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PRESS RELEASE

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COUNTY ROAD AGENCIES AHEAD OF THE CURVE CRAM Releases Report of Road Commission Reforms and Efficiencies

Lansing, MI- Today, the County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM) released a report showing that Michigan's county road agencies are ahead of the curve in implementing the reforms and efficiencies that Gov. Snyder and the Michigan Legislature have recently proposed for local governments.

“If you look at the reforms and efficiencies that have been required for implementation by local governments, you will find each in place at a road commission(s) somewhere in the state,” CRAM Director, John Niemela said. “From administrative expense reductions to adopting lean government practices, reforms are standard operating procedure allowing road commissions to continue to provide services to the public amid decade low revenues and continually increasing costs.”

Gov. Snyder has encouraged local units of government to explore possibilities for sharing or consolidating services that result in taxpayer savings. While the public may be unaware, road commissions routinely share labor and equipment, and jointly purchase materials with adjacent road commissions; cities, villages and townships; other county departments; school districts; and local, state and federal agencies.

At a recent Road Maintenance Best Practice Conference sponsored by State Reps. Rick Olson (R-Washtenaw) and Roy Schmidt (D-Kent), Rep. Olson stated, “(state and local road agencies) need to continuously improve; beg, borrowing and stealing each others’ ideas.”

“This is exactly what road commissions have been doing for years,” Niemela said. “CRAM’s listserv sees thousands of posts annually where road commissions share questions and receive innovative ideas in response from road commissions on the other side of the state.”

As the legislatively-approved and gubernatorial-appointed Transportation Funding Task Force (TF2) recognized, “those not aware of what is happening may assume nothing is happening.” Road agency efforts typically go unnoticed because the cost-cutting measures are designed not to disrupt service.

Road commissions were surveyed in 2008 by the Citizens Advisory Committee to the TF2, and again in January 2011 by the County Road Association of Michigan. This report is a combination of these survey responses and is intended to give Michigan taxpayers an opportunity to review some of the reforms and regional cooperation already in place across the state.

“When reviewing the examples provided by road commissions, it is critical for state government leaders to understand that “top-down” or “cookie cutter” solutions will not work for local road agencies,” Niemela said. “As this report shows, efficiencies in one county may not work in others due to a variety of factors such as traffic counts, size and training of the workforce, distance from material distributors and more. Each local road agency must continue to evaluate operations and services to maximize efficiency and value to taxpayers based on the situation and resources present in its community.”

The report provides county road agency examples in the following areas: labor and equipment sharing; joint purchase of equipment and materials; joint projects with other governmental entities; cost sharing with other governmental entities; public-private partnerships; other areas of collaboration; reforms to enhance summer operations; reforms to enhance winter operations; and reforms to administrative and other areas.

“Challenges lie ahead of all local governmental entities, including road commissions” Niemela said. “We hope this report is not only a benefit to road commissions as they continue to learn from each others’ successes, but also to local governments across the state struggling to implement reforms.”

The County Road Association of Michigan represents the interests of Michigan's 83 county road agencies that collectively maintain 75 percent of Michigan roads, and 7697 bridges; the nation's fourth largest local road network.

[Click here](#) to download the full report.

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