

ROADS OF ROSS TOWNSHIP

Often, residents have questions concerning the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of roads within the Township. They also inquire about the working relationship between Ross Township and the Kalamazoo County Road Commission. This article is intended to respond to those inquiries.

Within a township such as Ross Township, one will find state, in some instances, city and/or village, and county roads. There also are a few private roads.

State roads are all highways with the letters "M", "US" or "I" in their names. Examples include M-89, I-94 and US-12. State highways fall under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

City and/or village roads within their boundaries are maintained by those municipalities.

County roads fall under the jurisdiction of county road commissions. The county roads in Ross Township fall under the jurisdiction of the Kalamazoo County Road Commission (KCRC).

County roads include primary roads and local roads defined below:

Primary roads are major roads within a county road system. They are determined to have the greatest general importance to the county and usually carry through traffic movements including high traffic volumes. (e.g., North 37th St.) Ross Township has about 26 miles of primary roads.

Local roads are those roads in the county not classified as primary roads. They usually have lower traffic and mainly provide access to property and funnel traffic to more residential/agricultural areas. (e.g., North 43d St.) Ross Township has about 53 miles of local roads.

Townships have no jurisdiction for constructing and maintaining various categories of roads found within a township. They also have no liability with respect to such roads.

The road commissions' source of road funding in Michigan primarily comes from the state collected gas tax and vehicle registration fees. Michigan road agencies (State, Road Commissions, Cities and Villages) also rely on federal road funding; however, no single road agency receives a very substantial amount.

KCRC has overall responsibility for the construction and maintenance of all primary roads in Kalamazoo County. It provides the funding for all primary road projects. Additionally, KCRC has overall responsibility for the construction and maintenance of local road projects. However,

Michigan law mandates that a road commission such as KCRC can only spend 50% of monies available to the commission on local road construction projects. Like many other counties, KCRC partners with the townships in the County for local road projects. The partnership between the KCRC and townships has allowed many road projects to be completed in Kalamazoo County that otherwise would not have been completed for years, if at all.

KCRC's policy is to provide and have requirements for its Local Road Participation Fund known as PAR funds. Annually, the Board of County Road Commissioners of Kalamazoo County (Board) determines the amount of PAR funds to be made available to the 15 Kalamazoo County townships for use on local road projects. In 2010, the Board allocated \$950,000 in PAR funds. Annual PAR fund allocation to each of the 15 townships in Kalamazoo County is based upon a formula comprised of a township's population, local road mileage and urban mileage. Ross Township's 2010 PAR fund allocation amounted to slightly over \$50,000. A township must match at least some of, but not necessarily all, the PAR funds made available to it each year. Absent special circumstances, any PAR funds allocated to a township which are not used in a particular year will be applied by KCRC to a primary road project.

Over the years, Ross Township Board has primarily relied upon (a) all of the PAR funds allocated to the Township as well as (b) additional monies from the Township's General Fund to underwrite the costs of local road projects. In some instances, residents in various areas of Ross Township have contributed to a local road project by virtue of a Special Assessment District. In 2010, Ross Township spent slightly over \$109,000, which included \$50,000 in PAR funds, on local road projects.

All routine maintenance activities such as patching and snow removal continue to be the responsibility of KCRC for both primary and local roads.

Within the last few years, KCRC instituted a software program which permits both KCRC and Ross Township to enjoy a uniform system for rating the condition of the Township's roads. Additionally, KCRC's software programs now permit it to assist Ross Township in forecasting and prioritizing local road projects to be carried out over a multi-year period. Such information is particularly helpful to the Township during annual budget deliberations.

To learn more about the KCRC, please visit www.kalamazoocountyroads.com.

Owen Murray, Trustee