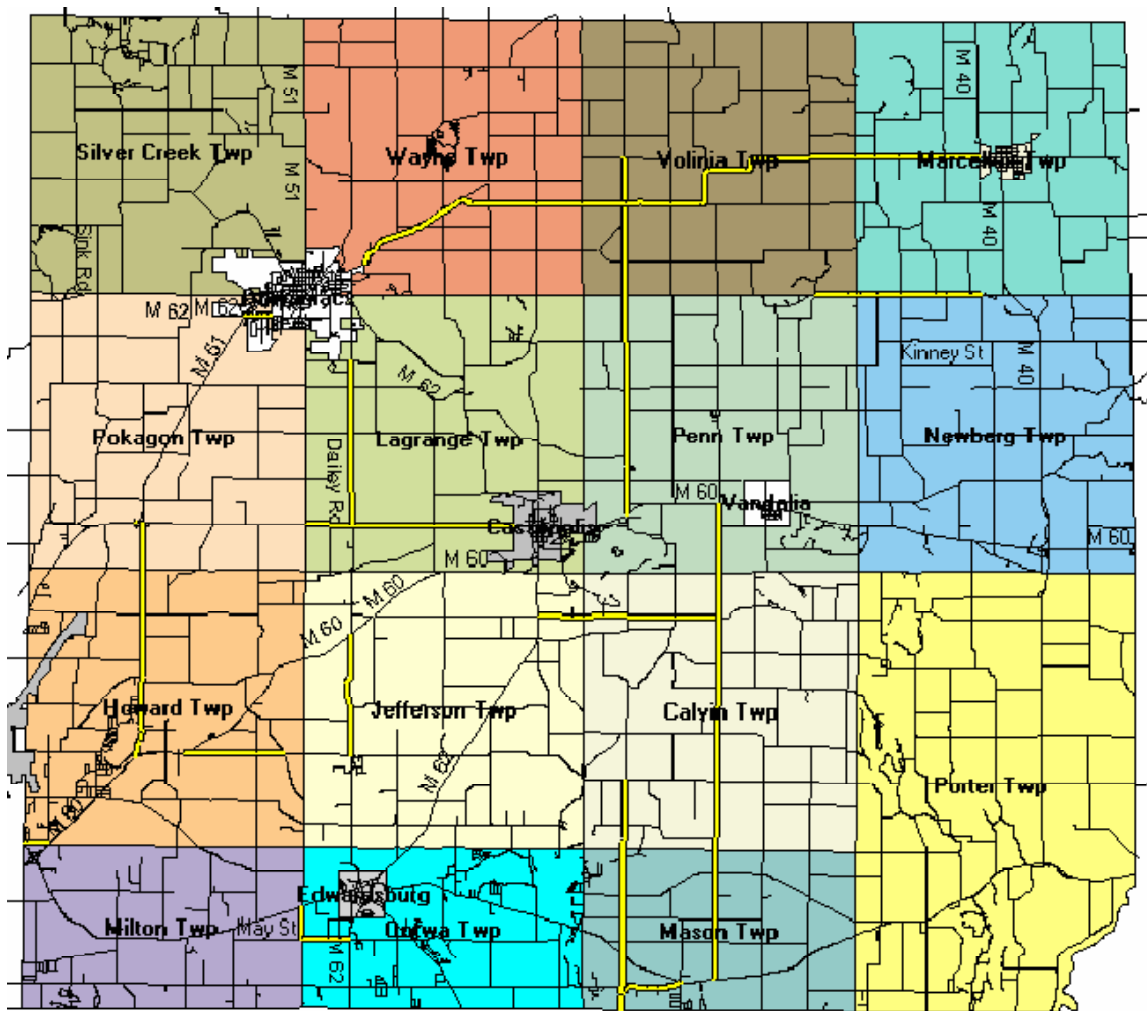
With input and creative ideas from county residents and employees, the agency's management team continues to work toward creating a positive program that produces data showing greater operational efficiency at reduced costs. The program was created for all county residents and employees working together to make Cass County and its roads "one of a kind" in the state.

Management Operations Review (MOR) Procedure

- 1. Customer service request is received in person or via telephone, e-mail, website, or mail at the Cass County Road Commission headquarters. Request is logged into a software program by type of request (Chart B), and name of township from where request issues are located (Chart C).**
- 2. The documented request is assigned to a designated foreman or management staff.**
- 3. If necessary a site visit is made and the initiator of the service request is contacted.**

4. Foreman schedules the work to be done and identifies the equipment needed as well as any specialty personnel
5. The document showing that work has been completed is returned to the staff for marking as complete.
6. Citizen who made the request is notified of the resolution, if needed.
7. Record (Chart D) is updated to show the amount of time it required from date received to complete the request (0-7 days, 8-14 days, 15-21 days, 22-30 days, or 31+ days)
8. For purposes of analysis, year-to-year charts are kept to identify service requests by month (Chart A)

Cass County



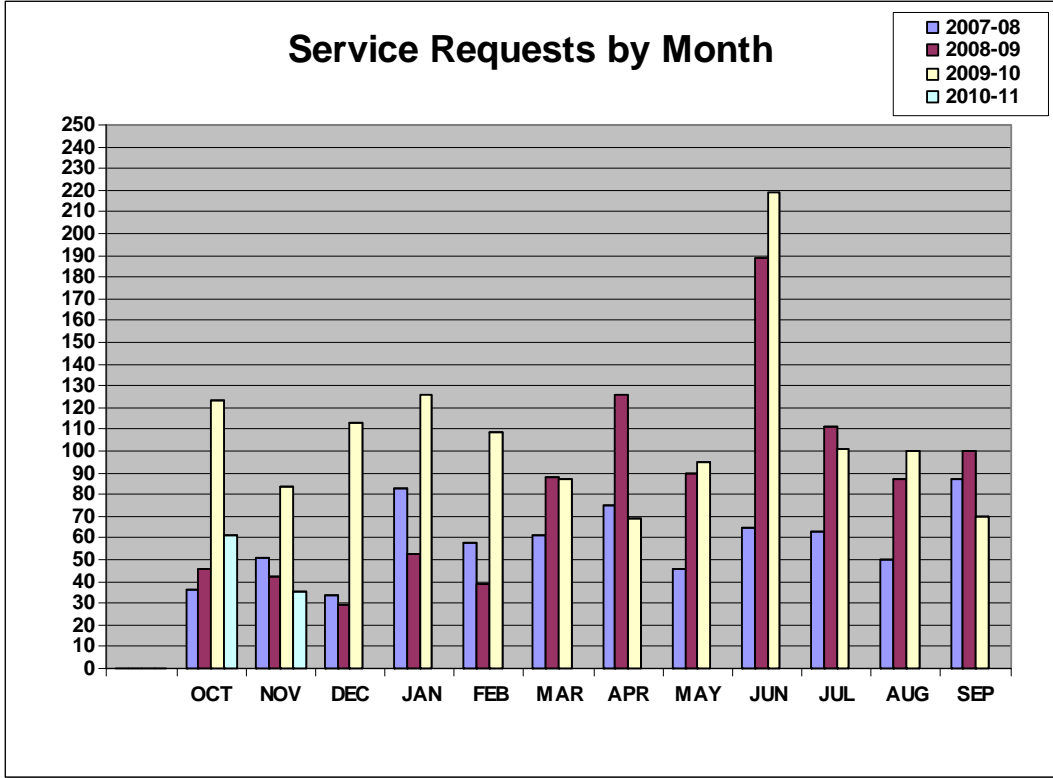


Chart A

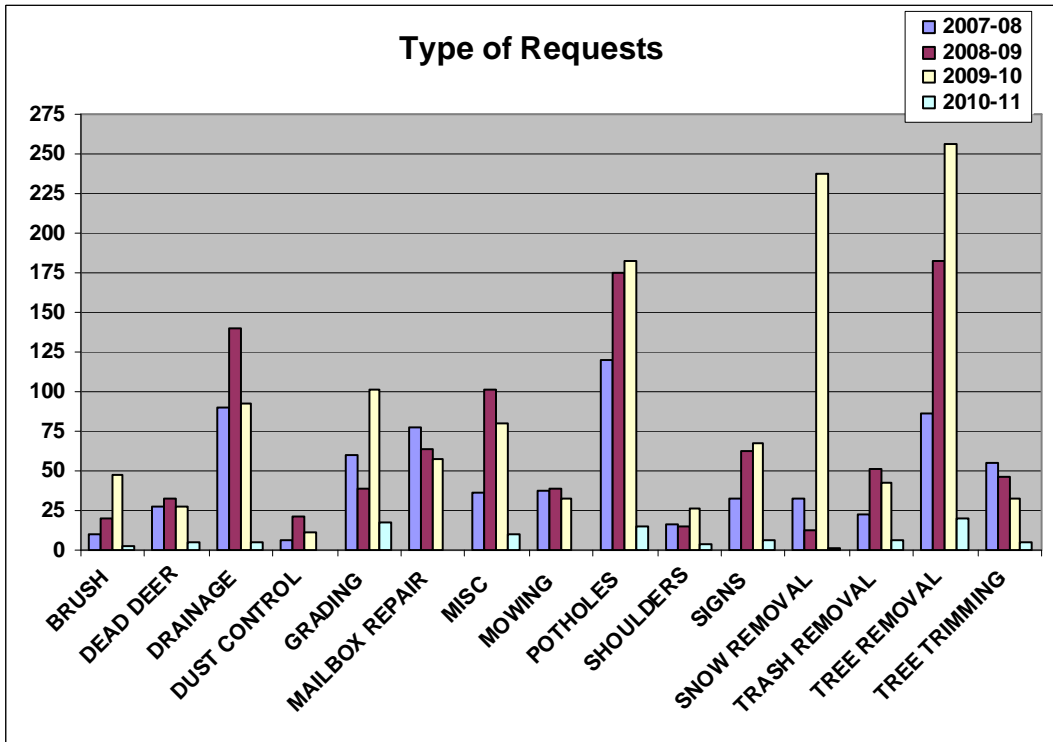


Chart B

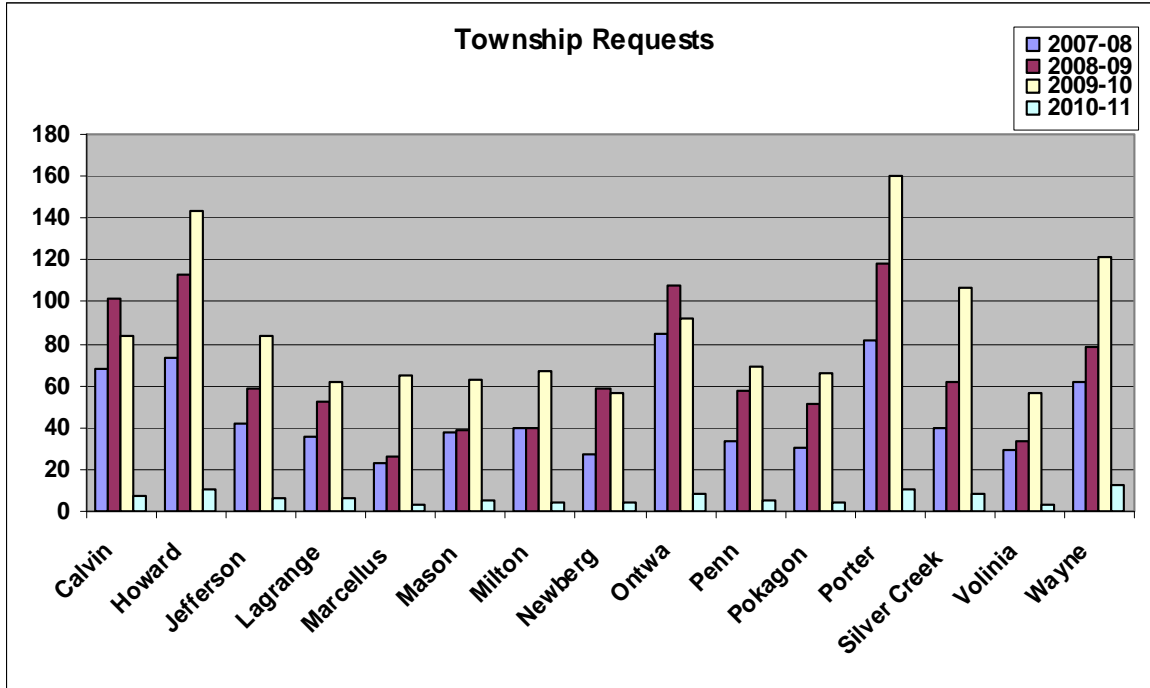


Chart C

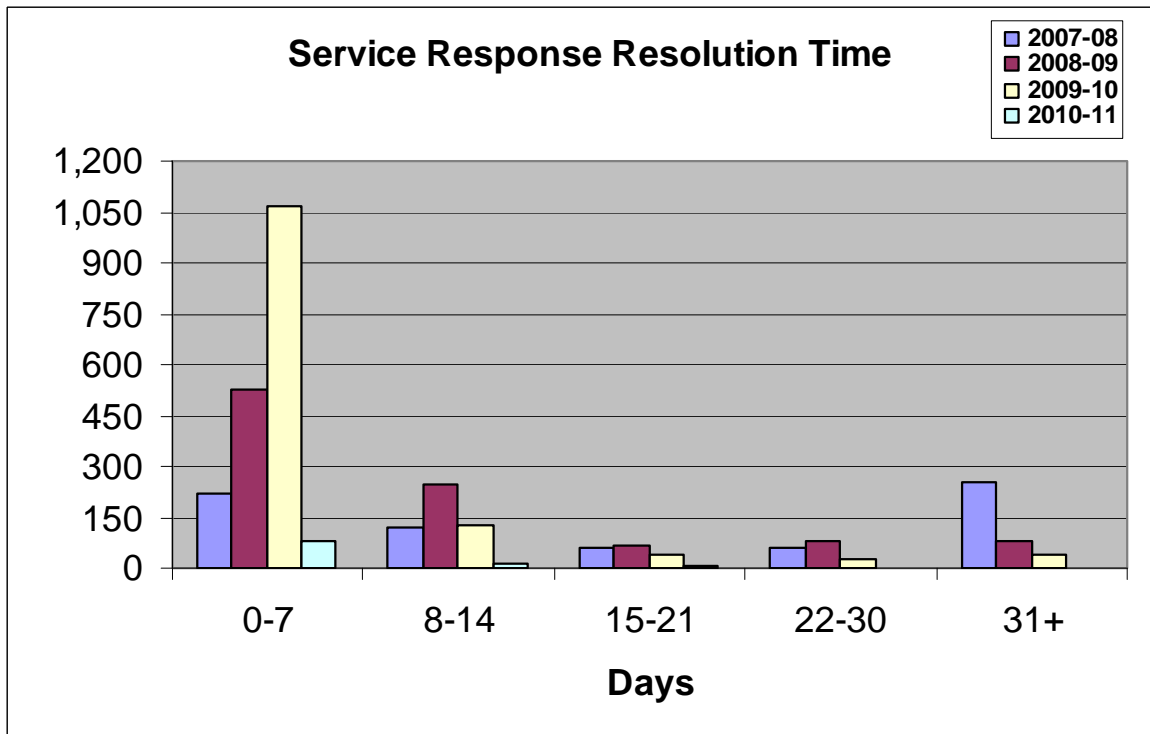


Chart D

EMMET COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION ENERGY AUDIT

Scope, Importance, and Value of Activity/Contribution:

Recognizing that declining MTF revenues were going to continue to plague Road Commissions for years to come, the Emmet County Road Commission looked at all parts of our budget to see where we could save money. One area we seriously looked at was our ever-increasing expense to heat our buildings. In 2009, we spent nearly \$50,000 to heat our offices, truck storages, equipment repair, and employee lunch rooms.

