

*2021 Annual Report of*  
***The Mason County Road Commission***  
*To*  
**The Mason County Board of Commissioners**



Wedging on Chauvez Road

**Mason County Road Commissioners**

William Schwass, Chair  
Mike Ingison, Vice Chair  
Jeff Conklin, Member

**Staff**

Mary Samuels, Manager/Director  
Heather Braginton, Finance Director  
Eric Nelson, County Highway Engineer



# MASON COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

---

William Schwass, Chairman  
Douglas Robidoux, Vice-Chairman  
Michael Ingison, Member

Mary Samuels, Manager/Director  
Eric Nelson, County Highway Engineer

June 08, 2021

The Honorable Board of County Commissioners  
County of Mason, Michigan  
County Courthouse  
Ludington, Michigan 49431

Dear Commissioners,

With the enactment of Public Act 283 of 1909, the legislation enabled the establishment of Road Commissions and charged them by law with the duty “to keep in reasonable repair, so that they shall be reasonably safe and convenient for public travel, all county roads, bridges and culverts that are under their care and control, and which are open to public travel.”

It is the Mission of the Mason County Road Commission to construct, manage, and maintain the publicly held roadways in the safest and best condition in the most cost-effective manner with the resources provided.

The Mason County Road system has grown to include 16 bridges and 239 miles (478 lane miles) that are designated as County Primary roads. Passage of the McNitt Act in 1931 abolished the old township road system and transferred all miles of township roads to the Road Commission during the 1930’s. These old township roads, together with new roads built since then make up what is now the 23 bridges and 703 miles (1,406 lane miles) of County Local roads.

The Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) is the depository of fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees collected by the state and the principal source of road commission funding. The collected funds are distributed by a complicated, yet transparent and verifiable formula to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), 535 cities and villages, and 83 county road agencies. Fluctuating fuel prices, higher fuel efficiency, hybrid and electric vehicles have stifled growth in fuel tax collections over the past several years. Our total MTF revenues for 2020 did not increase from 2019 due to revenue losses related to COVID-19. We were scheduled to receive an increase in 2020 of approximately \$550K which did not materialize due to the decrease in fuel consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In November of 2015, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed a major transportation funding package – the first since 1997. We are pleased that the funding issue has finally been addressed by the State. Revenues have been incrementally increased with the full revenue now being seen in 2022. There has also been a redirection of some income tax and marijuana sales

tax implemented which will allow us another funding increase of approximately \$200K. The condition of our road system continues to decline and the funding we will see will not allow us to catch up and get ahead of the curve, but we are continuing to make repairs as the funding allows. With the implementation of our 10-year plan we have been able to track the number of failed culverts repaired, time spent in each township shoulder pulling, working on drainage issues and tree and shrub removal in the right of ways. In addition, we are tracking repairs made to our roads with Paser ratings of Good, Fair and Poor based on a percentage in each category. The Road Commission transferred \$1.5 million from the Primary Road Fund to the Local Road Fund to cover maintenance costs.

Substantial Township financial participation in addition to the Local Road Match Program was reflected in **56** local projects totaling \$1.74 million of improvements on the local road system. There were two additional projects scheduled that were not completed due to lack of time. Without this partnership, most local roads would see little to no improvements.

Federal-aid projects completed in 2020 included reconstruction of Hansen Road for \$499,822, participation with MDOT for a wedge and overlay on Sugar Grove Road and a Mill and Fill on Scottville Road. Total cost of \$424,723. MCRC has also completed primary road projects county-wide of Asphalt Paving and Wedging in the amount of \$705,058 and Chip Sealing in the amount of \$306,077. and Pavement Marking of Primary and Local roads in the South half of the county in the amount of \$45,113.

In 2017, the Road Commission successfully applied for and received a fiscal year 2020 \$348,000 grant for the Tuttle Rd Bridge over North Branch of the Lincoln River. This was postponed until 2022. The bridge removal and replacement grant are through the competitive Local Bridge Program, funded through the Federal Highway Administration and the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The Road Commission strives to continue to improve its communication (internally, with its Township partners and the public), to review its use of technology and moving forward with incorporating and expanding asset management software. We will continue to review and expand the use of our current GPS tracking of equipment along with our newest addition of Snow Paths for tracking snowplow routes. These tools help in improving our public response of operations.

Our employees are a vital element of our operation. We appreciate their hard work, dedication, and ingenuity especially during the 2020 pandemic year. They followed protocol daily and thanks to their diligence we had very minimal exposure issues. Business was able to be run as usual and at no time were we not able to serve our county residents. Even though the public demands and expectations have increased over the years, they continue to work hard and provide a reasonable level of service to you, county residents and the motoring public. The Mason County Road Commission and its employees, your local road professionals, are faithfully working to fulfill the commission's mandate to provide safe and convenient roads.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Road Commissioners for Mason County,

