

## Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

August 6, 2025 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2025 at 5:00 PM, E.D.T., the Board of County Road Commissioners for the County of Van Buren met in regular session at the Road Commission Administrative Office in Lawrence, Michigan.

### PRESENT:

Road Commissioners Askew, Boze, Kinney and Nelson  
Managing Director Bret Witkowski  
Highway Engineer Barry Anttila  
Finance and Human Resources Director Linnea Rader  
Operations Director Greg Brucks  
Administrative Assistant-Board Secretary Jill Brien

### ABSENT:

Road Commissioner Burleson (Excused)

### GUESTS PRESENT:

Mike Chappell, County Commissioner

Chairman Askew called the meeting to order at 5 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Boze to approve the Agenda.

YES: 4  
NO: 0  
ABSENT: 1  
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney to approve the Minutes of the July 16, 2025 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 3  
NO: 0  
ABSTAIN: 1 (Boze)  
ABSENT: 1  
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. None was received.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

### Finance and HR Department:

- Union negotiations are underway. Our fourth session was 07/29/2025 and went very well. A very real concern of our staff during negotiations has been the ever-increasing costs of health care and seemingly ever-decreasing coverage that those costs provide. A proposed solution is later in the agenda.
- Marla and I met with our health insurance agent again on 07/29/25. We are again looking at huge increases in employee costs. To combat those costs the agent gave an RFQ to other insurance companies and received quotes. While some options would not escalate employee costs per pay period as much as our current plans, the options increased deductibles, co-pays, prescription costs and reduced other benefits. It is our opinion that our employees should be offered health care that they can understand, utilize as needed, and afford. Again, the proposed solution is later in the agenda.
- The funeral for Cedric Jones, the Road Commission of Oakland County's employee that was killed is Saturday, August 2. A processional will occur and public works agencies across the state will be participating. We've asked for volunteers to attend.

A resolution recognizing those that attend is later in the agenda as well.

- Staff are beginning the process of planning our Township Annual Meetings for this fall.
- We are also working on setting a date for the Annual Road-eo and Employee Appreciation Day. The date is dependent on when seal coat and fog seal is completed, so we are watching the progress carefully.
- The operating budget as of 7/30/2025 is attached.

#### **Operations Department (by Witkowski):**

- Sealcoat is moving through the Northern portion of the County. Fog Seal continues in the Southern portion of the County. (More detail will be provided at meeting).
- Contract Gravel resurfacing (township requested) is complete.
- Hot mix patching crews are actively repairing potholes throughout the County.
- Gradall crews have been active this week repairing washouts, patching crosspipe replacements, and cleaning/clearing ditches in both South Haven and Bloomingdale Townships.
- On 7/30/25 we did a trial/test with “steel slag sand” in chip seal for Cass County with potential to use it in Van Buren in the future.
- Participated in a graded exercise at the County’s EOC (Emergency Operations Center) on 7/29/25. Preliminary results sound very positive.

#### **Engineering Department:**

- Nashville Construction Company began on the following bridges in the Preventative Maintenance Bridge Bundle:
    - **45<sup>th</sup> Street over the Paw Paw River, Paw Paw Township** (between 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue); traffic is being detoured. Paving is scheduled for August 7, weather permitting.
    - **CR665 over the South Branch of the Paw Paw River, Waverly Township** (between Fisk Lake Road and 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue); traffic is being detoured. Paving is scheduled for August 7, weather permitting.
    - **Baseline Road over the Black River, South Haven Township** (between 71.50th Street and 72<sup>nd</sup> Street); traffic is being detoured.
- There are a total of six (6) bridges in the Bridge Bundle.
- Red Arrow Highway between CR681 and the City of Hartford, Hartford Township; mill and pave work began on Monday, July 28<sup>th</sup>. The paving should be completed by Saturday, as long as the weather cooperates.
  - Sand Pines subdivision, Antwerp Township, was paved on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. The contractor has to place some gravel in drives for the project to be complete.

