



The Road Newsletter, Volume 7, Issue 6

June 2017

Roadside Vegetation Control

Many people in Ottawa County and across the state enjoy Michigan's picturesque roadways, often enhanced with trees and other vegetation. In addition to providing better roadside aesthetics, trees also serve important environmental purposes, such as improving air quality and preventing soil erosion. Mature, hardy trees are an essential feature lining county roads. For this reason, the Road Commission preserves trees and other vegetation along the road right-of-way as much as possible so that everyone can enjoy the benefits they provide.



Even though roadside vegetation provides many positive attributes to the roads, often trees and other vegetation in the road right-of-way can increase hazards to drivers, decreased visibility along the road, and obstruct drainage. Sometimes vegetation in the road right-of-way must be removed or trimmed for the safety of people using the roads.

Due to the benefits trees provide, it is always the Road Commission's first objective to preserve trees in the road right-of-way. The Road Commission uses several criteria in determining when to trim or remove vegetation in the road right-of-way. The potential hazard of a tree or other vegetation in the road right-of-way will be assessed by the Road Commission, such as its proximity to utilities, buildings, and other structures. Trees that are weakened, dying, or at a high risk of being

struck are the more likely to receive action. The potential for immediate danger to road users' may place vegetation and trees on a higher priority to be removed.

When there is a question if vegetation is a threat to the safety of those using the roads, a request can be made to the Road Commission to evaluate whether it is in the road right-of-way, the danger that it presents, and the possibility of trimming or removing the tree or vegetation. The Road Commission does not remove trees that present no hazard to drivers. There are usually plenty of dead or dangerous trees in the road right-of-way that require Road Commission attention.



In addition to trimming or removing dangerous trees in the road right-of-way, the Road Commission also does regular maintenance mowing along the State highways as well as primary, secondary, and unpaved roads. If motorists using the roads see vegetation blocking the line of sight, they are encouraged to contact the Road Commission.

It is always the Road Commission's goal to preserve roadside trees and vegetation, for their value in roadway beautification and for their environmental benefits. It is also the Road Commission's primary goal to provide safe and drivable roads, and sometimes that requires the trimming or removal of roadside vegetation. The Ottawa County Road Commission works hard to balance tree and vegetation preservation while also providing clear and safe roads for everyone.

Road Right-of-Way Tree Planting

It's that time of year when people are considering how to improve their landscaping, gardening, and tree planting. Trees planted along the roadside can provide many aesthetic and environmental benefits. Trees in the road right-of-way, however can also be hazards to those using the roads. Because of these potential hazards a permit is required from the Ottawa County Road Commission before planting trees in the road right-of-way. These permits are free of cost, but they are important to prevent future problems with trees in the right-of-way.

Before issuing a permit, the Road Commission will evaluate the nature of the road at the planting location, distance from the centerline, and tree species to ensure the tree does not become a hazard to those using the road. A certain distance from the centerline must be maintained to prevent the trees from blocking vision down the road. There are certain tree species that are prohibited in the road right-of-way. The type of tree must be hardy and resistant to salt and other environmental factors. So that it does not later die, become weak, or block the roadway and would then require removal. These criteria are important to the long-term maintenance and safety of the roads.

Below is a chart with minimum tree planting locations from the road centerline:



Please only use this chart for planning, even if your planting meets these distances, a permit is still required to plant trees in the road right-of-way

	55 mph			45 mph			25 mph		
Primary Road	2 lane	3 lane	5 lane	2 lane	3 lane	5 lane	2 lane	3 lane	5 lane
	32' Min.	38' Min.	47' Min.	30' Min.	36' Min.	45' Min.	28' Min.	34' Min.	43' Min.
Local Road	2 lane	3 lane	5 lane	2 lane	3 lane	5 lane	2 lane	3 lane	5 lane
	30' Min.	38' Min.	47' Min.	28' Min.	36' Min.	45' Min.	27' Min.	34' Min.	43' Min.
Subdivision Street							2 lane		
							25' Min.		

If you would like to plant trees within the road right-of-way don't forget to request a permit from the Road Commission first to ensure that all the criteria have been met. Trees that are planted in the right-of-way without a permit can be removed by the Road Commission. It is also the responsibility of the property owner to maintain the tree and make sure it doesn't block the line of sight for motorists.

By taking all the proper steps before planting trees in the road right-of-way we can work together to keep our roads safe and beautiful.

New Employees at the Ottawa County Road Commission

Rich Holmberg:

Rich is a Grand Valley State University Alumni, who most recently worked for Ottawa County Parks. Rich will assist the Special Services Department in reviewing permits for work being done in the road right-of-way. The Special Services Department also reviews of construction projects and other work property owners want to do in the road right-of-way, to help decrease hazards and make sure the roadways stay safe for drivers.

Zach Russell:

A recent graduate from Michigan State University, Zach Russell is the new Communications Administrator for the Road Commission. Zach will be involved in public relations, internal and external communications for the Road Commission, as well as expanding our social media presence. Keep an eye out for the Road Commission on Facebook and Twitter in the future!

We welcome these new employees to the Road Commission and look forward to their contributions.

Important Dates

Thursday – June 08, 2017 | 9AM | Board Meeting

Thursday – June 22, 2017 | 9AM | Board Meeting



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



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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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