The Emmet County Road Commission performed an Energy Audit of its facilities in December of 2009. It was discovered that the office area and employee lunch room had been vastly under-insulated. It was also discovered the windows and doors were providing very little insulating from the cold in the winter and heat in the summer.

The audit also confirmed that the equipment repair area and our Levering truck storage were where the most heat was being consumed. The equipment repair area was heated solely with natural gas. The Levering truck storage was heated solely with propane through radiant heaters.

The Emmet County Road Commission has seemingly an unlimited supply of trees cut from the road rights-of-way that the either the landowner does not want or is on public land. We decided it would not be a problem producing enough firewood for outdoor wood furnaces for both garages. The Board and I met with the employees and told them of our plans to save money. The employees were all onboard to help out by bringing firewood back to both garages when the occasion came about and making sure the outdoor wood furnaces were fed enough firewood to be the main source of heat for both the areas of concern.

The Board decided to have the insulation upgrade of the office area and employee lunch room bid out. It was also decided to install outdoor wood furnaces for both the Levering truck storage and equipment repair area.

The Levering outdoor furnace was installed and running by February of 2010. We have a 1,000 gallon propane tank to supply the heat for the storage building. We typically need to fill the tank every month during the winter months. After the wood furnace became activated in February, we did not have to refill the tank until December of 2010. We only used about 100 gallons of propane this December. Most of the heat is generated with the outdoor wood furnace.

The insulation was installed by Adelaine Construction of Harbor Springs. The insulation specified was a sprayed in foam insulation. Both the walls and ceilings of the office area and employee lunch area had to be removed to accomplish the upgrade. Adelaine did a fantastic job in getting work done at minimal disruption to our operations. The work was completed in 3 weeks in May.

The window and door upgrade was performed by Bob Brill Builders of Alanson. The windows and doors specified were with triple pane insulated glass. This work was completed in a little over 1 week in May.

The outdoor wood furnace for the equipment repair area was installed during the summer of 2010 and operational in September of 2010.

1. Effectiveness Measures

The total amount expended on the insulation, windows, doors and outdoor wood furnaces was \$78,000. Although there has not been a whole year to track the savings at either of the facilities, the total 2010 heating bill for the Emmet County Road Commission had dropped to \$35,000.

This is a \$15,000 savings. We anticipated the savings for an entire year will be more than \$20,000. The upgrades will pay for themselves in 4 years and provide savings above and beyond the original expense for years.

2. Quality of Performance

None of the work would have been accomplished without the total effort on part of the Board and employees of the Road Commission. Bob Genson, Building and Grounds Maintenance performed the inspection and oversight of the contractors work and helped install the wood furnaces.

The truck drivers, mechanics, Foremen and Equipment Superintendent all take the time to monitor the outdoor wood furnaces and fill the furnaces when they start running low.

The Board had the faith in the staff to follow through with the upgrade recommendations, especially the outdoor wood furnaces. The Emmet County Road Commission is the first Road Commission to install this type of heating for the main facility heating. The savings in the heating bill in the winter and cooling bills in the summer months will definitely allow the Road Commission to put more money where it should be going: into road improvements.

Muskegon County Road Commission Return to Work Initiative

The Muskegon County Road Commission and the Muskegon County Sheriff have entered into a partnership that utilizes jail inmates as the work crew and a Muskegon County Road Commission employee that is on Worker's Compensation for oversight of the crew to perform various maintenance tasks that traditionally have not been consistently performed by regular commission forces.

The genesis of the program began several years ago when residents and township elected officials attended a board meeting to complain about excessive trash on a section of US-31 in Muskegon County and asked for the Road Commission's assistance in getting it cleaned up. At about this time it was decided that Muskegon County Road Commission needed to proactively address its very highly utilized Worker's Compensation program to reduce the number of days employees were off work and nonproductive.

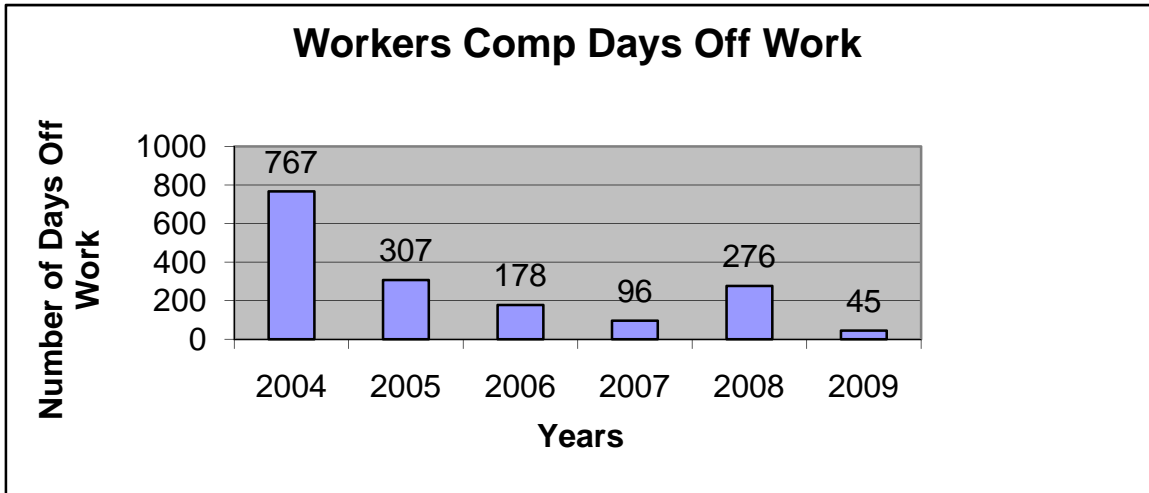
Previous administrative policy required that employees be returned to work at 100% capability without restrictions. Insurance industry representatives indicated that one tactic for addressing high utilization was to bring employees back into the workforce as soon as possible so they would not get used to the culture of being off of work. A decision was made to try to accomplish the roadside cleanup using inmate labor and an employee that was off work on restrictions drawing Worker's Compensation.

A work program was developed by Muskegon County Road Commission staff centered around litter pickup and under guardrail berm removal on the 120 miles of State highway in Muskegon County with secondary projects on the county road system and at county road maintenance facilities. MDOT, due to the high volume of calls on the litter problem on their system agreed to a trial program. In 2005 the inmate crew removed litter from the 120 miles of state road three times with high profile areas being done five to six times. They have subsequently requested that we continue the program on an annual basis and have increased the budget line item in the maintenance contract to cover the program costs.

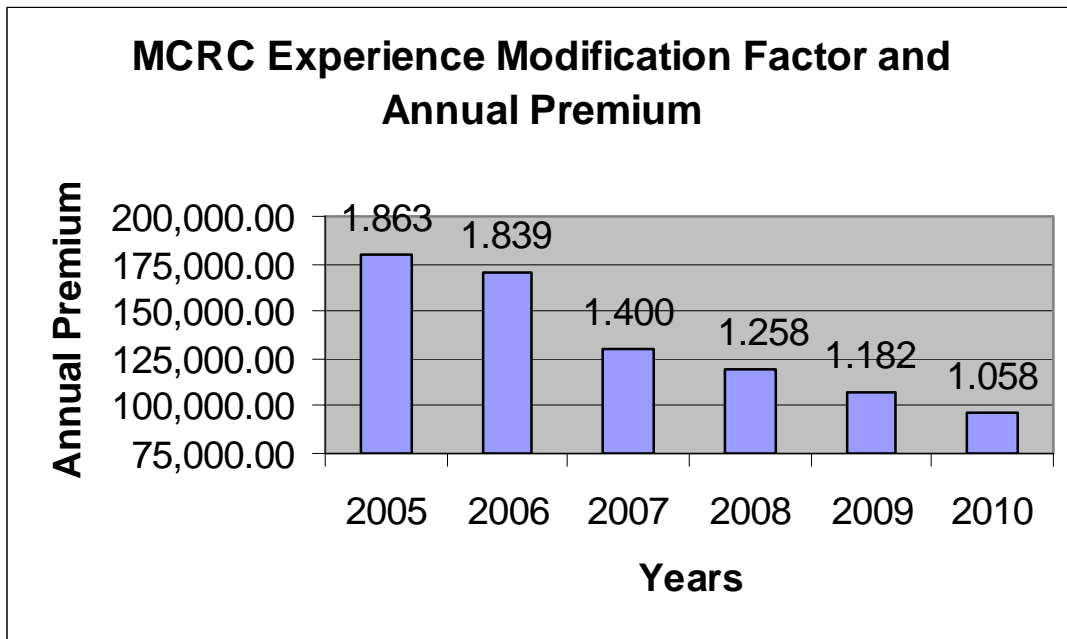
On the county road system the inmate labor has allowed us to tackle some basic maintenance on our bridge system that previously never seemed to get done. We used the annual bridge inspection report prepared by our bridge consultant to formulate work that could be done by Muskegon County Road Commission forces. This included removing brush from around the bridge structures and on the side slopes and hand shoveling berm from beneath the guardrail to reestablish proper drainage. The work projects also included basic yard work and cleanup at our three facilities. The main office and garage facility sits on 85 acres with a large "front" yard that includes dozens of oak trees. Previously this front area was mowed once per year and then the weeds were allowed to grow up to hide the leaves. Utilizing the prison crew we now remove the leaves and cut the area several times each summer. This vastly improved the appearance of our facility for a nominal cost.

The basic program involves Muskegon County Road Commission entering into a contract with the Sheriff to supply five inmates per day. The Sheriff assumes all liability for the inmates and provides a lunch. Muskegon County Road Commission staff pulled an older suburban from the auction list and outfitted a utility trailer with various small hand tools. Inmates are picked up at 7:30 a.m., driven to a work site and then returned to the jail at 2:30 p.m. The inmates are available at the discretion of the Muskegon County Road Commission. On inclement weather days we have not generally run the program or utilized the crew for interior building cleaning. It is interesting to note however that on bad weather days the inmates will typically call and ask if they can come to work. They have proven to be very eager workers.

In addition to getting many of the small but important maintenance tasks accomplished, a major impact can be seen in our Worker's Compensation utilization. Rather than allow employees to stay home where we essentially get no benefit from the expenditure of Worker's Compensation funds, the employee is brought back to drive the suburban, pick up the inmates, instruct them at the worksites and return them to the County jail at the end of the day. While working on the State system we are able to charge that against the state contract reducing the impact on our Act 51 dollars. In 2003, prior to starting the inmate program, Muskegon County Road Commission had employees on Worker's Compensation for 908 total days away from work. We implemented the program in 2004 and our total days away from work dropped to 767. In 2005, total days away from work dropped further to 307. The total program costs to the Muskegon County Road Commission for 2005 after charge out to state trunkline amounted to \$24,500.



This program has worked exceedingly well for the Muskegon County Road Commission. We have accomplished several high profile tasks that we were not able to do prior to the program and were able to do basic maintenance activities on our bridges that were not formerly being done. We expect that our high Worker's Compensation experience modification factor will drop significantly in coming years saving real Act 51 funds.



Monroe County Road Commission (MCRC) WORK GROUPS

SCOPE

Six primary work activities were determined by the managing director to be essential to Monroe County Road Commission (MCRC) operations, but due to a 36% cut back in management staff resulting from financial restraints there were not enough remaining management staff members to properly do this work. On December 9, 2009 the MCRC put in place the concept of using "Work Groups" to perform these six primary tasks. Each of the six remaining managers were assigned to head up a work group with assigned goals and objectives that were added to his/her job responsibilities over and above their normal work. The six work groups were made up of the manager and at least five non-management MCRC employees from various departments who reported directly to the manager in charge. The work groups established included:

1. Budget Work Group – Director of Finance
2. Safety Work Group – Director of Operations
3. Technology Work Group – Director of Planning
4. Records Work Group – Director of Human Resources
5. Buildings and Grounds Work Group – Director of Logistics
6. Public Relations/Newsletter Work Group – Managing Director

Each director setup his/her team of employee specialist. Employee volunteers were given preference and consideration in accordance with their skills, normal job duties and demonstrated interest. There were enough appropriate volunteers so it was not necessary to draft any individuals. The employees that participated in the work groups were required as part of their job responsibilities to meet as directed and to carry out the duties as determined by the group and as assigned by the manager in charge. Each work group made a written monthly report of their accomplishments and made recommendations to management staff in order to implement their ideas and concepts. The managing director made monthly reviews of each group's progress at management staff meetings.

EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES

The following were the work group assignments for 2010.

Budget Work Group

1. Establish a crew of employee specialists (a minimum of five) that meets at least once a month to discuss, and review all MCRC fiscal issues.
2. Make written monthly reports of budget Work Group activities and make recommendations to management staff.
3. Provide budget training for all employees involved with administering the budget.
4. Study and make recommendations of cost saving measures that can be implemented.
5. Establish a database system that provides immediate access by management to reports and data necessary to keep up to date with all MCRC operations.
6. Update Precision software and reporting systems
7. Schedule and carry out June/July Township budget meetings for 2011 planning and five year planning.
8. Schedule at least a monthly progress review of all MCRC projects and make sure the system to implement and account for projects is adhered to by MCRC employees.
9. Review monthly equipment charges to departments and compare to actual equipment costs.

