



Washtenaw County Road Commission

# Roads in Review

Spring/Summer 2018

wcroads.org

PROJECT FUNDED BY  
RESIDENTS OF  
WASHTENAW  
COUNTY

## A Summer to Remember

**As road funding slowly improves, WCRC has big plans for this construction season**

While some may dread the orange barrels and detours, we at the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) are looking forward to another summer of road projects. 2018 marks the second year in a row where we have seen increases to the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF), which is the lifeblood of all road agencies.

These increases are thanks to the legislation passed by the Michigan Legislature in 2015 that raised the fuel taxes to \$.263 per gallon and mandated a 20% increase in license/registration fees. This legislation also called for progressively larger General Fund transfers to the MTF each year between 2019 and 2021, ultimately bringing annual road funding to \$1.2 billion in 2021.



In a welcome surprise, the Michigan Legislature recently passed an additional \$175 million in road funding to be spent this construction season, WCRC will see approximately \$2 million of that spending package.

In addition, 2018 is the second year of the Four-Year Road and Non-Motorized Millage passed by Washtenaw County voters in 2016. The millage generates approximately \$3.3 million for WCRC to put into county primary roads. Last year, millage dollars helped improve more than 50 miles of county road.

With these funds and additional grants, we plan on improving more than 100 miles of primary road and at least 17 bridges/culverts this construction season. We will also be installing three roundabouts in the county to help reduce congestion and improve safety. [See a preview of some of the major projects on page 2 and 3.](#)



While these new and improved road funding sources are positive trends, it will take decades to catch up. The years of underinvestment in Michigan roads were demonstrated in dramatic fashion this winter and spring. Our operations department has been working hard to hold the roads together with our still-limited maintenance funds. We have already used a record amount of cold patch, the temporary material available to us in the colder months to patch potholes. Our crews will be out throughout the summer working on general maintenance including patching potholes, grading gravel roads, trimming trees, mowing, improving drainage and dust control efforts.

Construction season is an exciting time for us and the residents of Washtenaw County, especially when the road funding landscape is improving. We ask that you use caution around all work zone and we hope you have a great summer!



# Construction Season Preview

This year will be a record construction year! From surface preservation to total road reconstruction, there will be plenty of orange cones out this year. Please use caution in all work zones. Thank you for your patience!

For a complete list of all major projects planned in 2018, visit [wcroads.org/road-work-construction/projects/](http://wcroads.org/road-work-construction/projects/)



## Baker Rd

SCIO TOWNSHIP & CITY OF DEXTER

WCRC and the City of Dexter will install two roundabouts, one at Baker Rd and Sheild Rd and one at Baker Rd and Dan Hoey Rd. Construction will start in June and last through August. This area will be closed to through traffic during construction.



## Textile Rd

PITTSFIELD TOWNSHIP

This gravel primary road will be paved from Hines Dr to Michigan Ave. In addition, Pittsfield Township will be building the Platt-Textile Greenway along this route. Construction will start in June and last through November. This area will be closed to through traffic during construction.



## Zeeb Rd

LODI TOWNSHIP

This gravel primary road will be paved from Ellsworth to Waters Road. Construction will begin in late 2018/early 2019 but preliminary construction is already underway. This road will be closed to through traffic during construction.



## Platt Rd

PITTSFIELD & YORK TOWNSHIPS

Platt Road from Willis Rd to Bemis Rd in York Township will be repaired and resurfaced. The road will continue to be closed to traffic until repairs are complete. Platt Rd from Merritt Rd to Michigan Ave (US-12) will be pulverized and resurfaced.



## N. Harris Rd

YPSILANTI TOWNSHIP

Harris Rd will be reconstructed as a "complete street" between Michigan Ave (US-12) and Holmes Road. Construction will start in April and last through August. This area will be closed to through traffic during construction.



## Wiard Rd

SUPERIOR TOWNSHIP

Wiard Rd between Clark Rd and MacArthur Blvd will be milled and resurfaced. The road will remain open during construction, but delays are likely.



## Sharon Valley Rd Bridge

SHARON TOWNSHIP

Sharon Valley Rd Bridge over the River Raisin will be replaced. Construction will start in July and last through October. The road will be closed to all traffic during construction.



## Lima Center Rd

DEXTER & LIMA TOWNSHIPS

Lima Center Rd from Dexter-Chelsea Rd to Island Lake Rd will be improved with 6" of limestone. This road will be closed to through traffic during construction.



## Dexter-Ann Arbor Rd

SCIO TOWNSHIP

Dexter-Ann Arbor Rd from Dan Hoey Rd to Zeeb Rd will be pulverized and resurfaced. Construction will begin in April/May and be completed before June. This road will be closed to through traffic during construction.



