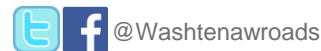


You're Going to Build What?!

Communicating with the Public About All
Types of Road Work



Introduction

- Emily Kizer
 - Washtenaw County Road Commission
 - Communications manager
 - Started in October 2017
 - Member of CRA – PR Committee

Agenda

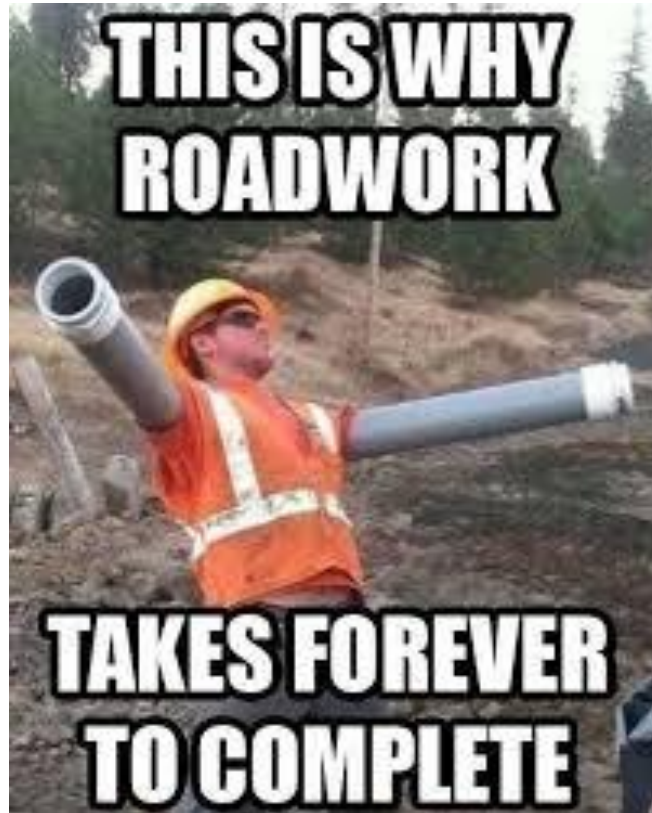
- I. Why communicate?
- II. WCRC's journey
- III. Current practices
- IV. Lessons learned



WHY COMMUNICATE?



Why Communicate?



Why Communicate?

- The public is angry and looking for targets
- We are asking for more \$\$
- The public doesn't understand us



I'll have an ounce of prevention



WCRC'S JOURNEY



Who are we?

- Washtenaw County
 - 344,000 citizens
- WCRC
 - 1,653 miles, 580 miles for MDOT
 - \$31 million MTF
 - \$22 million Federal/State Aid Projects
 - 130 staff



History

- Pre 2015
 - Handled mostly by board secretary
 - Press releases
 - Ribbon cuttings
 - Website
 - Paper service requests

History

- In 2015...
 - Hired communications manager
 - Aligned with local politics and major initiatives
 - Launched Facebook page
 - Started website refresh

History

- In 2016...
 - Voters approved county-wide roads millage
 - Launched WCRC Fix It
 - Launched new website
 - Conducted public roundabout survey

History

- In 2018...
 - Push back from projects involving tree removals
 - Developed project communications procedure



Project Communications

- Track 1, 2, 3 projects
 - Different level of communications depending on project scope
- Collaborative effort between Engineering, Operations and Communications



CURRENT PRACTICES



Staffing

- Comms Staff
 - Communications manager
 - Customer service representative

**At WCRC, communications is
part of everyone's job!**

Communication Areas

- Customer service
- General education
- Project communications
- Internal communications

Our Philosophies

1. Under promise, over deliver
2. If we know we will be there, let's tell
3. We say “no” a lot, let's explain why
4. This is an art and a science

Communication Channels

- Website
- Emails
- Social media
- Newsletters
- WCRC Fix It
- Community events
- Mail
- Traditional media



Emails, Social Media, WCRC Fix It, Community Events

A DEEPER LOOK





EMAILS



Emails

- Mailchimp
 - Road advisories
 - Project updates
 - Weekly road work schedules
 - Newsletters