10. Make recommendations to quarterly adjust and update the budget with known current operations.

Safety Work Group

1. Establish a crew of employee specialists (a minimum of five) that meets at least once a month to discuss, review, and implement safety standard operating procedures and to keep abreast of State and Federal regulations.
2. Make written monthly reports of safety Work Group activities and make recommendations to management staff.
3. Review safety equipment used by MCRC and make recommendations to management staff.
4. Schedule monthly training sessions in keeping with State and Federal regulations for each department and keep written records of all employees that receive training.
5. Schedule quarterly training on subjects that is pertinent for entire Road Commission and keep written records of all employees that receive training.
6. Review workshops and conferences and select employees to attend and return information to MCRC (Train the Trainers) and keep written records of all employees that receive training.
7. Do quarterly safety audits of MCRC buildings and equipment.
8. Review and respond to inspections by MCRCSIP and MIOSHA and make appropriate corrections.
9. Review all major accidents involving MCRC employees and make recommendations on how to prevent future occurrences.
10. Make sure all required safety manuals including MSDS books are up to date and associated reports are posted as required by State and Federal regulations.

Technology Work Group

1. Establish a crew of employee specialists (a minimum of five) that meets at least once a month to discuss, review, and implement technology operating procedures.
2. Make written monthly reports of technology Work Group activities and make recommendations to Management staff.
3. Make and keep an inventory of all MCRC electronic equipment and software.
4. Make an equipment and software replacement schedule to optimize and to keep up to date with current technology.
5. Review new technology that can be used to improve MCRC operations.
6. Schedule monthly training sessions to train employees in the use of software and hardware tools that create efficiencies in communication and operations.
7. Review workshops and conferences and select employees to attend and return information to MCRC (Train the Trainers).
8. Make capital improvement purchase recommendations to the Managing Director.
9. Review relocating servers and related equipment to a more appropriate location.
10. Review the landline phone communications systems and make recommendations to upgrade or replace.

Records Work Group

1. Establish a crew of employee specialists (a minimum of five) that meets at least once a month to discuss, review, and implement record keeping standard operating procedures.
2. Keep abreast of State and Federal regulations.
3. Make written monthly reports of records Work Group activities and make recommendations to Management staff.
4. Make an inventory and cross index for all MCRC records.

5. Find a safe and secure way to store all MCRC records at a specific fixed location.
6. Review, update and implement a record retention and termination system.
7. Analysis ways to reduce duplication and multiple copies of records.
8. Find a way to reduce paper records.
9. Create a system for controlling and storing and purging electronic records.
10. Create a system to track records that are temporally checked out from their permanent location.

Public Relations/Newsletter Work Group

1. Establish a crew of employee specialists (a minimum of five) that meets at least once a month to discuss, review, and implement public relation measures.
2. Make written monthly reports of PR Work Group activities and make recommendations to Management staff.
3. Prepare a bi-monthly newsletter.
4. Ascertain and arrange information to disseminate to the media, to County, to Townships and to the general public.
5. Review reports and official documents for readability and for understanding by the general public.
6. Discuss ways to get the public involved in road activities such as “adopt a road”.
7. Schedule quarterly meetings to inform employees about MCRC issues and operations.
8. Update and prepare new public brochures.
9. Keep abreast of Federal, State, CRAM, NACE, etc. and update staff on pertinent issues.
10. Plan an annual event to boost employee morale and give out awards.

Buildings and Grounds Work Group

1. Establish crew of employee specialists (a minimum of five) that meet at least once a month to discuss, review, and implement building and ground standard operating procedures.
2. Make written monthly reports of building and grounds Work Group activities and make recommendations to Management staff.
3. Prepare routine maintenance schedules for all HVAC equipment.
4. Come up with a plan for improving cleaning operations.
5. Establish permanent locations for all vehicles and equipment
6. Determine major restoration and repairs necessary.
7. Review disposal and recycling procedures.
8. Discuss and determine cost saving measures.
9. Review and reorganize storage areas and facilities.
10. Set up procedures for reporting problems and getting things fixed in a timely manner.

QUALITY PERFORMANCE

The successful implementation of the work groups not only accomplished most of the assignments for 2010, but animated group discussion lead to new and additional innovations to help improve and make MCRC operations more effective and efficient including the following:

BUDGET WORK GROUP

1. Established a system for evaluating suggestions and recommending cost saving initiatives.
2. Set up a system to review operations by account and activity and not just by functions.
3. Established a method to review equipment operations and set appropriate rates.
4. Improved Township workshop procedures to better forecast projects.

SAFETY WORK GROUP

1. Set up an award system for the best safety suggestion.
2. Reviewed and established safe methods to remove snow from posted weight restricted bridges

TECHNOLOGY WORK GROUP

1. Set up voluntary training workshops for employees to learn how to use available technology.
2. Set up system for sharing printers and receiving paperless faxes to save money.
3. Purchased a signature pad to be used for permits and drain assessments etc.
4. Research various systems solutions relative to computers, networking, data storage and other technology related areas.

RECORDS WORK GROUP

1. Organized record storage centers.
2. Arranged for a private company "Rapid Shred" to more economically shred and recycle obsolete records and purge annual records.
3. Reviewed ways to reduce paper and efficiently manage records electronically by use of hyperlink technology and by using other electronic record systems.

PR NEWSLETTER WORK GROUP

1. Suggested ways to better communicate with the public by using Facebook and improving the MCRC web Page.
2. Revised the MCRC newsletter to provide more information on operations and financial considerations and less information on employee information and announcements.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS WORK GROUP

1. Worked with SEMCOG to receive free planning to improve storage of materials and yard operations.
2. Adjusted and locked out thermostats to more effectively control heating and cooling costs.
3. Replaced lights in maintenance garage with more energy efficient lights and received significant energy credits from Detroit Edison.

In conclusion, the MCRC "Work Group " program was determined to be highly successful in 2010. Team effort enabled a lot more work to be accomplished than any one director could have accomplished on his own. The MCRC work groups will continue even if the management staff is able to return to its' original staffing level at some future date. It goes to show that good things can result from adversity and necessity.

Nominations for the 2009 Best Practice Award

Awards presented at the 2010 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Huron County- Wind Turbines

Wind Turbines in Huron County

Overview: With the continuing interest in alternative energy and the fact that Huron County was identified as a premier area for harnessing wind energy it became obvious that a wind turbine plan was necessary. The initial meetings involved consulting engineers, design engineers, wind energy specialists, construction managers, finance people, township officials, county building and zoning officials just to name a few- many chiefs, not many Indians and no plan. Ultimately in order to protect our transportation infrastructure we became consultants in our own right. The end result was the construction of 78 wind turbines each in excess of 300' tall located within two separate "wind parks" at opposite ends of the county.

Scope: We had to determine how to facilitate the logistics of moving parts of these turbines that are in excess of 100' long with most of the construction on county local roads. Also involved were permits for service road culverts, special permits for culvert extensions (later to be removed), sign posts had to be lockable and removable so as to allow long loads to navigate intersections, daily inspection of road surfaces for required maintenance, special permits for overweight and oversize loads, constant review of construction plans and timing schedules. Also it became necessary to take French language lessons since most of the turbine parts were shipped from Quebec, Canada, resulting in a communication problem between their truckers and our engineering staff. If we weren't ahead of the curve and reacted as quickly and effectively as we did, roads in Huron County would have suffered irreparable harm with the cost of repairs squarely on the shoulders of the Huron County residents.

Effectiveness Measures: To accomplish the tasks listed above, there were obvious costs involved for our forces. To offset expenses we required two separate cash bonds. The first was for \$25,000, renewable and to be used for road repair and maintenance only. Whenever roads required more than routine maintenance as a result of the wind turbine project, our crew charged that bond number. When the bond became depleted to an amount less than \$12,000, all special permits were suspended until such time as the bond was replenished back to \$25,000. The second bond was for \$100,000 and will be held by the Huron County Road Commission for five years. This bond was necessary due to excessively heavy loads being moved with and without proper permits with some of these loads utilizing the incorrect route. It was a huge exposure for us. Had we not secured these cash bonds, there would have been little or no recourse as most of these companies/contractors were from out of state. The projects were halted on two separate occasions due to bonds not secured.

Quality of Performance: The issue of whether we supported wind energy was irrelevant. Our ultimate goal was achieved in that the wind farms were erected on schedule and the cost to the residents of Huron County as it relates to roads within the county was nil. It is critical to note that this was a complete team effort. Every department was involved: office administration, engineering, weigh master, permitting, sign crews, equipment operators, and supervisory staff. Innovation was constant. We developed a locking, removable sign post, worked nights, weekends and Sundays, whatever it took to assist the contractors and still protect our roads. The plan is now in place and we are ready to assist in future wind turbine development projects. It is proposed that by 2015 there could be up to 1000 turbines operating within Huron County.

Nominations for the 2008 Best Practice Award
Awards presented at the 2009 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Emmet County- Educating the Public on Road Funding
 Manistee County- Underbody Truck Wash
 Oceana County- Aggregate Road Rating Scale
 Washtenaw County- Collaboration with other Road Commissions

Emmet County- “Road Funding in Crisis”

Event/Opportunity/Problem: The Emmet County Road Commission has been proactive in engaging our township officials and the County Board of Commissioners in the funding crisis facing county road agencies.

The Road Commission Board asked the Engineer-Manager to put a presentation together to help township officials, County Board, and the citizens of Emmet County to understand how the Michigan road funding situation affects everyone.

Program or Actions Implemented: With the help of Brent Shank, Operations Engineer, the Engineer-Manager put together a presentation entitled, “Road Funding in Crisis.” The Power Point presentation covered State of Michigan road funding distribution, national comparison of road funding, five-year MTF revenue comparison, expense comparison during the same time frame, a 40-year traffic county history on major roads in the county, explanation of PASER, local road rating comparison, primary road rating comparison, and the total cost of improving all roads to a good condition.

Intended Message: The message we are trying to convey was that if a substantial road funding increase was not implemented now, our county road system will fall into a hopeless state of disrepair.

Target Audience and Actions: The first presentation was made at a Road Commission Board meeting. A half dozen township officials were present. The Board and township officials felt this information needed to be made known throughout the community.

Staff Writer, Noah Fowle of the *Petoskey News Review* was present at the meeting and requested an electronic copy of the Power Point presentation; which he linked to a story highlighting the need for increased road funding.

The Road Commission manager contacted the County Clerk and requested to be placed on the agenda for the next County Board meeting. A presentation was made to the County Board on May 13, 2008, and the County Board overwhelmingly supported the Road Commission in its duties.

Outcome: Noah Fowle’s article in the *Petoskey News Review* linked the Power Point for readers to view on the newspaper’s website. The Road Commission received many complimentary phone calls from citizens that read the article and viewed the presentation. We know the townships, and County Board support the Road Commission and have helped our citizens to become better educated on road funding.

Manistee County Road Commission- Underbody Truck Wash

The Manistee County Road Commission has been faced with the challenge of cleaning truck frames for many years. With the salt bodies continually putting salt and calcium chloride up on and into the frame members, the corrosive metal frame members were showing early signs of decay.

Manistee County Road Commission mechanic, Paul Wehrmeister decided to implement a washing system under one of the new trucks to see if he could combat this issue. The system he developed was a quick couple attachment that hooks up to the garage water supply system and with adjustable nozzles, he aimed the water to the most critical areas of the frame. The unit is mounted under our sander which we place a sheet of stainless steel under so the washing system is contained under that piece of stainless steel.

The unit cost was only \$150. After 1.5 years of service, it is still working properly and we have shown little corrosion under the sander. We are continuing to monitor the system, but first signs have shown the \$150 investment has more than paid for itself.



Oceana County Road Commission Aggregate Road Rating Scale (Asset Management Data Collection for Aggregate Roads)

1. Scope, importance, and value of activity

We were looking to inventory our entire road system to answer the questions of how many miles of each type of road do we have in our system. First thought was to drive all the roads, rating the hard surfaced as per the Asset Management Council and just collect surface types, and number of lanes, and breaks (change locations) of these on the unpaved (gravel, earth, unimproved). But why not actually collect some data that was useful about the road on the unpaved system? PASER was recommended for their surface rating scales. However, the PASER scales take into account items that may change daily in determining the rating. What was needed was a rating scale for non paved roads with some stability. A rating scale that would be easy to use & still reflects the general road conditions. The scale also should directly relate to the maintenance & construction needs of the roadway.

We asked the foreman & district drivers what are the problems with gravel roads? What can be done to deal with these issues? What are the work projects and maintenance procedures that typically are done on gravel roads? What is the hope for all gravel roads? The response that kept coming up when talking to the seasoned workers was get the road to drain, and even poor gravel would be OK. We also heard that width is an issue. Not that we need lanes & shoulders, since most people drive gravel roads toward the middle, but enough width for two cars to comfortably pass is great, but one wide lane is also OK according to the road workers. This is adequate for a truck or grader to maintain. All other problems were associated with surface roughness and this could usually be graded out with a float truck. One other repeated response was it would be nice if all these were paved. Talking to the township officials, they also would like to see all gravel roads paved.

We found that only 3 relatively constants exist for aggregate roads. These are width, drainage (ditches), and crown. Everything else can change daily based on traffic, weather, etc. What we came up with was a scale that in essence associates the road rating to the ability of the road to maintain itself. A road rated 10 is ready to pave. A road rated 2 may be occasionally closed, while 4, 6, and 8 are steps in between.

After first use of the scale in 2006, we observed that all unimproved & graded earth roads fit into the 2 rating. Other observations included the fact the two-lane gravel roads without ditches usually remain open even after a storm, roads with brims that block the runoff to ditches usually have breaches during heavy rains making drainage to the ditches possible, and any road that has two lanes has had some gravel put on it so they are all gravel.

With these, and minor difficulties actually trying to describe projects based on the rating, the scale was slightly revised in 2008 (see scale next page). Now a rating can pretty well describe the work needed.

2. Effectiveness measures

The result of this is a usable scale that actually relates to the condition of the road. Work needed on a section can easily be determined by just looking at the rating. A 10 is really good. This road is basically ready to pave with only grading and adding gravel. An 8 is in very good condition, but might have some berm. These were ready to pave last year or a few years ago, but they may take a little work to return them to ready to pave status. A six has most of the needed drainage in place, but not all of it is functioning. Some ditching & other improvements are needed to make these ready to pave. Also a real good, top line narrow road with drainage fits into a 6 as long as it is wide enough to be maintained. A 4 has very little drainage in place.

A 4 is an adequate one-lane road. This group will require extensive ditching, or widening to be ready to pave. A 2 has very little done to it. These roads are mostly unimproved or graded earth roads that have no drainage improvements. Checking the scale with what the foremen say a road needs, the two are in agreement.

3. Quality of Performance

When the scale was first envisioned, gravel roads were a problem. The Engineer wanted to get a grasp on how many miles & what condition they are in. We did not know where we would end up, but we knew we wanted to take the journey.

