

CROSSROADS

QUARTERLY JOURNAL • **County Road Association of Michigan** • VOLUME 10, ISSUE 3

SPRING 2025



CONSTRUCTING A PATH TO INNOVATION

Midland County Road Commission's
vision for infrastructure progress

IN THIS ISSUE:

Legal Issues Corner: Earned Sick Time Act pg. 25
New federal bridge modeling requirements pg. 42



County Road Association
OF MICHIGAN

CROSSROADS

Crossroads is a publication of the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan. The 83 county members of CRA support a safe and efficient county road system in Michigan. The Association is dedicated to helping members promote and maintain a safe, efficient county road right-of-way in rural and urban Michigan.

ON THE COVER

Midland County Road Commission's Brooks Road Bridge replacement project.

CRA BOARD PRESIDENT

Dirk Heckman, PE, *Mackinac*

VICE PRESIDENT

Jerry Byrne, *Kent*

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Burt Thompson, PE, *Antrim*

PUBLISHING TEAM

Denise Donohue, CAE, APR
ddonohue@micountyroads.org

Dustin Earley, APR
dearley@micountyroads.org

Betty McNerney,
bmcnerney@micountyroads.org

DIRECTORS

Larry Brown, PE, *Allegan*

Randy Dellaposta, *Genesee*

Tom Donnellon, *Huron*

Jerry Heim, *Kalkaska*

Dennis Kolar, PE, *Oakland*

Robert Laitinen, PS, *Chippewa*

Bob Lindbeck, PE, *Alger*

Scott Merillat, PE, *Lenawee*

Douglas Mills, PE, *Baraga*

David Pettersch, *Gladwin*

Doug Steffen, *Clinton*

Melissa Williams, *Macomb*

No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission of the editor and the County Road Association of Michigan.

Opinions expressed by columnists and contributing authors are not necessarily those of the County Road Association of Michigan, its officers, employees or the editor.

Advertisers and sponsors are solely responsible for the accuracy of information in their ads.

© 2025 County Road Association of Michigan

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Call 517.482.1189 or email bmcnerney@micountyroads.org to contribute ideas for future issues.

SHARE ONLINE

Read the online version of *Crossroads* at micountyroads.org/newsroom/crossroads. Use our digital reader to share individual articles via Facebook, Twitter and email.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 5 | **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**
- 7 | **MEMBER FEATURE
MIDLAND COUNTY**
Driving success with a focus on innovation.
- 13 | **PAVE WAY FOR ROAD CONDUCTORSM**
This seven-year initiative is ready to make its debut.
- 15 | **SEASONAL WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS**
Updated app and website are up and running!
- 17 | **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**
How to develop a written AI policy for your road agency.
- 20 | **DYNAMIC DUOS**
How winning partnerships drive success at two road agencies.
- 25 | **LEGAL ISSUES CORNER**
Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act.
- 29 | **INNOVATION ALLEY:**
Kent County Road Commission saves bridges and budgets with smart fixes.
- 32 | **LEGISLATOR PROFILE**
Rep. Roth discusses transportation and road funding.
- 35 | **AWARDS SPOTLIGHT**
CRA presents 2024 Engineer of the Year Awards.
- 37 | **EVENT CALENDAR**
Three "don't miss" educational events.
- 39 | **CHANGING LANES**
Key transitions at...
- 40 | **COMMUNICATION CORNER**
The benefits of using e-platforms to manage public "asks."
- 42 | **HEAVY NEWS FOR ROAD AGENCIES**
Feds demand more bridge data

MEMBER FEATURE:

MIDLAND COUNTY

Driving success with a focus on innovation

Initially home to Native American tribes such as the Ojibwe, Potawatomi and Ottawa, Midland County was settled by European pioneers in the early 19th century.

The lumbering era was very significant in the county, giving way to an agrarian economy. This transformation laid the foundation for the region's growth and development, particularly in its infrastructure.

In 1897, Midland County welcomed its modern industrial giant – The Dow Chemical Company. Midland County is now synonymous with Dow, which has had a significant impact on the local economy and workforce. Dow, combined with the region's agricultural

roots, has made Midland County a unique blend of manufacturing innovation and rural farmland.

As the county continues to evolve, so too does the **Midland County Road Commission (MCRC)**. With strong demand for good road management, MCRC continuously seeks innovative solutions for roads to maintain the county's growth and economic vitality.

Innovation at the helm

Jonathan Myers, PE, MCRC managing director, plays a big role in driving MCRC advancements. Myers brought nearly 20 years of experience at the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) when he joined MCRC five years ago

– part of a remarkable wave of new managers and innovators at county road agencies.

“My background in design and project management gave me the opportunity to work in many areas, but what really appealed to me about the road commission was the chance to make a difference on a larger scale,” said Myers. “I’ve always been passionate about managing and improving transportation networks, and the opportunity to lead an organization that is dedicated to trying new things really drew me in.”

While MCRC always prioritizes improvement, Myers said recent staff changes and retirements have been challenging. MCRC has 43 employees: 12 administrative staff and 31 crew members.

“Nine of our 12 administrative staff have been in their positions for five years or less, and we brought on six new crew members within the past year,” said Myers. “We have many staff who are very new.” Overall, 60% of MCRC staff have been with the road agency less than five years.

The wealth of knowledge lost with staff retirements and backfilling the work they were accomplishing, can be very challenging, noted Myers. At the same time, these transitions present an opportunity for fresh perspectives.