Operations Director Brucks arrived during Engineering Department update and provided additional information for the Board as follows: As of today crews have accomplished 108.46 miles of sealcoat and are 76% complete. The County Weighmaster vehicle was submitted as an entry for the calendar for the government’s purchasing program for Ford Direct; however, it was not selected. Sealcoat staff staggered start-times were also discussed.

#### **Managing Director Witkowski:**

1. The next board meeting will be held on September 10, 2025.
2. The next SW district council meeting will be at the Paw Paw Brewing Company on Monday, August 11, 2025, at 10:00 am. Since the VBCRC is hosting, please let Jill or me know if you would like to attend.
3. I have companies coming in to provide sandblasting services, truck washing, steel beams, and painting them. They have some rust, and our insurance carrier pointed them out in their annual report; I have met with one company and will be meeting with a second company this week. I have one bid so far, waiting on the 2nd bid.
4. The remodel of the Western Garage is moving along nicely.
5. For the month of August, I will be attending Board meetings in Waverly Township on August 7, Bangor Township on August 12, Hartford Township on August 14, and Almena Township on August 20. Currently, I have attended 9 of the 18 townships' night board meetings.

6. Good job by Joel and AJ for all their work doing PASER ratings for the roads in Van Buren County, the number of miles that received a PASER rating in 2024 by local counties. Van Buren County has the 8th most miles in the state.
  - a. Van Buren County 1,200 miles
  - b. Kalamazoo County, 645 miles
  - c. Allegan County 659 miles
  - d. Cass County 722 miles
  - e. Berrien County, 491 miles
7. Our mowers are out and working on the second round of roadside mowing.
8. CRA put out an email looking for ideas that can be researched. I suggested the best time to apply fog seal after seal coating. There are many different thoughts on the issue. The Director of Manistee called me last week. They liked the idea and had questions, explaining what they do. However, their work has been delayed because they contracted for it. One constant issue I come across is that Van Buren County does more miles than any county I have talked to.
9. On July 30, the VBCRC staff seal coated, fog sealed and mowed in the same day.
10. The State of Michigan has not passed the budget for the upcoming year, which could include an increase in road funding. We can hope that when they return to session, the House, the Senate, and the Governor can agree on the state budget and road funding. I would suggest to the board that we pause discussion of a second roadside millage until the state passes its budget, which by law was supposed to be passed **by July 1**.

Review of Vouchers by Managing Director Witkowski:

Voucher #2424	\$	945,065.06	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2425	\$	187,823.55	Payroll
Voucher #2426	\$	1,029,783.84	Accounts Payable
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,162,672.45</b>	

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to approve the vouchers totaling \$2,162,672.45.

YES: 4  
 NO: 0  
 ABSENT: 1  
 MOTION CARRIED.

Rader discussed the Annual Certification of Employee-related Conditions that is required to be filed annually with the MDOT. Over the years the publically funded Health Insurance Contribution Act, PA 152 of 2011, has not kept up with health insurance rates. After discussions with other Road Commissions and our auditor, Derek Hall, to confirm that there is no adverse effect from the State or any of our funding sources, Rader recommended that the Board exempt itself from Public Act 152. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to approve Resolution 2025-15, Exemption Resolution, and authorize the Chairman and the Managing Director, CFO to execute MDOT Form 2067, Annual Certification of Employee-related Conditions, both as presented. The Board questioned combining groups with the ISD and other possible cost-saving measures for health insurance. Rader advised that many avenues have been reviewed, including combining with other agencies, and different insurance options to no avail.