Effort was put forth by our entire engineering department. Sacrifice was limited since most of the work was done during breaks (interviewing drivers & foreman). The operators & drivers at Oceana County Road Commission are the ones that really put this scale together. Without their input, this rating scale never would have been created. They provided the information that started this moving. The only real effort was to initialize the process, and then compile the results of the various interviews. Once the basic starting points were established, and different levels of work needed were defined, the scale described itself.

As for innovation, the only “innovation” was to get the maintenance forces involved in an Engineering problem. If engineers and managers talked more with their maintenance people on how things actually work, more good things would come.

- 10 Excellent – good crown, adequate width, ditches in place & functioning (needs nothing). Ready to pave with minor work

- 8 Good - 75 percent like 10. Road is ditched & wide enough to pave. The only problem is occasional places with poor crown, or occasional spots with standing water on the road. This can be fixed with minor maintenance- spotty berm removal and spotty ditch cleanout.

- 6 Fair - (A.) All like 10 except too narrow for paving but wide enough to maintain. (Fix- widen road)

 (B.) Uneven crown, or crown missing over 50 percent- Variable cross slope.

 (C.) or Standing water on 25% to 50% on sides of road after rain, or Ditches mostly exist, but not fully functioning.

 (Fix- Maintenance– grade and shape roadway, remove berm, clean ditch)

- 4 Poor- (A.) no ditches or failed drainage, less than 50% of segment with proper drainage.

 (B.) Over 50% of road surface does not drain due to lack of drainage.

 (Fix - add ditches, reshape to typical section)

- 2 Failed- (A.) Road becomes impassible for short periods of time.

 (B.) 1 lane road with less than 50% with drainage improvements

- 0 Unrated

Washtenaw County Road Commission- Liberty Road Bridge Collaboration

In July of 2007, as a result of a routine inspection, the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) was required to close the Liberty Road Short-span Bridge in Lima Township due to severe deterioration and structure failure of the abutments. The original structure was approximately 18-feet in length and 20-feet wide and therefore did not qualify for state and/or federal funding for repairs or replacement. As a result, the project required funding entirely from Michigan Transportation Funds.

With the continued decline in road funding, the WCRC was faced with a difficult decision of leaving this bridge closed or taking money out of reserves. After deciding to move forward with this project in July of 2007, it was then confirmed that due to the hydraulics at the bridge site, replacing the bridge with a box culvert was not an option. The required span of the new bridge had to be a minimum of 24-feet, which narrowed the options to either a conventional concrete bridge or a timber bridge.

For this scenario it was determined that a timber bridge was the best choice as they have proven to be an ideal solution for low traffic, as well as keeping the natural setting of the area. In addition, as the WCRC crews have built timber bridges many times, significant savings could be realized by eliminating unnecessary contract work. However, it was determined from soil borings that the soils in this area were quite soft, which would require a pile supported foundation. Unfortunately, the WCRC does not have the equipment or the experience required to drive the timber piles for the foundation. It was necessary to solicit quotes for this portion of the work.

When estimates for the foundation work were received at approximately \$70,000, Kelly Jones, Project Engineer, knew she had to “think outside of the box” to identify and secure alternative solutions. To solve the budget problem, Ms. Jones looked into collaborating with other road commissions. Understanding that the Lenawee County Road Commission (LCRC) has the proper equipment, resources and trained personnel, Mr. Jones approached the LCRC to inquire about a most cost-effective option by contracting with the LCRC crew to install the timber piles. LCRC was enthusiastic to work with WCRC as they too have seen their budget affected by declining fuel tax revenues and this opportunity would help offset some of their costs.

The initial LCRC contract of \$40,000 included \$30,000 for the pile driving operation and an additional \$10,000 for removal of the existing bridge foundations, which were not feasible for the WCRC to remove. Even with the additional cost for the foundation removal, the total contract for LCRC was \$30,000 less than the original contractor’s estimate for only driving the piles. Of the original \$40,000 quote, actual costs came to only \$22,000 due to the project running more efficiently than expected.

The completion of the project was accomplished sooner than anticipated, again demonstrating the efficiency of the two road commissions working in partnership on this portion of the project. The bridge reopened November 26th, in time for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The timber-bridge replacement project total final cost for the WCRC was approximately \$150,000, which included all contractual materials, services and labor costs. Total contracted work {LCRC, Krenn Bridge (timber bridge supplier), G2 Consulting (soil boring)} resulted in \$110,000. The total WCRC design and construction costs came to \$40,000. With an initial budget of \$250,000, this collaborative effort saved the WCRC 40 percent of the initial planning cost, with a total savings of \$100,000. This project is an example of cooperation between road commissions that not only saves the agency money but also makes us more efficient as we share common knowledge.

We feel this project is reflective of the kind of positive working relationships that can be developed between road commissions. As each county owns costly equipment, sharing specialized equipment and skills between neighboring counties is an excellent opportunity for road commissions to save in individual costs. With the collaborative effort between the two road commissions, our agencies were able to work together to save the public a considerable amount of money, as well as demonstrating an increase in productivity which enabled us to reopen the bridge ahead of schedule.

Steve Puuri, Managing Director of Washtenaw County Road Commission, agrees that “Our agency has invested a great deal of time and effort into fostering good working relationships with various agencies. Joining efforts with Lenawee County Road Commission on this bridge project is another example of cooperation that has saved us additional dollars.” WCRC continues to look for opportunities to coordinate road commission projects by integrating our efforts with others to achieve a greater level of financial accountability and efficiency.

Nominations for the 2007 Best Practice Award

Awards presented at the 2008 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Oakland County- Strategic Planning Process

No Other Nominations

For the past 22 years, the Road Commission for Oakland County has conducted bi-annual meetings with the leaders of their 61 communities with the goal of:

1. Building community relations.
2. Determining transportation needs.
3. Evaluating the Road Commission's delivery of service to the communities.

The meetings are held at each of the individual City, Village, or Township Halls, and Local officials, County Commissioners and State Legislators are invited to attend.

The Road Commission for Oakland County's commitment involves scheduling, pre-planning, agenda preparations, data collections, and follow-up issue resolution. Key staff including the Managing Director, Deputy Director, and Department Heads attend all 61 meetings as a priority commitment to sustaining and improving community relations within Oakland County.

As a result of the Road Commission's ongoing Strategic Planning process, the communities are individually and collectively updated and informed about transportation issues in Oakland County.

The process continues after completion of the meeting –when the Road Commission staff prepare responses to each and every concern or issue raised, and follow through with a written or verbal contact to the communities.

Upon completion of the meeting process, the final task is to compile all the information into a published report that is shared with all the communities and elected officials.

And, yes, the process has been worth the many hours of staff time and effort. For **“Today, there is a noticeable difference in the tone and mood of the Strategic Planning meetings. There is far greater understanding on both sides of the table – no longer are the relationships between “agencies”. Today they are relationships between people, based on the enhanced communications initiated at the Strategic Planning meetings and continued year-round.”**

Nominations for the 2006 Best Practice Award
Awards presented at the 2007 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Muskegon County- Self-Funded Health Care Plan
Other Nominations: Washtenaw County- Taking Control of Health Care Costs

Muskegon County Road Commission Self-funded Health Care Plan
Date of Implementation: July 1, 2004

Description: Like all municipal and other local governments, the Muskegon County Road Commission was experiencing double digit increases in the cost of health care, which in some years even exceeded a 20% increase. Additionally, due to a significant proportion of retirees, it was becoming increasingly difficult to find a carrier that would write a health plan covering the entire group. While the organization was able several years ago to offer employees a choice of five different plans, due to the retiree issue, we could only get one carrier to write a health care plan for the organization and thus were limited as to options and ultimately locked into the cost from a single vendor.

Through the labor negotiation process, MCRC management had negotiated a cost share with the employees. Essentially MCRC had “frozen” its contribution to a negotiated amount with premium increases becoming the responsibility of the employee. This worked well in years when increases mimicked national inflation rates, but became a serious concern and led to great dissatisfaction among employees when premiums rose 18-28% per year for several consecutive years. Employees very soon were paying an annual contribution in the \$2,800 range.

Road Commission management realized that the issue should be a priority and became determined to make a best effort to keep health care costs minimized for both the Commission and for the employees.

A committee was established to investigate the issue and to determine a course of action. The committee consisted of the Managing Director, Ken Hulka; Assistant Managing Director; Jim Stibitz; Director of Finance, Joyce Whisenant; Accountant, Michelle McCabe; and a Benefits Consultant, Bill Lewis. Meetings were held frequently over the course of several months to familiarize the members with the health care industry and to investigate the different components that make up the health care premium.

After significant study, it was determined that MCRC would “self-fund” its health care benefit for both active and retired employees. The next step in the process was to hire a third party administrator to help design the plan. The goal was to establish a base plan that did not have to be degraded over time to hold premium increases in check, and which would be as similar as possible to the existing plan. After several sessions a plan design was chosen that involved employee co-pay and deductibles.

The plan was approved by the Board for implementation and several meetings were held to explain the plan to the active and retired members of the Muskegon County Road Commission. The plan went into effect on July 1, 2004, and has been an unqualified success in that rates for both employer and employees have stabilized to the extent that on July 1 of 2005 and July 1 of

2006, no rate increases were necessary. We continue to be on track for no increase in July of 2007.

The Road Commission and its employees have derived great benefit from this program. We can find no other organization that has held the same health care costs for three consecutive years. The following charts and figures depict the savings derived from the program.

Premium Costs for July 01, 2003 thru June 30, 2004 before Self-Funding	
Total Cost Employee & Employer	\$ 750,733.58
Above premiums with a 18% increase (Conservative estimate of what premium costs could have been for 04/05.) [Quoted premiums ranged between 18-22%]	885,865.62
Total Fixed and Variable Costs Self Funded Plan 2004/2005	598,265.38
Estimated Savings	\$ 287,600.24

Premium Costs for July 01, 2004 thru June 30, 2005	
Total Cost to Employee & Employer Under Original Plan	\$ 885,865.62
Above premiums with a 8% increase (Conservative estimate of what premium costs could have been for 05/06.)	956,734.87
Total Fixed and Variable Costs Self Funded Plan 2005/2006	798,031.56
Estimated Savings 2005/2006	158,703.31
Estimated Savings 2004/2005	265,078.24
Total Plan Savings – First Two Years	\$ 423,781.55

Muskegon County Road Commission Annual Employee Paid Insurance Balance	
<i>Family Amount Due</i>	
02 – 03	\$ 1,311.68
03 – 04	2,726.00
<i>Self Funding Implemented July 1, 2004</i>	
04 – 05	\$ 2,398.96
05 – 06	2,118.64
06 – 07	2,137.60

The success of this program in terms of the financial impact on the employees has been significant. Additionally, the program has been a success due to the hard work and continual effort to explain the program and to work through employee problems by the team members that put it together. Joyce Whisenant, Director of Finance and Human Resources, and Michelle McCabe, Accountant, are the first call that employees often make. Their patience and expertise in assisting the employees and retirees have been a tremendous service that unfortunately is rarely recognized by the employees.

This program can be emulated by other organizations willing to put the time into the effort. Self funding an existing health care plan is very possible as there are many choices that can be made in terms of what items are covered. There are few restrictions on program design, but serious thought needs to be put into the design and use of a benefits consult is a key part of this program. We would not recommend going forward without the consultant.

Washtenaw County Road Commission- Taking Care of Health Care Costs

Having observed an alarming trend in rising health care and related costs at the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC), at the direction of the Managing Director, the Human Resources Director began a full analysis of all components that made up our health care and related costs puzzle. These include a Dental/Vision Program, Life Insurance, Short-Term and Long-Term Disability, and Health Insurance.

Upon examination, it became clear that to implement change in our health care costs would require a strategy spanning more than a few months, and would require a direct link to insurance carriers that were not available with the limited cooperation of our current Broker acting as an intermediary. After removing this Broker from the process, we obtained and analyzed all the available health care information, and a multi-step course of action was charted.

Dental/Vision Program: The information revealed that the WCRC should be able to obtain its dental and vision coverage at a better rate. Quotes were sought from several insurance providers and also from MERS. When the responses came back, there was real difficulty in matching the exact benefit structure that we had in the past, and which was incorporated into our Union contracts. MERS indicated that it could help us match our dental/vision plan if we operated on a "self-funded" basis.

It quickly became obvious in reviewing the quotes that the WCRC could realize a substantial savings by operating its own dental and vision plans on a self-funded basis. At the same time, WCRC was experiencing horrendous problems with the service delivery under the plan administered by its long-term carrier. A relationship was formed with MERS through Dugan and Coleman where they made available SecureOne as the plan administrator for a very reasonable cost. Because of commitments in the Union contracts, we had to phase in the various employee groups consistent with agreements.

In January of 2005, WCRC instituted its self-insurance dental/vision plan and began tracking all costs- administration, fees, claims, etc. - for the various employee groups. The MERS

SecureOne Program greatly facilitated this process by providing online access to all claims and payment activity.

Life Insurance: Likewise, utilizing MERS program for life insurance coverage to replace the program that was in place, the WCRC went from paying \$.42 cents per thousand for life insurance to a little over half that amount.

Short-Term and Long-Term Disability: As of November, the plan was providing excellent service with minimal to no service problems and is currently saving the WCRC approximately \$2,000 per month.

A similar analysis of our short and long-term disability programs showed that over 15 years there had only been one claim against the long-term disability program and it was only for three months. The short-term plan was self-funded and administered and covered the first six months of disability. The long-term plan has a 180-day elimination period and was fully insured.

It was further determined that the WCRC could save one-half the cost of the insurance by also self-funding the first six months of the long-term disability plan. This change was also implemented in 2006 utilizing SecureOne at a very nominal cost to maintain our data on their system for processing claims in the event one occurred.

Health Insurance: As of the beginning of 2006, the WCRC will implement the first phase of its health insurance cost savings plan with a drug co-pay change to a \$10/\$20/\$40 prescription drug co-pay for various employee groups consistent with agreements. The projected savings from this action is expected to be 11 percent of the total health care costs. In addition, a ceiling has been established based on total 2006 cost above which any increase in cost will be shared equally with employees up to a cap of \$15 for a single employee, \$28 for a two person plan, and \$40 for family coverage.

Overall, these actions are expected to at least halt the rise in cost for health care and related costs to the WCRC. A more aggressive plan for providing a high deductible/Health Savings Account (HAS) plan to new employees is currently being explored to establish even greater savings as we continue to provide high quality health care coverage to our employees.

If successful, our Road Commission would expect to realize significant savings and, in turn, these changes will substantially address our "Other Post Employment Benefit" (OPEB) cost liability.