Emails

- In 2019, we sent 340 external email campaigns
 - 154 road advisories
 - 143 project updates
 - 35 weekly road work schedules

Average open rate:
42.4%

Sample Project Update



Zeeb Road Update #4

June 18, 2019

We're off to another great week on the Zeeb Road project in Lodi Township. Our contractor installed curb last week in preparation for paving. We are hoping to start paving the first layer of asphalt later this week (as long as it doesn't rain). If you live or work within the project area, you will be provided access to your property but there may be some delays.

The road remains closed to all other traffic, including the intersections. We noticed a lot of cut-through traffic last week and have asked the Washtenaw County Sheriff to assist in enforcing the road closure. Please follow the posted detour or seek an alternate route.

If you have questions about the project, please contact James Hui, project manager, (734) 327-6660, huij@wcroads.org.

Emails

Advantages

- Free or low cost
- Easy to use
- Easy to measure success
- Can reach wide audiences

Challenges

- Internet-based
- Might create a monster



SOCIAL MEDIA



Social Media

- We use...
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn



Facebook

- Total followers: 5,946
- Average monthly reach: 48,800
- Total annual reach: 586,160

Total Page Followers as of Today: 5,946



What We Post

Facebook = Family Dinner



Washtenaw County Road Commission

Published by Emily Kizer [?] · November 19, 2019 · 🌐

Cool shot of the completed Saline-Milan Road bridge in York Township. This was a tricky one for sure!

Our contractors will be back in the spring to do final clean-up, plant grass seed and place permanent pavement markings.

[City of Saline Government](#)



Twitter

- Total followers: 1,505
- Average monthly impressions: 32,500
- Total annual impressions: 390,500



Washtenaw Roads ✓ @washtenawroads · Jan 27

We started our first construction project of the year today on Marion Rd in Saline Twp. We have a HUGE construction season planned, check out the project map so far: ow.ly/47ns50y5K5k



What We Post

Twitter = Bar



Washtenaw Roads  @washtenawroads · Jul 22

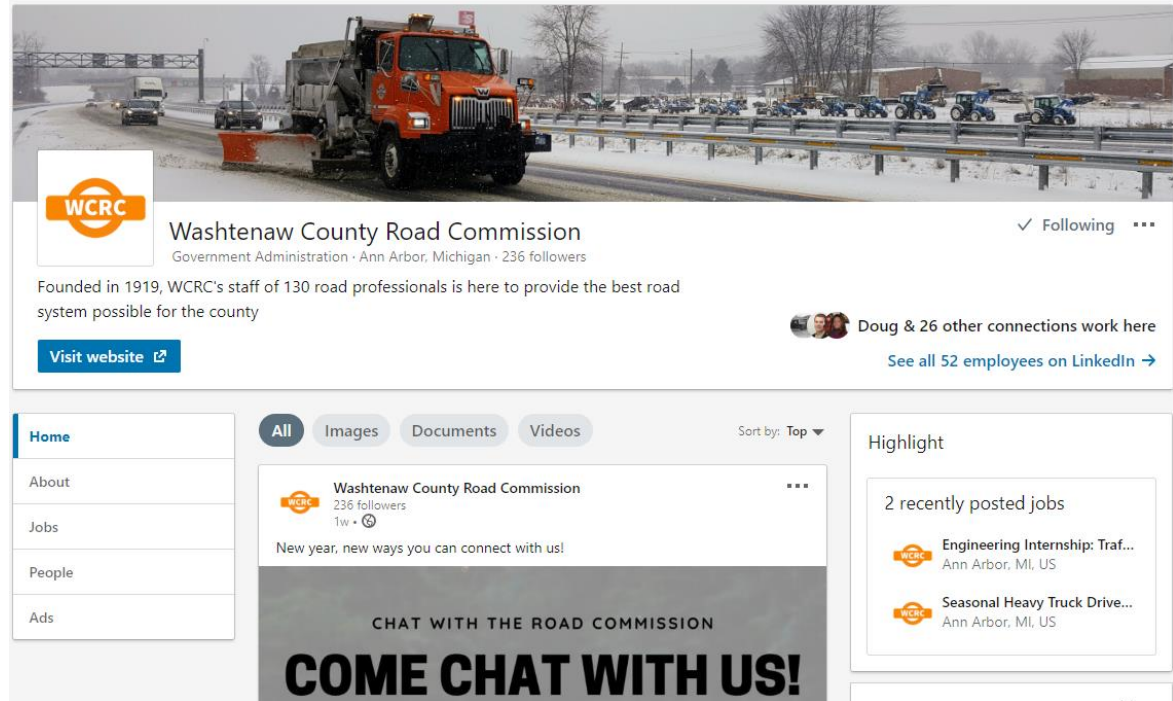
Reminder: Hogback Rd in Ann Arbor Township is closed to through traffic for road resurfacing. It will be closed for approximately 10 days. Read more:

[ow.ly/npxZ50v7Js5](https://www.washtenawroads.com/news/road-closure-advisory)



LinkedIn

- 236 followers



The screenshot displays the LinkedIn profile of the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC). The header features a large banner image of a red snowplow clearing a road in winter, with several blue tractors parked in the background. Below the banner is the WCRC logo, the company name "Washtenaw County Road Commission", and its location "Ann Arbor, Michigan" with "236 followers". A brief description states: "Founded in 1919, WCRC's staff of 130 road professionals is here to provide the best road system possible for the county". A "Visit website" button is present. On the right, it shows "Following" status and a note that "Doug & 26 other connections work here" with a link to "See all 52 employees on LinkedIn".

The left sidebar contains navigation links: Home, About, Jobs, People, and Ads. The main content area shows a post from the company, dated "1w", with the text "New year, new ways you can connect with us!". Below the text is a large graphic that reads "CHAT WITH THE ROAD COMMISSION" and "COME CHAT WITH US!". The right sidebar highlights "2 recently posted jobs": "Engineering Internship: Traf..." and "Seasonal Heavy Truck Drive...", both located in Ann Arbor, MI, US.

What We Post

LinkedIn = Professional Conference



Washtenaw County Road Commission

239 followers

1d • 🌐



Thanks to [SEMCOG](#) for featuring our own [Adam Lape](#) in their new video series about the awesome career path of public works (and other public jobs). [Trevor Layton](#) and Jon visited last week for an interview and tour of our main y...see more



Social Media

Advantages

- Free or low cost
- Easy to measure success
- Can reach wide audiences
- Get your message out without a filter

Challenges

- Internet-based
- Might create a monster
- Opens agency to public negative comments



WCRC FIX IT



WCRC Fix IT

- 5 year partnership with SeeClickFix
 - Website and app
 - Launched in 2016



5,939 requests were opened in 2019

WCRC Fix It

Advantages

- Easy to measure success
- Helps educate audiences
- Show progress

Challenges

- Internet-based
- Might create a monster
- Opens agency to public negative comments
- Not free



COMMUNITY EVENTS



Community Events

- In 2019, staff participated in:
 - 23 Township Official Meetings
 - 22 Public Meetings
 - 18 Presentations
 - 11 Big Truck Events
 - 8 Painted Plows
 - 7 Parades
 - 3 Blood Drives
 - 1 PSA Competition



Special Events

- Roundabout education



Special Events

- Paint-a-Plow Program



Special Events

- PSA Competition at local HS





WE'RE STILL LEARNING



Lessons We're Learning

- ✓ You can't reach everyone
- ✓ Get the facts right the first time
- ✓ Keep it manageable
- ✓ Follow and copy peers
- ✓ Defend but don't argue
- ✓ Kill 'em with kindness

Challenges

- Input v. notification





SUMMARY



Takeaway's

- It is a marathon
- Keep it simple
- Show progress



Questions?

- Emily Kizer
 - kizere@wcroads.org
 - (734) 327-6646

