



*The Road Newsletter, Volume 7, Issue 2*

February 2017

## Seasonal Weight Restrictions

“All-Season” roads are those that have been designed and built with the appropriate width and pavement thickness to withstand truck traffic loads all year long. Thus they are not subject to the Seasonal Weight Restrictions that are placed on most roads during the early spring.

Roads not constructed to “All-Season” standards are subject to a reduction in allowable loading and speeds. During spring, thawing of the ground below these roads softens the roadbed and makes the surface susceptible to damage from heavy loads.

As a general rule, primary roads are constructed to all-season loading standards. However, there are a few primary roads that require reduced loading during Seasonal Weight Restrictions. All residential subdivision streets, most local roads, and all gravel surfaced roads in Ottawa County are subject to a 25 percent reduction in allowable loading when Seasonal Weight Restrictions are in effect.



Seasonal weight restrictions are legal limits placed on the loads trucks may carry. During late winter and early spring, when seasonal thawing occurs, the maximum allowable axle load and speed is reduced to prevent weather-related deterioration of roads.

Roads thaw out from the top down each spring and moisture is trapped on the surface. Heavy loads cause the deterioration of gravel and bituminous surfaces during this thawing period.

Seasonal Weight Restrictions are very important for the longevity of roads. The Road Commission employs 2 weighmasters for enforcement of Seasonal Weight Restrictions on county roads.

For more information on Seasonal Weight Restrictions in Ottawa County and throughout Michigan, visit [www.micountyroads.org](http://www.micountyroads.org).

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# Bridging the Gap

The Road Commission currently oversees the maintenance and replacement of **135 bridges** that span at least 20-feet or more in length, measured along centerline of the roadway, as well as a multitude of short-span bridges and culverts (under 20-feet).

Per the **Federal Register, 23 CFR Part 650**, bridges must receive a routine inspection every two years. The Road Commission has bridge inspectors on staff who conduct the biennial inspections and provide recommendations for maintenance, noting any deficiencies that should be monitored. Bridge closures and any weight limit restriction changes are also recommended through the monitoring and inspection process. A newly constructed or replaced bridge is "unposted" as it can handle a weight capacity in excess of 77 tons, the full legal load limit. The closure of a structure is required when the weight limit falls below 3 tons and/or severe deterioration and structural failure of beams and/or abutments has been determined by the bridge inspector.

The Road Commission currently has 2 restricted bridges for Gross Vehicle Weight throughout the county. They are:

- Barry Street over east branch of Rush Creek – Posted Gross Vehicle Weight of 12 tons. The photo shows the deterioration of a pre-stressed beam strand that has diminished the bridge load capacity.
- Squires Road over Rio Grand Creek – Posted Gross Vehicle Weight of 58 tons



**Motorists traversing structures with loads exceeding the posted weight restrictions are guilty of a civil infraction and subject to a civil fine, as set forth in Michigan Vehicle Code, Public Act 300 of 1949, Section MCL 257.631. For your safety and that of the other motorists, the Road Commission advises strict adherence to bridge weight restrictions.**



Bridges are eligible to receive grant funding (approximately 95%) through the Michigan Department of Transportation **Local Bridge Program**. This state and/or federally funded program requires a 5% matching contribution from a local source, typically the Road Commission. The Road Commission is also responsible for all costs associated with design, construction inspection, materials testing, right-of-way acquisitions, and other preliminary engineering work.

Routine maintenance and repair costs associated with bridges are typically 100% paid for by the Road Commission and/or other local sources.

The Road Commission has received funding through the Local Bridge Program to rehabilitate the Barry Street bridge over the east branch of Rush Creek in Georgetown in 2018. The total estimated construction cost for the bridge is \$765,000 with over \$726,000 in allocated MDOT Local Bridge Program funding.

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## Paving the Way

The Road Commission continuously evaluates road conditions to identify replacement, repair, and maintenance needs. Project lists are developed with priorities based on the evaluation of data, such as:



- PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating) - a visual ten point rating system that is performed by certified individuals from the Road Commission, MDOT, and the local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
- Traffic Volumes
- Capacity and Congestion Issues
- Accident History
- Maintenance Problems
- Funding Sources

Each year the Road Commission gathers input from local governmental officials, MPOs, and the general public to determine improvement needs and to develop a 6-year Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP). The 2017-2022 SIP can be found on our website at [www.ottawacorc.com](http://www.ottawacorc.com).

Since the start of the “Subdivision Resurfacing and Improvement Program” in 1987, 100% of the costs associated with the program have been paid by the Townships and/or residents. Proposed project lists and cost estimates have been provided to the Townships for their consideration of the proposed 2017 Subdivision Street improvements. Once projects have been selected by the Townships, bids will be requested with completion during the construction season.

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## Street Smarts for Students

The Road Commission participated in a Holland Christian High School learning experience this past January. The program was called *Winterim*, where students have an opportunity to explore subjects outside of the traditional school curriculum, exposing students to new ideas, potential careers, and lifetime skills. Students visited the Road Commission North Holland Facility as part of their week long *Winterim* class,



referred to as “Street Smarts”. Ben Kapenga from Total Focus driving school was the class instructor. He used this opportunity to provide the students a better understanding of their local geographical areas in which they live and drive.

These young students/drivers interacted with Road Commission staff and learned more about the maintenance operations and what some of the dangers there are on the roadway in particular during the winter. Students were shown how a snowplow truck operates, and through simulations, the dangers of following a snowplow too close and trying to pass on the right. Students were shown how blind-spots can affect a snowplow driver as the students sat in the truck and looked through the plow’s mirrors.

It was a good learning experience for the students and for the Road Commission to share the challenges snowplow drivers face in the winter.

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## Important Dates

Thursday – February 2, 2017 | 9AM | Board Meeting

Thursday – February 16, 2017 | 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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