Nominations for the 2005 Best Practice Award
Awards presented at the 2006 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Ottawa- Salt Management Plan
Other Nominations: Manistee- Hydroseeding for Erosion Control
Muskegon County- Use of Inmate Work Crews (see 2010 Awards)

Ottawa County Road Commission Salt Management Plan

Background: Ottawa County's road system consists of about 400 miles of primary roads and 1,240 miles of local roads, 380 which are unpaved. In addition, the Ottawa County Road Commission maintains 481 lane miles of State Trunkline within the county limits. Residents of Ottawa County and the State of Michigan rely on this roadway network throughout the year for transportation to and from the workplace and recreational facilities, for the transport of goods and services, and for emergency services.

Snow and ice conditions during the winter months have a significant impact on the function of this roadway network, dramatically affecting public safety, roadway capacity, travel time and economic costs. With the technology currently available, the Ottawa County Road Commission must use road salt and chlorides to maintain reasonably safe roads for the residents of Ottawa County and the State of Michigan.

Although public health departments and the Department of Environmental Quality have not defined specific limits which might be harmful to humans, there are concerns that road salts are entering the environment and are posing a risk to plants, animals, birds, fish, lakes and streams, and groundwater. In addition, studies performed through the MSU Extension indicate that salt may be causing damage to blueberry crops planted adjacent to roadways.

In 2004, a Salt Commission was formed to attempt to address these environmental concerns. The Salt Commission consisted of representatives from the County of Ottawa, The Ottawa County Road Commission, The Ottawa County Sheriff's Office, The Ottawa County Health Department, The Michigan Department of Transportation, The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, The Michigan State Police, The Michigan State University Extension Service and several affected blueberry farmers. One of the recommendations of the Salt Commission was that the Ottawa County Road Commission form and implement a Salt Management Plan.

Purpose of the Plan: The purpose of the plan is to better manage the use of road salt in light of the concerns about the effect road salt may have on the environment while continuing to provide for road safety.

The Salt Management plan sets out a procedural framework for the Ottawa County Road Commission to continually improve the management of the use of road salt in winter maintenance operations.

The Road Commission's winter maintenance activities shall be carried out in a way that provides for reasonable roadway safety and user mobility consistent with the weather conditions experienced during the winter season.

It is imperative that this plan be flexible, allowing the Road Commission to phase in new technology in a way that is consistent with its fiscal responsibilities and its responsibility to ensure the roadway safety is not compromised.

Plan Statement: The Ottawa County Road Commission will perform its winter maintenance operations utilizing de-icers in an environmentally sensitive manner while providing for reasonably safe road conditions. In performing its maintenance operations, de-icers shall be used as appropriate in a manner that mitigates potential impacts of salt on the environment.

The goal of the Ottawa County Road Commission is to provide winter maintenance in an effort to achieve reasonably safe winter conditions for vehicular traffic in accordance with service guidelines contained herein and in accordance with guidelines established by the Michigan Department of Transportation and/or the Ottawa County Road Commission within the funding guidelines established by the State of Michigan and the Ottawa County Road Commission while striving to minimize the effects of road salt on the environment. To accomplish this, the Road Commission will:

- 1.) Follow the guidelines contained within the Salt Management Plan;
- 2.) Annually review and upgrade the guidelines contained in the Salt Management Plan to take into account new materials, technologies and developments;
- 3.) Work with other transportation agencies and concerned environmental groups in order to consider and evaluate alternative winter maintenance procedures within the constraints of this plan; and
- 4.) Commit to ongoing staff training and education.

Application: This plan is adopted by the Ottawa County Road Commission and applies to all employees involved in winter maintenance operations.

Conditions: On-going review and refinement of the Salt Management Plan will be based on the following:

- Periodic review and analysis of industry practices
- Implementation and documentation of the plan
- Education and training of the staff
- Monitoring and analysis
- Management review
- Environmental review
- Practices and plan revisions

Winter Maintenance Practices and Guidelines

Levels of Service: All roads in Ottawa County have been categorized by classification and/or traffic volumes to assist in the development of recommendations for level of service of treatment. These categories are as follows:

1. MDOT State Trunkline
2. High Volume Primary and Local
3. Medium Volume Primary and Local
4. Low Volume Primary and Local with speed limits of 30 mph or greater
5. Low Volume Local with speed limits of 25 mph or less (subdivision streets)
6. Unpaved Roads

Levels of Service will be as follows:

- **Level 1:** Treat in accordance with MDOT's assigned minimum level of maintenance.
- **Level 2:** Provide maintenance services as appropriate and apply chemicals during and after a snow event.
- **Level 3:** Provide maintenance services as appropriate to provide a pavement surface generally bare of snow and ice in the center portion of the roadway sufficient for one wheel track in each direction. Clearing the pavement snow and ice over the entire width will be accomplished as soon as reasonably possible after the snow event.
- **Level 4:** Plow snow as necessary to provide a surface that is passable, but yet snow covered. De-icing chemicals and or abrasives are to be applied only at intersections, curves and critical hills. Under extreme ice and/or snow pack conditions, general application of chemicals/abrasives may be made with authorization of the District Supervisor.
- **Level 5:** Plow snow as necessary to provide a surface that is passable, but yet snow covered. De-icing chemicals and or abrasives are to be applied only at intersections, curves and critical hills. Under extreme ice and/or snow pack conditions, general application of chemicals/abrasives may be made with authorization of the District Supervisor.
- **Level 6:** Plow snow as necessary to provide a surface that is passable, but yet snow covered. No general application of de-icing chemicals except in emergencies.

In all cases, special consideration may be made for:

- Roads near facilities which generate high volumes of traffic for a short duration (schools, sports facilities, churches);
- Areas with high accident exposure;
- When requested by emergency services for protection at an accident/fire scene; and
- When reasonably necessary and practical to provide for reasonable traffic safety.

General Methods of treatment:

- Rock salt is not to be applied on a clear pavement;
- No rock salt is to be applied until the road surface has been plowed as clear as practical. General application of rock salt will be re-evaluated before applying at temperatures less than 20 degrees. Below 20 degrees, application of salt/abrasive mixtures may be placed at lights, intersections, critical curves and extremely hazardous areas; and
- Due to the potential for anti-icers to freeze when diluted by precipitation from a snow/ice event, thereby making application of salt necessary, the use of anti-icers will be limited to MDOT Trunklines and High Volume County Roads where bare pavements are desirable.

Manistee County Road Commission- Hydroseeding Program

The Manistee County Road Commission was experiencing the same problems all road commissions face- erosion. We decided to purchase a hydroseeder in order to expedite seed germination and soil stability. We have found that the hydroseeding process (although initially more expensive) reduces overall costs to use on side slopes and shoulder work because of the quick root growth, thus reducing and many times eliminating washouts prior to ordinary seed germination. Not having to repeat soil erosion control measures twice or three times actually reduces our overall costs by nearly 25 percent on most projects. The added bonus for us was getting rave reviews from property owners by making their lawns look professionally done and quick return on lawn grass. This has helped our image with the public.

Nominations for the 2004 Best Practice Award
Awards presented at the 2005 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Calhoun- Customer Service Program
 Oakland- Brine Enterprise Program
Other Nominations: Monroe- Master List of Projects

Calhoun County Road Commission Customer Service Program

Description/Summary: The Calhoun County Road Commission has set up a Customer Service Program intended to copy private sector programs. Such programs make customer satisfaction one of the organization's primary business goals. Since starting this program in June 2000, the program has resulted in cost savings of over \$500,000 by cutting repeat trips and causing an overall decline in pothole and other service requests. Also the Customer Service Program has received over 400 unsolicited thank you calls and letters by the end of 2004.

The major objective of our Customer Service process is "customer service." The public may or may not expect immediate attention to a matter. Nevertheless, with a postcard acknowledgement and proper tracking, the public has greater confidence that their call will be addressed. As a result, they may be more patient. We pride ourselves on not having a "complaint system" but rather, a means to SERVICE the public we serve. In this area, the effectiveness and value is immeasurable.

Customer Service Program Calhoun County Community Development

Without people and their cars there would not be a need for road commissions. Then again, without people we would not have the phone calls and letters telling us what we as road commissions are not doing, to make roads safer, smoother, faster, slower or any of a thousand other complaints/faults that can be reported. Mishandle the response to any of these calls and letters and we risk the wrath of citizens, politicians, newspapers or our legal system. There are risks to being too generous in responding, and if a concern is ignored, we risk being in the same situation as a firefighter- putting out one fire, only to find a dozen new ones have started.

Research has shown that citizens' calls and letters, commonly referred to as complaints, are useful in reducing liability and optimizing the process of complaint receipt, complaint response, street maintenance operations, and liability minimization. It is only a short step to recognize that an effective system to capture, learn from and follow-up citizen input, including complaints, can be an effective substitute and surrogate for direct political accountability at road commissions.

Also, a Customer Service System, together with pavement quality evaluations, and maintenance management data, can lead to a truly rational process for allocating road funds. Such a holistic system allows the transportation professional to provide the best street system at the optimal spending level.

By controlling and minimizing low-severity risk, which is most often evidenced by citizen complaints, resources can be managed more effectively in the battle to reduce high-severity risk. At the same time, using citizen complaints in the street management function is a very good public relations tool that can help promote the overall transportation function.

In Calhoun County, we have taken citizen complaints and turned them into a useful source of information. Using complaints, we have been able to improve service to our customers in many different ways.

In considering how our organizations might provide better service to our customers, we wanted to look first at ourselves. While it is common for an organization to refer to a “complaint” as a service request, there is often no change in how the organization and its workers view service requests. That is, service requests are often just considered another way of saying “complaint” and thus looked on as a waste of time. Consequently, they simply manifest the squeaky-wheel syndrome, complaints are forgotten and the senders ignored, at best. Therefore, as a first step, we needed to change the mind-set of our employees to reflect a new viewpoint.

Beginning with the Road Commissioners and senior management, we have instilled the idea that the Calhoun County Road Commission does not consider service requests a waste of time. Moreover, we consider people who file a service request as providers of useful information, people who are concerned with the safety and maintenance of county roads.

Scope, Importance and Value of Activity/Contribution: Our Customer Service Program is an important part of our organization. An emphasis on customer service is the keystone to our entire service delivery philosophy. Our objective is to have satisfied customers, in the same way the private ventures strive to have happy, satisfied customers. To this end we have set up specific objectives including:

- **Follow-up each citizen service request** with a postcard thanking them and pointing out that their call will be addressed. The value in this is that it thanks the public for taking an active role in our road system and recognizes their call is important;
- **Generate weekly reports for managers** on pending service requests. We want to change the idea that customer service is somehow contrary to providing good public service. The value of this is to help supervisors understand the need for accountability and a timely follow through response; and
- **Fix standard for response time.** By specifying ahead of time when work needs to be done, we make it clear how important it is to “say what we mean” and “do what we say.”

While addressing these three objectives, we have found the Road Commission:

- Is able to focus its efforts and thus run more efficiently;
- Receives less negative publicity and thus benefited from appearing to be a more capable organization;
- Committed itself to customer service and benefited from this commitment; and
- Lessened the number of repeat calls and complaints which causes the road commission to appear more professional and saved a significant amount of money.

Effectiveness Measures: Our Customer Service Program was started in 1995; however it was changed in June of 2000 and has been in full operation in 2001 and 2002. We have realized the following positive benefits:

- Decreased Complaints
 - By tracking and aggressively addressing service requests we have cut out 90 percent of multiple callbacks; and
 - By being able to concentrate more on patrol patching rather than “fighting fires” we have lessened overall pothole requests by 10 percent.

- Dollar Savings and Benefit/Cost
 - These two items have resulted in a total estimated savings in labor and equipment costs of nearly \$250,000 annually;
 - The total cost to set-up the program was \$12,500; and
 - The resulting cost to benefit ratio is 20:1
- Thank you contacts from the public:
 - 22 unsolicited thank you calls and letters in 2001
 - 92 unsolicited thank you calls and letters in 2002
 - 130 unsolicited thank you calls and letters in 2003
 - 151 unsolicited thank you calls and letters in 2004
- Targeted road improvements
 - Selection of roads for special repair program
 - Used with Roadsoft surface quality data to make selection
 - Selection of roads for chip and seal
 - Selection of roads for installation of deer reflectors
- Increased Productivity
- Decreased “Fire-fighting” in response to complaints
- Reduced repeat visits- callouts

Summary of Program Results:

- Increased thank you’s- better relationships with the public
- Reduced pothole service requests by 10 percent
- Reduced repeat calls by 90 percent

Quality of Performance: In terms of effort our Customer Service Program:

- Needs some increase in effort in the administrative section mainly in tracking requests and insuring that requests are followed-up and closed;
- Needs some increase in effort for field supervisors as they must contact each person putting in a service request to advise them what if any action we will take;
- Lessens effort for field crews by cutting repeat visits. Crews can spend more time on uninterrupted patrol patching.

While many people feel that it may be a sacrifice to provide the extra effort necessary to earn a “thank you,” clearly once the proper habits develop, there is no sacrifice, and in fact, there is much satisfaction for everyone involved.

In the private sector the idea of customer service is well known. However, in public sector, customer service is a murky term, rarely put into effective practice. Often understood as doing what the customer wants, true customer service is a much more complex idea. The concept of not being able to make every customer happy often leads governmental organizations to abandon the idea of establishing a true customer service program.

What does it take to make a customer happy and how you measure satisfaction are the two primary questions the Road Commission has considered for years. It is not always possible to satisfy every individuals concern. Often, the individual’s wishes run contrary to the public good. An example is a homeowner living on a cul-de-sac who wants their road cleared immediately after a snow storm. Clearly, by focusing snow removal on high volume primary roads first, and then clearing cul-de-sacs the Road Commission is addressing the greater public good.

How the Road Commission reconciles the need to balance individual wants with the public good goes to the heart of its customer service program. It begins the balancing process by first taking every concern seriously. Then, the Road Commission shows its concern by making sure that customers are told how their concern will be addressed and if it cannot be address according to their wishes, an explanation is provided.

Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Brine Enterprise Program

Scope and Importance: in 1996, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), after reviewing its gravel road dust-control program, introduced a bold new initiative intended to cut costs and improve service to motorists. The program has been a dramatic success in both areas.

The goal was to create a self-supporting brine enterprise within the RCOC. The Maintenance Department proposed constructing our own brine well and then selling the brine service to residents and communities in order to recover costs. Funding was provided from the Road Commission budget, with the agreement it would be repaid by the enterprise.

Since then, the program has expanded to include three RCOC-owned brine wells. The program is self-sufficient, and RCOC has been able to consistently provide a more competitive service than the private sector.

Value: This program has resulted in a cost savings for both the Road Commission as well as residents living along gravel roads and for those communities that purchase blanket dust control. Over the last five years, the per-foot dust-control brine application cost has increased only one penny.