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE ANNUAL EXEMPTION OPTION**  
**AS SET FORTH IN THE PUBLICLY FUNDED HEALTH INSURANCE**  
**CONTRIBUTION ACT,**  
**PUBLIC ACT 152 of 2011 (2025-15)**

WHEREAS: The Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act, Public Act 152 of 2011 (the "Act"), was passed by the State Legislature and signed by the Governor on September 24, 2011; and,

WHEREAS: The Act contains three options for complying with its requirements as follows:

- Section 3, “Hard Caps” option. Limits a public employer’s total annual health care costs for employees based on coverage levels, as defined in the Act.
- Section 4, “80%/20” option. Limits a public employer’s share of total annual health care costs to not more than 80%. This option requires an annual 2/3 vote of the governing body.
- Section 8, “Exemption” option. A local unit of government, as defined in the Act, may exempt itself from the requirements of the Act by an annual 2/3 vote of the governing body; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby elects to exempt itself from the Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act for the medical benefit plan coverage year December 1, 2025 through November 30, 2026.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski and Rader presented the proposed Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) for the Board’s consideration. The updated Plan uses the criteria established in the VBCRC’s Transportation Asset Management Plan to determine where funds will be spent to maintain and improve the road network. Motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney to approve the 2026-2030 Five-Year Road Plan for the Van Buren County Road Commission as presented by Finance and Human Resources Director Rader.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

The Board reviewed correspondence from the CRA regarding the State’s identification of the Monarch butterfly as a threatened species, which becomes final in December 2025. The CRA is proposing that the VBCRC join Michigan’s Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA). By joining the CCAA, the Road Commission will be exempt from seeking federal approval every time work is accomplished in the road right-of-way. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to authorize the Managing Director to commit to three years in the Michigan Monarch CCAA at a first-year estimated cost of \$486.22.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to mark the official ballot for the 2025 CRASIF Board of Trustee Candidates as follows: Commissioner Bill Luetzow, Commission Wayne Schoonover, and Commissioner Michael Scott.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Askew, seconded by Nelson to adopt the following resolution recognizing and honoring Road Commission staff and family:

**RESOLUTION HONORING VAN BUREN COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION  
STAFF FOR THEIR DEDICATION AND COMPASSION (2025-16)**

WHEREAS: The Van Buren County Road Commission is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Cedric Jones, a fellow roadworker of the Road Commission of Oakland County who was fatally struck while performing drainage repair work; and,

WHEREAS: Roadworkers across Michigan face daily risks in service to their communities, maintaining the infrastructure that supports public transportation; and,

WHEREAS: Staff members of the Van Buren County Road Commission voluntarily gave of their personal time over the weekend to attend the funeral of their fallen colleague, demonstrating extraordinary compassion and solidarity as follows:

- Brian Burrows (and family)
- Christina Clayton
- Linnea Rader (and Colton)

WHEREAS: Their presence at Cedric Jones' funeral not only honored his life and service but also offered comfort and support to the grieving family and coworkers, reflecting the highest values of public service and human kindness.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Van Buren County Road Commission formally recognizes and commends these staff members for their selfless act of unity and empathy.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

**Wayne Nelson**

Attended a road tour with Supervisor Joe Leduc and Managing Director Witkowski.

**Greg Kinney**

Plans to attend Decatur Township's board meeting tomorrow.

**Rick Boze**

Attended Keeler Township's board meeting last night. Complaint received of a downed tree pushed off the road at/near Victory Shore Drive.

**W.C. Askew, Sr.**

No report.

The Chairman opened the meeting to second public comment. Anttila advised the Board and those present that the Pavement Marking Contractor was working in Van Buren County last Friday, and Sunday marking various roads slated for new paint.

Brucks shared a video of a chip seal on M40 by the State at CR352 in Porter Township where the Road Commission had chip sealed (CR352) within one day of each other. The State came back through and fog sealed one day later, and the Road Commission fog sealed their segment approximately 3 weeks later after traffic had locked in the stones, and the rain and traffic had washed away most of the fines allowing the material to adhere better to the road surface. All who viewed the video were in agreement that the Road Commission's segment looked better than the States as there were more stones locked in place and the road surface still looked new.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 5:48 PM.

YES: 4  
NO: 0  
ABSENT: 1  
MOTION CARRIED.

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Board Secretary

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Board Chairman