

10

REDUCED VEHICLE LOADS - SPRING THAW PERIOD REGIONAL ROADS

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, January 18, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The gross weight of commercial vehicles be restricted to five tonnes per axle for the period between March 1 and April 30 in each year on the Regional roads detailed in *Attachment 3*. These road sections are highlighted on the maps in *Attachments 1 and 2*.
2. The Regional Solicitor prepare the necessary by-law.
3. The Commissioner of Transportation and Works be authorized to implement and post the reduced load restriction, as conditions warrant.

2. PURPOSE

This report is submitted to obtain approval for a restriction to the gross weight of commercial vehicles permitted to travel on certain sections of the Regional road system, listed in *Attachment 3*, during the spring thaw period. A Regional by-law is required under the *Highway Traffic Act* before any such weight restriction regulation can be enforced.

3. BACKGROUND

The Regional road system is currently 1,028 kilometres in length. Of this total, approximately 237 kilometres of the rural sections have limited vehicle carrying capacity for one of the following reasons:

- The road surface is low cost bituminous pavement (surface treatment).
- The road base and asphalt surface is of insufficient thickness to support heavy traffic loads during spring thaw.
- The section is continuous along a route where an adjacent municipal road authority has imposed a load restriction.

The sections that meet one or more of these criteria should have a spring half-load restriction implemented on an annual basis.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The legal load limit for vehicles travelling on any public road in Ontario is regulated under the *Highway Traffic Act*. The maximum allowable weight per axle permitted under this legislation is 10,000 kilograms (10 tonnes). The total vehicle weight can vary substantially with axle configurations.

Section 122(7) of the *Highway Traffic Act* permits a municipality to pass a by-law to designate when the legal load limit of a road can be reduced. The reduced load period limits a vehicle axle weight to 5,000 kilograms (five tonnes) per axle, or half the normal legal loading.

The Regional Municipality of York has enacted a similar commercial vehicle load restriction by-law under this provision of the *Highway Traffic Act* each year. This period covers the time when the carrying capacity of lower standard roads is reduced during the spring thaw period. To implement a vehicle weight by-law, each road section is posted with the five tonnes per axle weight restriction signs.

The time when the load restriction is required on a given section of roadway can fluctuate annually due to winter climatic conditions and the timing of the spring thaw. It is proposed that the actual posting of any spring load restriction, within a proposed period, only be implemented when conditions so warrant to reflect the weather and road conditions.

Both the York Regional Police and staff of the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario carry out enforcement of the Region's by-law upon request by the Roads staff.

The *Highway Traffic Act* exempts any restriction to municipal vehicles involved in snow removal, waste disposal, utility and emergency vehicles. Fuel delivery, livestock and feed vehicles with axle weights up to 7,500 kilograms (7.5 tonnes) are also permitted to travel on the restricted road sections during the half-load period.

The following highlights changes to the 2006 Regional Roads for Spring Half Load Restriction listing (*Attachment 3*) as compared to the listing in 2005:

- **Teston Road – from Jane Street to Weston Road**
This section was extended along an existing load restriction route.

- **Metro Road – from Woodbine Avenue to Dalton Road**

This section was added due to insufficient road base to support heavy traffic during the spring thaw period.

- **Old Homestead Road – from Metro Road to Woodbine Avenue**

This section was extended along an existing load restriction route.

It is recommended that a by-law be enacted to authorize reduced loads for the period March 1 to April 30 in each year. If in future years there are any changes to the roads that will be subject to the by-law, an amending by-law will be presented to Council.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications associated with this report are the installation of the road signs displaying the five tonne per axle load restriction. The sign installation costs are included in the annual Roads Budget.

Without a weight restriction during the spring thaw period, heavy truck usage could cause extensive damage to these limited structural capacity Regional roads. Remedial repairs could cost up to \$65,000 per kilometre.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There are no direct local municipal impacts as a result of this report. Most municipalities also enact a similar by-law for the roads under their jurisdiction.

7. CONCLUSION

A by-law is proposed to restrict the gross vehicle weight limit to five tonnes per axle for the Regional road sections as detailed in *Attachments 1, 2 and 3*. The by-law is to cover the period between March 1 and April 30 in each year.

The time when the load restriction is required on a given section of roadway can fluctuate due to climatic conditions. It is, therefore, proposed that the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be authorized to implement and post the reduced load restriction, as conditions warrant.

The proposed half-load restriction will have limited impact on existing traffic patterns and will not affect any industrial or commercial development activity. Oversize/overweight permits will be issued for commercial vehicle deliveries to existing commercial businesses along these weight-restricted routes.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause were included in the agenda for the February 1, 2006 Committee meeting.)