Additionally, having our own brine well has allowed RCOC to have access to “free” brine for winter maintenance activities, including making chloride sand, for use in pre-wetters on salt trucks, for anti-icing applications and for use as a de-icing agent in our automated bridge deck sprayer- all of which have resulted in safer roads.

Effectiveness Measures: Prior to establishing its own brine wells, RCOC paid more than \$600,000 per year to purchase brine from a vendor. Now RCOC collects more than \$600,000 in revenue from the program each year, which is used to cover the expense of providing dust-control services. Because we do not make a profit (simply cover our expenses) through our brine program, we are able to pass along the savings to residents and townships.

Additionally, the ready access to brine at virtually no charge has allowed us to standardize the process of “pre-wetting” salt with brine before application to roads. That is, brine is automatically sprayed onto the salt as it leaves the salt spreader on our salt trucks. This means the salt is already beginning to “activate” before it even hits the ground, and significantly increases the effectiveness of the salt. By adding pre-wetting to our trucks and using our own brine, we have been able to reduce our salt use by nearly 20 percent for each salt run.

Quality of Performance: This program was conceived of, proposed and implemented by staff of RCOC’s Highway Maintenance Department. Prior to the creation of the program, RCOC was considering completely privatizing dust control, as it appeared the work could be done more inexpensively by private contractors. Convinced they could do the work better and more cost-effectively than the private sector; the employees came up with the means of making the

program financially self-sufficient and convinced RCOE management to back the effort. They proved that, in some instances, the public sector can be more efficient than the private sector.

Monroe County Road Commission- Master List of Projects

The internal operations and business practices of the Monroe County Road Commission (MCRC) were for many years lacking a specific plan. Each year road projects to be completed in that year were determined by meeting with township officials to discuss problem roads, potential costs of projects, and the availability of funds. Projects were discussed and decided upon only months prior to the work being completed. This method of planning road projects caused inefficiency, confusion, added costs and stress. The Engineering, Maintenance and Finance Departments worked at an intense pace with undue stress and frustration to keep ahead of the project. Mistakes were often made and details overlooked due to the tension of all pieces coming together at the required time. At times when unusual circumstances surfaced it would cause delays and even postponement of the project due to time constraints.

Then the staff of the MCRC pulled together to develop a method to relieve the above problems as well as improve customer service and township relations. The development also allowed MCRC to gain control of spending for unexpected expenses and the annual budgeting process. The method put in place was the Master List of Project (MLP). Once it was instituted the MCRC developed not only the road projects for the impending year, but projects extending out five (5) years in the future. As the MLP has developed townships have begun to think more than a year in advance, and they have lengthened their list of road projects that they foresee completing a few years out. The MLP has helped townships to plan ahead, making decisions on road projects, and setting aside money for their future projects, knowing that the MCRC is also planning and preparing for the project.

The MLP has improved the efficiency of the MCRC. One process that is more efficient is the budgeting process. Using the MLP the Finance Department, Managing Director and other staff are able to secure definite information about how the proposed funds will be spent and what funds will need to be held over for projects. The advanced knowledge of projects also improves efficiency for the Fleet Manager and Purchasing Agent by being aware of equipment needs and budgeting for their department accordingly. The development of the MLP has helped to insure an overall cost-effectiveness for the MCRC.

Determining the list of road maintenance and construction projects that the MCRC would complete in one year is a difficult task. Attempting to make a meaningful projection for five years in the future adds multiple levels of complexity to the assignment. In order to determine the staff's recommendation for the projects to be scheduled for completion in future years, certain parameters have to be established. Consideration must be given to:

- The time necessary for competing the project design, MDOT and MDEQ approval and the construction period;
- Any necessary matching monies from the MCRC that would need to be determined in each future budget keeping in mind the need for a balanced budget;
- Priority projects that have the largest non-MCRC dollar contributions such as Federal Aid projects, projects with township contributions, Special Assessment Districts or projects with private contributions, in order to maximize the MCRC's available funds;

- Preservation projects (this category helps to leverage the most road, bridge and culvert improvements for future years), future Federal Aid match (this category helps to fund the MCRC share of Federal Aid projects in the future); and
- Specific cross county roads extending between townships, which have different funding levels. A project may begin in a given township one year and not be completed into the adjoining township until funding becomes available in that township.

It is difficult to put a dollar amount on the value of implementing this operation within the MCRC, or how much the practice has saved the MCRC. The improved efficiency has allowed the MCRC to complete more projects. The dollars that would have been saved were reinvested into other projects. As a result of this efficiency the MCRC has proven increased productivity, increase the return on the dollar spent and increased service to the customer.

The MLP allowed more efficiency within the organization because not only does it help to forecast our needs for funds and develop our budget, it also prepares our staff for future projects. Our Engineering Department can determine well in advance the projects that can be accomplished with our own staff and those which will require bidding with contractors. A MLP five years out also helps to determine the staffing needs and provide Bridge Engineers, Traffic Engineers and other staff to be actively pursuing future projects in the winter months when the pace is not as demanding.

Nominations for the 2003 Best Practice Award
Awards presented at the 2004 CRAM Annual Highway Conference

Winning Entries: Cass County- Chloride Solution Program
 Genesee County- Inventory Control Program
 Washtenaw County- Developer Funded Projects Process

Other Nominations: Calhoun County- Customer Service Program (See 2004 Awards)
 Macomb County- County Bridge Program
 Oakland County- Road Safety Audit Program

Cass County Road Commission Chloride Solution Program
Submitted by Steve Northrup, Road Superintendent

This story is about a problem the Cass County Road Commission encountered two years ago and the efforts of a group of employees who discovered a remedy through pure resourcefulness and ingenuity. We would like to share our ideas and efforts with everyone and hope it may help in some way to make your winter operations safer, as it has ours.

The salt situation became quite an issue at the Cass CRC two years ago, with only one major salt supplier bidding on the season's salt supply. The decision was made to rebid, because it was thought, the other suppliers may not have received the bid information on time or may have been lost in the mail. The second bid opening was a surprise to find, the only bid, on the first bidding, was withdrawn and three others replied, "no bid." There was some discussion at the same meeting about checking into the State contracting of the season's salt. Our problem with the State contracting was half of the predicted seasons usage would have to be stored under cover and we could only store 400 tons.

I pointed out at the meeting that the Cass CRC does not have a bare pavement policy. We rely on the abrasive characteristics of sand for our intersections, curves and hills on our 1,000+ miles of county roads. We only require enough salt in our sand to keep it from freezing in the trucks and in the stockpile. I explained this could possibly be done with calcium chloride to accomplish the same results. Vice Chairman Brad Walker said he had always wondered why we couldn't spray our sand while we were screening our season's supply. I replied, "we screen our sand well ahead of time and it wouldn't be a good idea to have that much treated sand sitting outside."

However, Mr. Walker's idea of spraying the sand as it came off the conveyor sparked another idea. Our Engineer-Manager, Mr. Collins and I immediately began talking about equipment we already have and what we would need to purchase for such an experiment. I spent the next couple of weeks researching calcium chloride and equipment while Mr. Collins researched other sources of acquiring salt. After talking with a representative of Great Lakes Chloride, we acquired a calcium chloride pump, equipped with a meter, to register the gallons used.

To feed sand onto the conveyor, we had 5 spare sand spreader boxes and decided to use one as a feed hopper. We made a frame to sit one of the sand boxes on but the problem with using a sand spreader box was the drive unit on the sand box required hydraulic power. After talking to the shop foreman, we decided to purchase an electric powered hydraulic unit to run the sand box instead of using an electric powered reducer. Our thinking was that we could use the

hydraulic unit to run the chains on the sand boxes and after the season was over, to lubricate and preserve our sand spreaders. The hydraulic unit we received was much too big and much too expensive for what we would be using it for so we decided to use the electric powered gear reducer.

Meanwhile we were all pooling our ideas while fabricating the frame for the sand box. We decided to hang a tube on the discharge end of a conveyor and attach spray nozzles inside to eliminate corrosion problems. Spraying the veil of sand as it was going through the tube on the end of the conveyor seemed to be the best solution but we needed to control when the chloride pump would come on and turn off without someone being right there to push a button. We decided to use a micro switch mounted at the end of the conveyor that would turn the pump on when there was sand coming off the belt and off where there was not. This would eliminate problems like running out of sand when the loader operator was busy. After installing the new gear reducer box, we were ready to turn the sand box on and check the speed it was running. To our surprise, it was turning off twice as fast as we wanted but all we needed to do was change pulleys to cut the speed in half. That was the day before Thanksgiving weekend and we would have to wait until the next Monday to get different pulleys to slow things down.

Our purchasing agent found the new pulleys. Once they were installed, the speed was about right. We ran a couple of tests without turning liquid on to determine how many tons of salt per minute we were running. We then turned on the calcium chloride making an adjustment to spray 8-10 gallons of liquid on 1 ton of sand. Although the ratio was right, we were not happy with the spraying. The two nozzles pointed directly at the veil as it came off the conveyor, penetrated the veil of sand and ended up running down the tube. We then decided to use only one nozzle angled toward the flow of sand. This proved to be the ticket but we needed to reduce the spray pattern of the nozzle so we ordered nozzles with a lesser degree of angle.

The 30 degree nozzle proved to be the right answer and we started making the treated sand and stockpiling it. We made 800 tons of treated sand at the ratio of 7.5 gallons per ton of sand then waited for the snow to arrive. The wait was over Christmas Eve day and we decided to use up our sand and salt pile left from last season before using the new material. We tried one load of calcium chloride treated sand on one truck to get an idea of how it came out of our sand spreader. We found it didn't make any difference with the truck but discovered it stayed where it was spread better than the salt sand mix. The salt tends to separate from the sand and because it is lighter, it tends to end up on the edge or shoulder of the road. The calcium chloride treated sand seems to stay where it was laid because it has been wetted with chloride, allowing traffic to work the mixture into the ice and snow.

After a week of steady snow coming down, we continued to run our sand treating plant and found a couple of small problems but nothing significant. We also found it was a good idea to keep another person there to watch the equipment and keep the sand spillage cleaned up. The loader operator can get very busy loading 16 sand trucks at different times of the day.

After using the mixture for a week, we noticed the treated sand didn't have the melting qualities the sand and salt has but it stays in place longer. We kept increasing the ratio until the sand would not hold anymore without bleeding out of the bottom of the stockpile. {This would depend on the type of sand that was used and how much moisture it has to begin with.} We found the most calcium chloride we could blend with the sand without bleeding was a 9.5 gallons of calcium chloride per ton of sand.

The snow subsided by mid-January, but we were getting just enough snow to make ice. The stronger ratio proved to have higher melting qualities than our first attempt but the staying power and the abrasion qualities of our sand proved to be our biggest benefit. When there is no snow to plow, we concentrate on ice control and it's not uncommon to use 3 to 4 times as much sand as we do when we are plowing. That's where we'll have our biggest savings when we do a cost comparison.

The next year, we entered into the state salt contracting program and decided to improve the melting quality of our treated sand by adding a small percentage of salt to our mix while we were making it.

After putting our ideas together, I decided the best way to introduce the salt into the mix was by using an auger. The foreman and fabricators drew up a feed hopper with an auger attached to the bottom. Using an auger would ensure that there would be an even flow and take care of the small lumps that stored salt usually has. A two inch screen on the hopper would take care of the bigger chunks.

The first attempt using the added salt certainly had ups and downs. We had the ratio right where we wanted it. We then reduced the calcium chloride content to 7 gallons per ton and added only 10 percent salt. This proved to be a very good mixture with just enough chloride in the sand to keep it from freezing and added salt to improve the melting qualities. The wetted sand with salt stayed where we put it rather than sliding off the road to the shoulder.

The biggest advantage of this whole project was that it proved to make our operations safer. We discovered right away that lumps in the stored sand was a thing of the past. The old method of mixing dry salt with frozen sand using a loader required employees to stand on top of screens kicking off lumps. We ended these unsafe conditions but were not without problems. The auger was short on horse power which caused battles for the rest of the season with restricting flow in the hopper. This caused some shoveling at the end of the day but it got us through the winter.

The following year we added more horse power to our salt auger and it seems to be the ticket. We never look forward to winter in this business but we hope to continue with our calcium chloride machine and will be glad to show off this technology to others interested.

Genesee County Road Commission Inventory Control Program

Problem Assessment: The Genesee County Road Commission (GCRC) is an independent county agency with responsibility for maintaining 1,700 miles of roadway and 153 bridges that compose the Genesee County Road System. To fulfill this responsibility, the GCRC operates and maintains a fleet of 167 vehicles. Until September 30, 2000, the GCRC maintained a "complete" vehicular parts inventory in order to support the vehicle fleet. Control of stockage levels was extremely difficult. The inventory was difficult to manage due to its size. A "hands-on" inventory conducted in the summer of 2000 revealed parts that were specific to vehicles no longer in use at the GCRC and parts that were past their useful shelf life (batteries, seals, etc...) continuing to be held in inventory. The value of the inventory as of September 30, 2000 was \$420,389.

Program Description: Phase 1 consisted of implementing a bar code system that allowed a UPC code to be assigned so that each type of part and each individual part could be identified.

The utilization of UPCs for part identification created information concerning the parts identity, date received, price paid, vendor from whom the part was purchased, shelf life, inventory location, vehicle part installed on, date installed and date removed from inventory. Phase 1 concluded with identification of parts surplus to the needs of GCRC. These surplus parts were then either sold at public auction or bought back by vendors as part of Phase 2.

Phase 2 consisted of competing 5-year support contracts for families of parts (hydraulic hoses, pumps, fittings, motors, tractor and mower parts, batteries, filters, alternators, belts and starters) that included buy-back of surplus parts where feasible and placed parts on consignment at the GCRC. In doing so, the GCRC moved from a strictly contractual relationship with its parts suppliers to one of a partnership in which the needs of each partner are better addressed. Currently, the GCRC has on consignment 334 different types of parts. The private companies that the GCRC is currently partnering with in this venture include: AM-Dyn-Ic, Ford Tractor, Monore Truck Equipment, Universal Lift, Volvo and Michigan CAT. The GCRC expects to enter into a partnership relationship with 5 more vendors in the next fiscal year.

In Phase 2, the private sector partner delivers parts to the GCRC where the parts are bar-coded and placed in a separate stocking area. Parts are not charged to the GCRC until the part is drawn for use on a vehicle. It is at that point the part becomes part of the GCRC inventory. Each private sector partner has their own secure area for parts storage and is responsible for maintaining a suitable stock level. If a part exceeds its shelf life, the private sector partner is responsible for replacing the part.