Mary Samuels  
Manager/Director  
Mason County Road Commission

# **MASON COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION**

## **OVERVIEW**

1. 38 Full Time Employees
  - 10 Staff Employees
  - 28 Union Employees
  - 2 Retirees in 2020
2. One (1) Part Time Employee
3. Three (4) Winter Temporaries
4. Three (3) Board Members – Appointed by the County Board of Commissioners for Six (6) year terms.
5. Coverage – 239 Miles of Primary Roads
  - 703 Miles of Local Roads
  - 164 Lane Miles of State Highway.
6. One (1) Location – 510 East State Street, Scottville

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2020**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL**

1. Completed 2020 Fiscally solid with a \$16M budget and ending fund balance of \$4.1M.
  - Net position increase of \$60,216.
  - MCRC Local Road Match program to Townships of \$400,000
  - Purchased a new 2020 Volvo Track Excavator
  - Purchased a new 2020 Caterpillar Excavator
  - Purchased a used 2015 Caterpillar Grader
  - Purchased a set of used 2002 Trailstar Gravel Trains
  - Purchased a used 2019 Marathon Tack Tank
  - Purchased a used 2003 Caterpillar Roller
2. Hired 2 maintenance (Union) employees.
3. Maintained utilizing temporary employees for winter work.
4. Contributed an additional \$240,000 to the MERS pension unfunded liability.
5. Created additional revenues by logging of wooded areas in MCRC owned gravel pits.
6. MCRC's Safety Committee drafted and implemented a new comprehensive safety policy handbook.
7. Implemented Snowpath GPS tracking system for vehicles to improve efficiencies and provide another layer of safety for employees working throughout the county.

### **PRIMARY ROAD SYSTEM**

#### **Roadway Improvements – Completed**

1. Hansen Road Reconstruction, from Lasalle to US-31 – All Season.
2. County-wide asphalt paving, wedging and chip sealing

3. Pavement Marking – South half of county local roads.  
**Total Cost - \$3,162,784**

## **LOCAL ROAD SYSTEM**

Roadway Improvements – Completed

1. Forty-Eight (58) Township partnered Local road projects.
2. Local Road Match Program: \$400,000

**Total Cost - \$4,719,881**

Transfer from Primary Road Funds to Local Road Funds: \$1,500,000

## **GOALS FOR 2021**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL**

1. Screen and process topsoil, sand and 6a stone for our use.
2. Continue existing road improvement programs both on the Primary and Local system – subject to available funding.
3. Continued efficient and effective delivery of services by addressing personnel, equipment, administrative operations and utilizing technology.
4. Addressing and re-establishing seasonal road reviews and maintenance.
5. Work on scanning old documents and place on shared file.

### **PRIMARY ROAD SYSTEM**

Scheduled Improvements:

1. Complete Reconstruction of Rasmussen Rd, East of Jebavy and East of Meyer – Estimate: \$1.015M
2. Complete Reconstruction of Hansen Rd, LaSalle Rd to US Hwy 31 – Estimate: \$655K
3. Complete Reconstruction of W Forest Trail, Quarterline to Morton – Estimate: \$805,000
4. Pavement Marking Program – North half of County – Estimate \$48K
5. Primary Road Chipseal – Stiles Rd and Scottville Rd – Estimate: \$300K
6. Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) in various locations county-wide -\$250K

### **LOCAL ROAD SYSTEM**

Scheduled Improvements:

1. Local Road changes in cost share percentages.
2. Replace culverts in poor condition and pull shoulders.
3. Prepare agreements with each township for requested local road improvements and brine application. **Programmed at \$1.9M**

## WINTER MAINTANENCE COSTS – CALENDAR YEAR

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
State Highway	\$ 272,656	\$ 297,000	\$ 303,349	\$ 325,504	\$ 201,485
Primary	375,587	406,000	413,156	530,771	299,478
Local	262,003	252,919	243,199	376,503	256,638

## FUNDING

### BUDGET

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Operational Budget	\$10.0 M	\$11.8 M	\$11.5 M	\$10.8 M	\$11.8 M
Maintenance	2.6 M	1.6 M	1.4 M	2.8 M	4.0 M
Improvements	2.7 M	3.5 M	5.4 M	4.0 M	3.9 M

### FUNDING SOURCES

Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) - \$6.3M  
MDOT Trunkline Maintenance Contract – \$700K  
Federal & State Aid - \$568K  
Improvements (Local Road Program, etc.)  
    Federal & State Aid - \$568K  
    Township Contributions - \$1.47M

### AVERAGE MAINTENANCE FUNDING AVAILABLE:

Primary System       - \$3,150 per mile  
Local System         - \$2,698 per mile

### FUNDING TRENDS

MTF revenues for 2020 did not increase from 2019 due to revenue losses related to COVID-19. We were scheduled to receive an increase in 2020 of approximately \$550K which did not materialize due the decrease in fuel consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. An increase of \$550K is now expected for 2021.

## LEGISLATION

### ENACTED

Public Act 202 of 2017, known as the Protecting Local Government Retirement and Benefits Act, set allowable levels of “fundedness” for local governments. The goal is to avoid unanticipated defaults on promised pensions and benefits. The requirements are 40% fundedness for OPEB (retiree healthcare) funds and 60% for pensions.

2021 MCRC OPEB: 345%  
2020 MCRC Pension: 69%