Projects funded by the Four-Year Road and Non-Motorized Path Millage passed by Washtenaw County voters in 2016 are indicated with this sign.



**Moon and Bemis Rd**  
PITTSFIELD & YORK TOWNSHIPS

To alleviate peak-period congestion, this intersection will be converted into a single-lane roundabout. Construction will start in August and last through November. The intersection will be closed to all traffic during construction.



**Henzie Rd & Van Tuyle Rd Bridges**  
MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP

The Henzie Rd bridge and the Van Tuyle Rd bridge over Iron Creek will be replaced. The road will be closed to all traffic during construction.



**Willis Rd**  
AUGUSTA TOWNSHIP

Willis Rd from Whittaker Rd to Tuttle Hill Rd will be pulverized and resurfaced. This area will be closed to through traffic during construction.

## 2018 Chip Seal Program

WCRC crews will chip seal approximately 65 miles of roadway this summer. Chip sealing is a relatively low-cost surface treatment that prevents water from seeping into a road.

A chip seal helps prevent potholes and protects a road's surface from the damaging effects of weather, sun, and traffic. A chipseal can help extend the life of a road by 3-7 years.

**Remember to observe signage and drive 35 mph on recently chip sealed roads!** This will help the road properly settle and keep loose stones from kicking up.



## Stay Informed This Construction Season!

**Sign-up today to receive email construction updates**

WCRC offers a number of ways for residents and commuters to learn about construction projects in their area during the busy summer construction season.

- View an interactive map of projects and filter to view upcoming and completed projects:  
**[wcroads.org/road-work-construction/projects/](http://wcroads.org/road-work-construction/projects/)**
- Sign up via email to receive our weekly road construction schedule, posted every Thursday morning. The schedule includes road and bridge closures for the following week  
**[wcroads.org/ weekly-road-work-update/](http://wcroads.org/weekly-road-work-update/)**
- Major projects will have their own webpage where you can view project details, detour maps, FAQs, and sign-up via email for project updates. Some of these major projects even have their own email list, join and get updates specific to that project. To view a project's page, visit  
**[wcroads.org/road-work-construction/projects/](http://wcroads.org/road-work-construction/projects/)**

# Speed Limits Explained

We often get asked about speed limits. We have found that there are a lot of misconceptions around these important laws and how they are set, changed and impact safety.

## History of Speed Limits

Road speed limits have been around for more than 200 years. The first speed restriction, in the U.S., was created in Newport, Rhode Island. It restricted horses from galloping on major thoroughfares to help keep pedestrians safe. The creation and popularity of the automobile forced more states to create rules for setting speed restrictions in their communities.

## Setting Speed Limits: The 85 Percentile Rule

In the United States, the most common method to set speed limits is the 85 Percentile Rule. Michigan, Ohio and many other states have passed legislation mandating this method for establishing speed limits.

The 85 Percentile Rule is a data-driven method that sets the speed limit, in increments of 5 mph, to the speed in which approximately 85% of drivers travel.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the 85 Percentile Rule is based on a couple of principals:

- The majority of drivers drive in a safe and reasonable manner.
- The normally careful and competent actions of reasonable people should be considered legal.
- Laws are established for the protection of the public and are meant to regulate unreasonable behavior.
- Laws cannot be effectively enforced without the consent and voluntary compliance of the public majority.

With these principals in mind, road agencies conduct a speed study of a certain section of road. During these studies, engineers analyze the roadside environment, traffic volume and most importantly, the real-time speed data over a period of time. Using the data collected, the speed is set based on the average speed in which the large majority of people (85 percentile) are traveling.

## Common Misconceptions

The 85th percentile rule has been the law of the land for many years but it still is controversial.

Residents, especially after an unfortunate incident, often ask road agencies to lower speed limits to improve safety. This is a difficult conversation for all; road agencies want to make the road safer and must follow the law; residents want swift action to prevent future injury or death but don't understand the data and laws behind speed limits.

Here are a few misconceptions that often come up regarding speed limits:

### Rumor:

A lower speed limit slows everyone down.

### Reality:

Studies show that this is not true. Unrealistically low speed limits do not slow down cars; drivers will continue to drive the speed they feel is safe for the road conditions.

### Rumor:

A lower speed limit decreases crashes.

### Reality:

Unrealistically low speed limits may actually increase the potential for crashes because it discourages a smooth flow of traffic.

An unrealistically low speed limit may also make the road less safe for pedestrians and other non-motorists; they expect cars to be traveling at the posted speed limit and make crossing decisions based on this mistaken assumption.

## What Can Residents Do to Help?

The best thing residents can do to improve safety in their neighborhood is to drive safely themselves and encourage others to do the same.

Road agencies will continue to make road improvements like narrowing lanes and adding wider shoulders and bike paths to help as well.

At the end of the day, safety is everyone's responsibility.