Implementation Dates:	Phase 1	May, 2000- November, 2000
	Phase 2	October, 2000- September, 2002

Startup/Ongoing Costs:	UPC Bar Code Equipment	\$10,000
	Computer Equipment	\$15,000
	<u>Improved Storage</u>	<u>\$8,400</u>
	Total Start-Up Costs	\$33,400

Annual Re-Occuring Costs \$2,500

Tangible Results:	Value of Inventory	
	September 30, 2000	\$420,389
	September 30, 2001	\$371,272
	September 30, 2002	\$262,580
	Inventory Reduction to Date	\$157,809 or 37.5%
	Projected Value of Inventory	
	September 30, 2003	\$202,923
	Projected Inventory Reduction	
	As of September 30, 2003	\$217,466 or 51.7%

Applicability to other Jurisdictions: This approach is applicable to other jurisdictions. However, it would seem more applicable to organizations operating and maintaining a fleet of over 100 vehicles. This seems to be the point at which there is a critical mass of vehicles (i.e. demand for parts) of sufficient size to interest the private sector in entering a partnership arrangement. The City of Flint is considering adopting this approach or having the GCRC manage their inventory. Transport Canada has also indicated interest in this approach as it is transparent to international boundaries.

Washtenaw County Road Commission – Developer Funded Projects Process

Developer Funded Projects Process- A practice developed by Washtenaw CRC staff that has proven to be a cost-effective and efficient means by which to make road improvements within Washtenaw County.

Jim Harmon, Assistant Director of Engineering made a presentation on this program to the Southeast Council Meeting on May 5, 2003. The presentation provided an overview of a number of road improvement projects that were successfully completed as a result of the collaborative efforts made between our staff, contractors and developers, including the acquisition of financial support from the developer and local units of government.

During his presentation, Mr. Harmon explained the importance of meeting with developers early in the planning stages of their projects, to approach the new site development proactively by identifying the necessary infrastructure deficiencies, and then discussing the necessary road improvements with the developer. Communicating to the developer the market value that improvements to the road system connected to their development can bring is the key to influencing them to extend their financial support of and participation in the road improvements.

The efforts made by Washtenaw CRC staff on several projects during the past few years, illustrates how the Washtenaw CRC has dealt with specific problems/challenges to secure privately funded road improvements. This process has proven to be one of our most cost-effective methods by which to develop and maintain a high-quality road system in Washtenaw County, at sometimes little, if any cost to the Road Commission. These cost-saving efforts are especially critical given the ever-increasing population and fast-growing housing developments that are currently underway in Washtenaw County. Thus, enabling our use of Michigan Transportation Funds to conduct other road improvements and maintenance services, where no outside financial assistance is available.

Example: Ann Arbor-Saline Road/Lohr Road/ Waters Road Intersection Improvements Project

The following outlines the steps that our staff took in securing the collaboration and financial support of the Township affected and surrounding developers on the Ann Arbor- Saline Road/Lohr Road/ Waters Road Intersection Improvements Project. This project took place in 2001, with Sheryl Siddall, Traffic and Safety Supervisor as its Project Manager, and required the following intersection improvements: (1) Addition of a second left-turn lane to the north leg of the intersection; (2) an additional lane to the south leg to maintain alignment through the intersection; (3) addition of a second eastbound through lane to the east leg of the intersection to accommodate the dual southbound left-turn lanes; (4) lengthening of the dual left turn lanes on the west leg of the intersection; (5) modifying access points as necessary to improve the operation and safety of the intersection.

During the preliminary stages of construction for several commercial developments in this area, our staff met with the developers and Township officials to discuss the impact their enterprises would have on the roadways and traveling public. Our staff stressed the value improvements to the roads and access to their establishments would have, and proposed the necessary redesigns to the intersection that connected to their area businesses. After discussions were concluded and the developers and Township agreed to contribute to the road improvements, the Washtenaw CRC entered into a Road Improvement Agreement with Pittsfield Charter Township, Waters Place, LLC and Oak Valley Center Partnership.

The agreement included security of \$250,000 from the owners of the adjacent properties and \$100,000 from the Township. The agreement also included the establishment of a Special Assessment District to include the property owned by the Waters Place, LLC, and Oak Valley Centre, for the amount of \$250,000. The Road Commission agreed to be responsible for the preliminary engineering costs of \$60,000. Below is the total dollar savings to the WCRC on this project.

Funding:		
Estimated Project Costs	Preliminary Engineering	\$60,000
	Construction Costs	\$640,000
	Construction Engineering	\$96,000
	Right-of-Way (donated)	\$0
Total Project Cost		\$796,000
Sources of Funding		
	WCRC (Preliminary Engineering)	\$60,000
	Pittsfield Township	\$100,000
	Waters Place, LLC	\$250,000
	CMAQ Grant	\$386,000
Total Funding Received		\$796,000

In addition to this agreement, the Road Commission also secured the donation of necessary right-of-way from another adjoining property owner, Meijer, Inc., who also agreed to contribute \$25,000 toward the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Lohr Road and the Lohr Circle/Meijer driveway, which was installed by the Road Commission.

It is worth noting that staff was able to secure a previous road improvement from Waters Place, LLC, for the alignments that tie into Lohr Road, with an approximate value of \$800,000. The inclusion of the Lohr Road improvements with this project, enabled staff to completely redesign this intersection and access for the adjoining properties in such a way as to streamline the flow of traffic, increase efficient use of the roadway, provide easy access to the I-94 interchange, provide adequate access and egress to business establishments, and minimize future road repairs for an anticipated 20 years.

As a result of the efforts made by staff to persuade developers, township officials and local businesses to take part in the planning stages of these road improvements, the 37,000-plus cars per day that pass through this intersection are able to do so with ease, safety and efficiency.

The positive results illustrated in this and the many other projects we have completed demonstrate how our productivity has increased since implementing the Developer Funded Project process into our daily road improvement planning.

Road Commission of Macomb County- Macomb County Bridge Program

Bridges and drain structures are critical to Macomb County's free movement of people and goods. With a shoreline to Lake St. Clair, Macomb County has many rivers and other watercourses that cross its terrain. Among the approximately 1,500 miles of roads operated and maintained by the Road Commission of Macomb County, there are 224 bridges and 529 drain structures. A drain structure is a crossing of a watercourse that is less than 20 feet in length.

According to state regulations, bridges and drain structures are inspected every other year. Those that are found to be in poor condition may either be closed to traffic or posted with weight restrictions, depending upon their exact condition. Due to unsafe conditions and a lack of funds for replacement, the Road Commission has been forced to close 19 bridges and 5 drain structures to traffic. In addition, 33 bridges and 14 drain structures are posted with weight restrictions. This means that almost one-fourth of Macomb County's bridges are deficient.

A lot of concern has been expressed regarding the closure and posting of so many bridges and drain structures. These actions have social, economic and environmental impact on Macomb County. The detours that are created as a result of a bridge being closed or posted with a weight restriction alters the normal traffic patterns of many community services, such as school buses, emergency vehicles and trash collection. Economic impacts of closures are felt by the general public and businesses through increased costs to operate cars and other vehicles. These additional costs could reach as high as \$12,000 per day or \$4.6 million annually on a county-wide basis.

The environment is also negatively impacted. Detours cause longer trips and higher amounts of exhaust emissions of hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen and carbon monoxide. These pollutants, along with sunlight, form ozone during hot summer days.

The Road Commission of Macomb County has become especially concerned with the number of closed structures within the county. In discussing this issue with representatives of several local units of government and members of the Macomb County Board of Commissioners, we were told that emergency vehicles and school buses were beginning to experience difficulty in trying to adequately serve some areas of the county. Many local officials requested that something be done to re-open several of the closed structures or remove the weight restriction on other structures. They asked that this action be completed over a relatively short timeframe.

The innovative part of this program is that the Macomb County Government would partner with the Road Commission of Macomb County as far as funding the bridge and drainage structure projects within the county. The townships in the northern area of Macomb County could not afford the local match for these bridge projects. Most of these areas are rural and do not have the funding for this type of program. Some of these bridges were closed in lieu of reconstruction due to costs. In 2003, 12 bridges were completed with a budget of \$5 million.

Bridge and drainage structures are critical to Macomb County's free movement of people, goods and services. The Road Commission applies for State and Federal Critical Bridge Funds annually. It was discussed that for local governments in the rural areas of Macomb County that could not afford to pay these project costs, Macomb County would match those funds. These costs included, but were not limited to:

- Local match for State and Federal funds, design costs and right-of-way acquisition;
- It was agreed the Road Commission would pay 50% of the existing and proposed projects in the County Bridge Program; and
- The Road Commission will continue with the planned five-year program and send invoices to Macomb County. Macomb County will notify the local government of their match and procure an agreement with the local government agency. If the local government agency is unable to pay, Macomb County will be responsible for the costs. Generally, the match is 12.5% of the total costs for local governments with a population of 7,000 or more.

In 2002, there was an investment of more than \$9 million on bridgework throughout Macomb County with a significant portion focused in rural areas. In addition to the construction program, we also invested maintenance efforts on the bridge system.

Currently the Macomb County Bridge Program has 45 bridges within it. It is set up that Macomb County Government will provide \$15 million of the funds and the Road Commission would match that for a total of \$30 million. The 45 bridges have been identified and the Road Commission continues to apply for State and Federal critical bridge funds. If one of the 45 bridges in the program is funded with critical bridge funds, we then include another location in the program.

This is a truly great example of Macomb County Government working with the Road Commission to serve the residents of Macomb County.

Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Road Safety Audit Program

Scope, Importance and Value of Program:

Scope: A Road Safety Audit (RSA) is a formal examination of proposed road improvement project in which an in-house team of independent and qualified auditors identify, review and report on potential safety issues. This program is an “add-on” tool that complements the existing standard design practices focusing on safety. The goals of the audit are to ensure the safest possible roads by reducing the likelihood of accidents and injuries on audited projects, to identify additional safety practices that can be standardized and included in the design process for all future projects and to minimize the potential for tort liability.

There are three key elements of an RSA:

1. It is a formal, systematic and comprehensive examination of the proposed project following predetermined steps;
2. It is performed by independent (not part of the design team), qualified auditors with diverse expertise and responsibilities. This provides objectivity and an interdisciplinary approach; and
3. The sole focus of the process is enhanced safety.

The Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer, the Director of Engineering and the Director of Traffic-Safety must select the projects to be included in the RSA program for the coming year by October 1 of each year. The team that will conduct the RSA consists of the Transportation Planning Coordinator (Planning & Development Dept.), the Construction Engineer (Engineering Dept.), the Maintenance Operations Engineer (Highway Maintenance Dept.), the Programming Engineer (Engineering Dept.) and the Traffic Services Engineer (Traffic-Safety Dept.). The Design Engineer (Engineering Dept.) or his representative, although not a member of the team, is invited to participate as an observer in order to ensure direct communication between the audit team and the design team. The Transportation Planning Coordinator serves as the facilitator for the audit, keeping the team focused and on schedule.

The audit consists of a review of plans, project/road history and field visits to the project site by the audit team. The team then discusses findings and reaches a consensus on important issues. An audit report is then created and presented to the Director of Engineering, who is responsible for ensuring that the issues identified in the report are addressed. The Director of Engineering is also responsible for ensuring that the audit team receives a formal response to

the report from the design team. There are formal procedures in place to resolve any difference of opinion that might arise between the audit team and the design team.

No more than five projects are selected for audit each year. The projects are typically different in nature (i.e. gravel paving, major resurfacing/reconstruction, widening, intersection improvements, etc...)

Importance and Value of Program: The RSA process ensures the RCOC projects provide the safest roads possible, thus reducing the likelihood of crashes and the potential for future RCOC tort liability. Additionally, the audited projects become learning opportunities, with issues identified through RSAs becoming standard elements of RCOC design practices and applied to all applicable projects.

Effectiveness Measures: The RSA program mandates before and after studies of the projects involved. This includes crash statistics and associated costs. Because the program has been in place for just two years, no “after” statistics are yet available. A secondary effectiveness measure, however, will be the degree to which road project design standards are changed as a result of RSA findings.

Finally, a third, less quantifiable effectiveness measure will be the degree to which the Road Commission experiences a decline in tort liability payouts. This, of course, is much harder to measure because typically a variety of issues contribute to a tort liability suit being filed with the courts and which determine the outcome of such suits. Frequency of filings and case outcomes often are not traceable directly to specific project design elements. Additionally, it typically takes many years and many projects in order to see a noticeable impact on tort liability.

Quality of Performance: The RSA process involves engineers and road experts from a variety of disciplines within the RCOC, and involves predominantly upper level managers including the Deputy Managing Director/County Highway Engineer. All the participants contribute their time to the effort in addition to their routine tasks and responsibilities.

The Road Commission for Oakland County is the first road commission in Michigan to implement this detailed, additional process in order to ensure the highest safety level possible is “designed into” its road projects.



CRAM Excellence in Public Relations Awards Summary of Nominations for CRAMmy Awards

A list of all nominations submitted for CRAMmy Awards follow. Those counties selected to reserve the CRAMmy Award are in **bold**. If you would like additional information on any of the nominations submitted, please contact the CRAM Office.

2010 Projects- Awards Presented in 2011

Genesee: for establishing a system of winter storm response activity E-mails to educate school districts on road conditions during a snow event allowing them to make better educated decisions on school closings.

Genesee: for developing a series of road safety message billboards with space donated by a local billboard company.

Genesee: for their periodic one-page newsletters –Roadways- on road related issues.

Kalamazoo: for their effort to host educational sessions to educate the public and elected officials on issues such as establishing speed limits, asset management and building the county map.

Muskegon: for their efforts to implement a Road Work Ahead media program to help motorists avoid construction zones.

Oceana: for the implementation of a Winter Safety Campaign aimed at elementary school students.

Roscommon: for their effort to educate local officials on county road conditions and the “mix of fixes” used to stretch taxpayer dollars by implementing a Ride Along Program.

Saginaw: for their efforts to educate the community through the production of an educational calendar.

Van Buren: for their education exhibit at the Van Buren County Fair

2009 Projects- Awards Presented in 2010

Alcona: for their effort to work with the Lion’s Club to erect mailbox barriers in conjunction with Shake Your Mailbox Day.

Baraga: for their efforts at inter-governmental cooperation with local Indian tribes which was recognized by the Federal Highway Administration in Better Roads Magazine.

Huron: for the implementation of an effective millage campaign for the renewal of the county road millage.

Ingham: for their “Our County Roads in View” and employee newsletters

Kalamazoo: for their efforts to communicate the historic role of the road commission as they implemented a Centennial Open House Celebration.

Oakland: for the production of the Perfect Storm Brochure, an update to the RCOC Strategic Plan.

Oceana: for the implementation of a Winter Services Awareness Campaign.

