



*The Road Newsletter, Volume 5, Issue 11*

November 2015

## Snowplow Rodeo

The Midwest Michigan Branch of the American Public Works Association recently held the 2015 Snowplow Rodeo at the City of Grand Rapids Public Services Department facilities. The Rodeo is a competition for a two-member team on an obstacle course designed to simulate actual snow plowing driving operations where drivers are timed and scored for accuracy, safety, and speed.



The obstacle course is laid out with cones and barrels to challenge the driver's ability to operate a plow truck through stations that simulate maneuvering around parked cars, inside and outside curves, diminishing clearance, offset intersections, serpentine areas, and backing into a loading dock. In addition to the obstacle course, the Rodeo competition also required the two-person teams to perform a diagnostic exam on a truck, and attend two educational sessions.



The Road Commission sent representatives from the Coopersville, Grand Haven, Hudsonville, and North Holland garages to compete in the Rodeo. All of the teams did very well, with the team of Gerald VanHouten and John Gappa representing the Coopersville garage and finishing 4<sup>th</sup> overall out of 60 teams.

The Rodeo also provided an opportunity for local road agencies to show off their pride of the fleet. Shown in the photo to the left is a newly completed tandem axle truck that was fabricated in the North Holland garage.

It was a fantastic day for learning and sharing new tips, tricks, what works and what doesn't, as well as seeing the latest equipment from the vendors.

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## Strategic Improvement Plan

Annually, the Road Commission develops a six year **Strategic Improvement Plan** (SIP) to manage county road assets, identify improvement needs, and determine economical methods to finance improvement projects. The review of the county road assets helps identify replacement, repair, and maintenance items to be incorporated into the SIP.

County road assets are inventoried in the following categories:

Primary Roads  
Local Paved Roads  
Preventative Maintenance  
Bridges

Local Gravel Roads  
Culverts and Drainage  
Traffic & Safety

Once the inventory reviews are compiled, project lists are developed with cost estimates, and a draft SIP is created. Part of the SIP process is to provide the draft SIP for review, so input and comments from local governmental officials and the general public can be received. A public hearing for the draft of the 2016-2021 SIP was held on September 24<sup>th</sup>. The Road Commission is pleased to present the adopted 2016-2021 Strategic Improvement Plan. Please visit our website at [www.ottawacorc.com](http://www.ottawacorc.com) for more information about the SIP.

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## Deer in the Headlights

Hunting season is a particularly dangerous time of year for potential deer-vehicle collisions. The Road Commission encourages drivers to slow down and watch the road carefully. Scan the side of the road for wildlife, and use high-beam headlights at night when there is no oncoming traffic. Also, be aware that deer tend to travel in groups. So, if you see one deer, slow down and watch for more.



The responsibility for picking up and disposing of dead animals has been a long-running debate. Surprisingly, there is no statutory requirement for any agency in Michigan to perform this service. Animal control authorities and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) have both stated they have no authority on the issue. Citizens usually call the local road agency to pick up the dead animals. While most road agencies will not dispose of the dead animals, they will move the carcasses off the traveled portion of the road that pose a hazard to motorists.

Over the years, the Road Commission has picked up and disposed of dead animals as a courtesy service for the public.

However, costs and budget constraints have limited this service to just one day a week, and only dead deer or other large animals will be picked up. State regulations regarding the disposal of dead animals can be very confusing. The Road Commission brings dead animals to a local landfill for disposal. The costs to pick up and dispose of dead deer have ranged from \$7,500 to \$15,000 per year.

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# Safe Roads for Everyone

## Winter driving: Are you prepared?

As the weather changes from fall to winter, the chances of being involved in a vehicular crash increase dramatically.

Winter driving can be hazardous. Factors such as rain, snow, ice, sleet, fog, and limited daylight hours present real challenges to motorists, whether driving for work or leisure. In fact, when it comes to winter, the number of casualty crashes almost doubles when motorists are driving too fast for the road conditions.

### Remember

Know-before-you-go. Check road conditions beforehand and ask yourself; “Do I really need to drive during inclement winter weather?”

If you must drive, then drive smart. Prepare yourself. Prepare your vehicle. Always drive for the winter conditions. Remember that the posted speed limit is set for ideal driving conditions. When determining your speed, you should ask yourself, “Can I recognize and respond to road hazards such as black ice, snow, rain, low light, and fog?”

More driving tips and information can be found on the Michigan State Police website at [www.michigan.gov/msp](http://www.michigan.gov/msp).

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## Signal Ahead

### How is it determined to install traffic signals?

A traffic engineer makes a determination of whether a signal is or is not "warranted" based on standards of the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD). This manual identifies 9 warrants that may be reviewed in determining whether a signal should be installed.



The warrants that receive the closest review, however, are minimum vehicular volume, interruption of continuous traffic, and accident experience. The first relates to whether there is sufficient traffic coming out of the side street in question to consider stopping traffic on the main road. The second relates to whether or not the traffic is too heavy on the main road for motorists from the side street to pull out. The last is an indication that traffic on the side street is having difficulty getting out, causing right-angle accidents to occur.

The Road Commission continuously reviews and evaluates intersections for traffic signals, as well as many other types of traffic control devices.

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# Important Dates

Thursday - November 12, 2015 | 9AM | Board Meeting

Wednesday - November 25, 2015 | 9AM | Board Meeting



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PO Box 739  
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417  
616-842-5400  
Office Hours: Monday-Friday; 7:30AM-4PM



STAY CONNECTED. SUBSCRIBE:

The Ottawa County Road Commissioners: Tom Bird | Tom Elhart | Betty Gajewski | Tim Grifhorst | Jim Miedema  
Managing Director: Brett Laughlin

***Who manages the roads and how are they funded?*** The Ottawa County Road Commission manages the roads--not the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners or County staff. The Ottawa County Road Commission is primarily funded by fuel taxes and vehicle registrations. Concerns about roads should be directed to the Ottawa County Road Commission. Questions? [Contact Us](#)

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