MCRC crews install aluminum box culvert along Stewart Road in Midland.

Continued on page 9

“Everyone brings new experiences and new ideas on how to do things,” Myers said. “I love hearing their thoughts and ideas on how to make things better. Things can always be improved upon.”

Some of those improvements are cutting-edge technologies to enhance both operational efficiency and communication, including the installation of GPS and dash cameras in plow trucks and the rollout of an interactive construction dashboard to increase transparency and streamline operations.

MCRC has also embraced new materials and innovative methods to improve road quality. One notable project included the use of geogrid geosynthetic in the base material of a paving rehabilitation project, which has shown promising results in addressing unique road conditions (pictured above.)

“We’re constantly looking for ways to improve, whether it’s with new materials or by taking advantage of successful methods implemented by other agencies,” Myers said. “We want to be proactive in solving problems before they arise, and using these innovations is how we do it.”

Communication top of mind

“Communication is key to our success,” Myers explained. “We’ve implemented tools that allow us to update the public in real-time about road closures and ongoing projects. Our interactive construction



MCRC’s Poseyville Rd. rehabilitation project using geogrid geosynthetic material to enhance road base.

dashboard is a great example—residents can see exactly what is happening across the county at any given time, which keeps everyone in the loop.” (Shown below.)

Myers commented that Midland is a highly educated community, largely a result of Dow Chemical’s influence in the region. This environment has fostered an understanding of the intricacies involved in road management and infrastructure projects as the public pays attention to road issues.

“We’re lucky to be part of a community that understands the importance of the work we do,” said Myers. “Whether it’s dealing with road construction or making sure our bridges

are safe, they know it’s for the betterment of the area.”

In addition to the community’s general support, MCRC’s efforts to engage with the public through platforms like its website and mobile app are well used. MCRC’s custom app allows residents to report service requests and track responses, ensuring issues are addressed promptly. This is invaluable, particularly during times of roadwork or inclement weather, Myers said.

Worker safety: Priority #1

MCRC places a high priority on the safety of its employees, both on the road and in the office.

For workers in the field, MCRC has implemented numerous safety protocols to minimize risk, especially in construction zones. Automated flagger systems, crash attenuators, and increased law enforcement presence in work zones are just a few examples.

“We’re constantly working to improve the safety of our roads for both the public and our crew,” Myers explained. “From traffic control measures to providing specialized training for our staff, we do everything we can to minimize risks and ensure the safety of everyone on the job.”

View on MCRC’s dashboard at midlandroads.com/now.

Continued on page 11

Join in!

During his five years at MCRC, Myers has been active in CRA events and networking opportunities.

“CRA has been instrumental in shaping how I approach road management,” said Myers. “It’s a great platform for sharing resources, learning from each other, and advocating for improvements that benefit our entire community.”

Myers likened the value of CRA membership to CRA’s three IMPRESS awards categories: Collaboration, Communication and Operations.

“CRA facilitates these three things,” he said. “I absolutely love the Highway Conference and Road Show and other conferences where vendors can help us work through unique challenges. It’s invaluable.”

Looking to the future

For 2025, MCRC has two major projects in the works that are a testament to the long-range planning county road agencies must do – and why sustainable road funding is needed now.

Five years after an epic rainstorm caused the Edenville Dam burst, the road agency is wrapping up its final flood repair project.

“The process has certainly taken longer than anticipated,” said Myers. “Getting federal aid and approvals for these

types of repairs isn’t quick—but we’re almost there. The journey has been full of challenges, from securing funding to navigating EGLE permit requirements. But we’re excited to see the finish line.”

The second project has been in the works for nearly a decade: Rehab of a historic truss bridge built in the early 1900s that spans the Tittabawassee River. *(Pictured below.)*

“It was supposed to happen last year,” said Myers, “but bids were higher than our dedicated funding. We have come up with a slightly different, less costly, design for it that is going to be bid out this spring. We’re keeping our fingers crossed.”

According to Myers, Bailey Bridge at Smiths Crossing has been closed for several decades. The plan is to rehabilitate it into a non-motorized trail over the river connecting to an existing trail through Freeland and eventually the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail in Midland.

“It’s a very big project,” said Myers. “I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about ways to make it a viable project with the funding sources that we have. I feel like we have a much better estimate going into the project this year.”

“A bridge like this is not something a lot of people get to work on in their careers,” said Myers. “As an engineer who likes unique bridges, I’m excited to see this happen.” **CRA**



The historic Bailey Bridge at Smith Crossing. It will be rehabbed for non-motorized use.

JUST THE FACTS

Office Headquarters:
SANFORD

43 full-time staff



★ 3 Commissioners *(appointed)*

MILES OF ROAD: 858

Total paved: **656 miles**

Primary: **287** Local: **369**

Total unpaved: **202 miles**

Primary: **0** Local: **202**

MDOT Contract: **88** Bridges
Yes
(256 lane miles)



Annual Budget: **\$20.6 M**
(FY 2024)

Local Revenue: **\$5.9 M**
(FY 2024)

Annual Snowfall

27”

MCRC Established
1920

Garages
3



Office Built
1996



FUN FACT: Midland’s abundant brine was the basis for the founding of The Dow Chemical Company. Beginning in the 1890s, natural brine became a source material for Dow’s extraction of bromine, chlorine, sodium, calcium and magnesium. This provides MCRC with a local and inexpensive source of mineral brine for roads. A great perk!