Roscommon: for the implementation of a Winter Services Awareness Campaign.

2009 Projects- Awards Presented in 2010 (continued)

Van Buren: for the creation of an effective Facebook page and presence in social media.

Van Buren: for the creation of a Transportation Partners Booklet to educate local and state officials on the duties of the road commission, and the townships' role in establishing and maintaining a safe and efficient road system.

Van Buren: for their efforts to communicate with local officials by hosting a Township Annual Meeting.

2008 Projects- Awards Presented in 2009

Alcona: for their effort to create a door hanger notice that can use used to immediately inform residents of right-of-way violations noted by the foreman while driving a county road.

Alcona: for their efforts to implement a Safety Round Up to educate employees on work zone safety.

Clinton: for hosting an Asset Management program for local elected officials.

Genesee: for their efforts to communicate with motorists and business owners during the Miller Road Reconstruction.

Ionia: for their efforts at Intergovernmental Collaboration and educating the public on the combined efforts and funding assistance that made a major rehabilitation project possible.

Midland: for their communication efforts during a major construction project, replacing the Tittabawassee River Bridge.

Oceana: for their efforts to educate townships on the need for local road preservation.

Roscommon: for their efforts to educate elementary students on snow plow safety.

Roscommon: for the implementation of Shake Your Mailbox Day.

Roscommon: for the execution of a Truck Road-eo as a two-day safety event for employees.

Roscommon: for their efforts to work with other local governmental units to coordinate an ORV Advisory Task Force and craft an ORV Ordinance.

St. Clair: for their effort to educate their workforce on road funding and road commission finances.

St. Clair: for their communication plan surrounding a \$16 Million CN Rail Project on a county road.

2007 Projects- Awards Presented in 2008

Mecosta: for its entry and fourth place showing in the Better Roads national photo contest.

Monroe: for its program to enhance township and community relations.

Oakland: for its *Facing the Music* brochure.

Washtenaw: for its redesigned website.

2006 Projects- Awards Presented in 2007

Barry: for their work with the Barry County Methamphetamine Task Force.

Calhoun: for their new website.

Clinton: for their County Commissioner outreach program.

Clinton: for communication with the public during their Lowell Bridge reconstruction project.

Kalamazoo: for their efforts in involving the public in creating new road acceptance standards.

Mecosta: for their continued efforts to inform their citizens and elected officials of road commission issues and policies.

Monroe: for their role in Monroe County's "Partners in Planning" program.

Washtenaw: for the "Washtenaw County Road Commission Customer Service Report."

Washtenaw: for developing the North Zeeb Road Task Force.

2005 Projects- Awards Presented in 2006

Alcona: for their Asset Management Training program.

Genesee: for their Web-based subscription and notification service.

Kalamazoo: for their winter maintenance improvement and public information campaign.

Mecosta: for their participation in local parades.

Monroe: for their Monroe's Better Roads Committee project.

Muskegon: for their Road Work Ahead Program.

Ottawa: for their Macatawa River Bridge Replacement process.

Ottawa: for their salt management plan.

St. Clair: for their revised annual report.

Washtenaw: for their East Delhi Road Bridge collaboration efforts.

Washtenaw: for their Roundabout Educational Seminars.

2004 Projects- Awards Presented in 2005

Alcona: for their township earmark program.

Berrien: for their maintenance program public information campaign.

Calhoun: for their project overview booklet.

Calhoun: for their customer service improvement program.

Clinton: for their snowplow safety presentations.

Clinton: for their employee of the year award program.

Clinton: for their township meeting program.

Emmet: for their successful millage campaign.

Jackson: for their snowplow safety presentations.

Kalamazoo: for their D Avenue Bridge public information campaign.

Monroe: for their facility consolidation project.

2003 Projects- Awards Presented in 2004

Alcona: for its 'Road Forum.'

Clinton: for its new "Employee of the Year" program.

Clinton: for their series of meetings throughout the year with township officials.

Clinton: for entering equipment in community parades.

Dickinson: for their "Snow Plow Safety" program.

Dickinson: for their **successful log hauler public awareness campaign.**

Dickinson: for their student interaction programs.

Genesee: for their "Road Funding 101" Program.

Great Lakes Council: for their **PSA (videos) campaign.**

Kalamazoo: for their public information campaign (bridge projects).

Monroe: for their brochure campaigns.

Monroe: for their **efforts to improve permitting operations.**

Muskegon: for their annual "Road Kill Banquet" where township, county and state officials, and members of the media meet and network with the road commission staff.

Oakland: for their newsletter campaign.

Washtenaw: for their Maple Rd Bridge public relations activities.

Washtenaw: for their interactive programs with school kids.

2002 Projects- Awards Presented in 2003

Berrien: for its campaign to inform property owners about what kind of work will be done on a project by inserting a letter of explanation in paper boxes within the project limits.

Branch: for its overall public relations campaign including an annual road tour, township supervisor meetings, annual township meeting, and an annual newsletter to elected officials and members of the media.

Cass: for its ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the completion of the multi-participant Michiana Parkway connector project.

Clinton: for their series of meetings throughout the year with township officials.

Clinton: for entering equipment in community parades.

Genesee: for their employee exchange program that allows employees to "trade places" with employees from other road commissions.

Grand Traverse: for their legislative breakfast meeting where area road commission managers meet with senators and representatives of the area.

Ingham: for their "Slow down - Speed kills" campaign aimed at reducing traffic crashes involving young drivers.

Isabella: for their **work with realtors to increase awareness about which roads are maintained and which roads are not.**

Isabella: for issuing a bi-monthly newsletter containing road related information to local officials and employees.

Kalamazoo: for reformatting their annual report for better understanding.

Kent: for a public relations packet featuring a coloring book, local and state map, and litter bag.

Monroe: for their introduction of two newsletters...one directed toward employees and the other toward elected officials.

Muskegon: for their eighth annual "Road Kill Banquet" where township, county and state officials, and members of the media meet and network with the road commission staff.

Muskegon: for their 11th annual **Safety Conference where training and certification in safety related areas are provided for road commission and other road building or maintenance personnel from around the state.**

St. Clair: for their overall public relations program which includes a full roster of activities designed to foster better communications with both external and internal audiences.

Wexford: for establishing a local road and bridge policy and presenting it to townships so participation, scope of work, and long range plans/goals for projects are clearly and uniformly defined.

2001 Projects- Awards Presented in 2002

Alcona: CRC staged a local snowplow "roadeo" as a PR event targeting both the media and RC employees. The event allowed drivers to show off their skills to their coworkers in a fun, friendly competition & gave reporters the opportunity to meet with drivers and ride along in the trucks, and generated positive coverage of the agency.

Bay: CRC developed a video about winter road maintenance. Among other places, the video is shown at schools as part of a presentation that includes a snowplow demonstration.

Bay: CRC assists two-to-four families each year at Christmas. They conduct an annual raffle to raise money to buy food, clothing and toys for the families.

Clinton: **CRC initiated a process of meeting regularly with township officials in an effort to counter criticism of the RC and explain road funding. This includes attending regular township meetings and establishing an annual meeting for township officials to talk about road issues.**

Clinton: CRC developed a program targeting school children: They visit schools each year, showing a video tape about winter maintenance and letting the students see the equipment up close. Students receive coloring books with information.

Clinton: CRC provides each village or small city in the county with six tons of salt each winter so they can salt their main street or intersection. Since the community can get to these more quickly than the RC, both benefit.

Clinton: CRC enters equipment in all parades in the county to provide positive exposure and demonstrate that the RC is part of the community. For Christmas parades, trucks are decorated, staffers wear Santa hats and pass out candy and children ride in the back of the truck.

Clinton: CRC has developed a road cleanup program that allows community groups to clean up roadside trash, keeping roads beautiful, reducing the amount of time staff must spend cleaning the roadsides and creating goodwill with the community.

Dickinson: CRC established a program to enhance relations with townships, including attending county township assoc. meetings & providing township boards with annual road tours of projects completed that year and future project locations.

Dickinson: CRC created a program to foster positive relations and open communications between the CRC and the county board of commissioners. Program includes RC staff & board members attending annual county budget hearings, an annual road tour for county commissioners, invitation to the county board liaison to attend all CRC meetings and dedicating time on all CRC meeting agendas for comments from the county board liaison.

2001 Projects- Awards Presented in 2002 (continued)

Dickinson: CRC has taken steps to foster a positive relationship with the logging industry. These included providing monthly meeting information to the Timberman's Assoc. & establishment of a policy allowing over-length loads on county roads. The efforts have resulted in DCRC being the only RC to receive a Friend of the Timbermen Award.

Iosco: CRC, in an effort to educate local officials about road issues, created an annual information seminar, which includes a tour of the RC building, a close-up look at a truck and "hands-on" presentations from staff, such as pothole patching and grading. Participants are allowed to drive a snowplow on RC property. The event ends with a barbeque. The local television and newspaper media are invited and have provided positive coverage.

Iosco: CRC has created a "Snow Smart and Road Wise" program, in which RC & law enforcement staff visit schools to educate youth about the hazards of snow removal and promote safety on the roads. The program includes bringing RC equipment to the schools and showing videos. The program schedule is provided to the local television news stations and newspaper, which has generated positive coverage.

Jackson: CRC visits fourth-grade classes to talk to students about how to be seen by plow drivers. Students also learn safety tips & snowplows are brought to the schools. A video of the school visits is presented at the JCRC's annual township meeting. Media is also notified of the visits.

Kalamazoo: CRC in 2001 hosted an orientation for new local, county and state officials. The event provided the officials with an overview of CRCs, road funding, maintenance issues, etc., and helped to create positive relationships between the officials and the road commission staff.

Kalamazoo: CRC each year adopts road commission board goals. The goals are shared with the media and local, county and state officials as well as with RC employees. The board then reviews the goals quarterly, ensuring that the agency is moving in the right direction to achieve the goals.

Kent: In response to complaints about lack of notice of pending road closures, the CRC initiated a program of placing changeable message signs at project sites one week prior to construction. The signs have reduced the number of complaints received by the RC.

Kent: CRC is participating in a pilot Federal Aid Stewardship Agreement with MDOT, in which the RC can design federal aid road projects without MDOT design review. This is reducing the process and design time for projects and the time required for MDOT letting and has reduced KCRC's dependency upon MDOT.

Kent: CRC has established a formal involvement process for townships. The process involves commissioners meetings with township officials, follow up staff visits to each township and an annual budget & RIP presentation dinner. Media is sometimes involved in each step. The process has resulted in better relationships with townships.

Muskegon: CRC has established an annual "Road Kill Banquet" for township, county and state officials. The event is used to educate the officials about road issues, policies, operations, projects, etc., and to foster positive relations between MCRC and these people. Staff and media are also invited. The event produces both more informed stakeholders and generates goodwill toward the MCRC.

Oakland: Following a 2000 snow storm, many township subdivision residents questioned why the RC couldn't plow their subdivision during or immediately after the storm. Oakland developed a program to educate the residents, which included a video, a brochure and media outreach.

Ogemaw: CRC has established an annual bus tour of its projects for public officials. Media is invited on the tour as well. In addition to educating the participants about specific projects, the bus tour provides an opportunity to educate them about road issues in general as well.

Shiawassee: CRC has established a winter school safety program. The program involves showing students a video, explaining road commission activities, etc. Media members are alerted to the program and have provided excellent, positive coverage. The program is also promoted to local officials who appreciate the RC's community involvement.

Shiawassee: CRC is in the process of creating 17 acres of wetlands on the site of its current gravel mining operations, in conjunction with the property owner and the DEQ. The media has been informed of this activity, generating positive coverage of the agency.





County Road Association of Michigan

EIGHTH ANNUAL BEST PRACTICES AWARDS

“Best Practices” Awards recognize programs and solutions which have been developed by individual road commissions to make their operations more efficient and cost-effective. Those nominations having the greatest impact with regard to cost-effectiveness and/or efficiency will be recognized by a “Best Practices” Award at the CRAM Highway Conference in March.

Nominations should include a narrative describing how the road commission dealt with a specific problem or challenge by developing and implementing the cost-effective program being nominated. Narratives should not exceed four typed, double-spaced, single-sided pages (approximately 1,000 words). Nominators must also complete a summary cover sheet and attach it to the nomination, for a total of no more than five pages. Supporting materials may be included. Joint nominations are not acceptable.

The principal criteria used in selection for the “Best Practices” Award is the increased level of efficiency and/or cost-effectiveness as represented by the nominated operation. In addition to the nominated program’s overall creativity and innovation, the panel evaluates each nomination using the following criteria, which should be discussed in the four-page narrative:

1. Scope, Importance, and Value of Activity/Contribution
How has the road commission benefited from this program? The programs nominated must have been in effect for a minimum of one full year (not including the planning process) and have demonstrated tangible results.
2. Effectiveness Measures
The narrative must describe dollar savings, discuss the productivity increased, and/or summarize program results/impacts. Notable improvements are often described in “before/after” terms. (Note: The nominations will also be evaluated on the program’s potential to be replicated by other road commissions.)
3. Quality of Performance
This criterion recognizes level of effort, sacrifice, and innovation as ingredients for merit. (Note: Be sure to recognize the “behind the scenes” contributors who made the project work.)

Nominations will be disseminated to the membership as part of the post-conference mailing.

Nominations for the 2010 Best Practices Awards are due in the CRAM Office by 12-30-2010.



CRAMmy Call for Nominations

Enter the “RACE” for the 2010 CRAMmy Awards

Public relations, often overlooked in our zeal to get the job done, should be included in every aspect of road commission operations--striving to keep the public informed and engaged should be a basic element in our long-term, as well as our day-to-day, operations. CRAMmy Awards were instituted to recognize and promote the use of creative and effective public relation activities.

The CRAM Public Relations- Education Committee (PREC) is calling for nominations for the CRAMmy awards. CRAMmy nominations will be evaluated based on the R.A.C.E. process (research, action, communication, and evaluation) with the highest ranking given to those nominations displaying the apparent and deliberate use of these steps in carrying out a public relations activity. The awards are then presented at the CRAM Annual Conference.

Simply submit your nominations in narrative form using 100 words or fewer to answer each of the following questions (attach supporting materials if needed):

RESEARCH

1. Describe the opportunity or problem your road commission was intending to address, and why.
2. What was the target audience you expected to reach?

ACTION

3. Describe the program or actions implemented by your road commission.

COMMUNICATION

4. How did you communicate your message?
5. What did you intend to communicate and/or what change in perception did you expect?

EVALUATION

6. What was the outcome of the project? Describe how the project was received by the target audience. Did it have the expected impact on your organization?
7. Are there any aspects of the project you would change or do differently in the future?

Nominations are due in the CRAM Office BY December 31, 2010.