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TRANSPORTATION SERVICES STAFF RESOURCES FOLLOW-UP FROM 2011 BUDGET APPROVAL

The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, dated October 17, 2011, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services, with the following addition:

2. The matter of enforcement of nuisance signs be referred to Legal Services to review options for amendments to the bylaw.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides further information to the Transportation Services Committee on the request for additional road maintenance resources in the 2011 Operating budget.

3. BACKGROUND

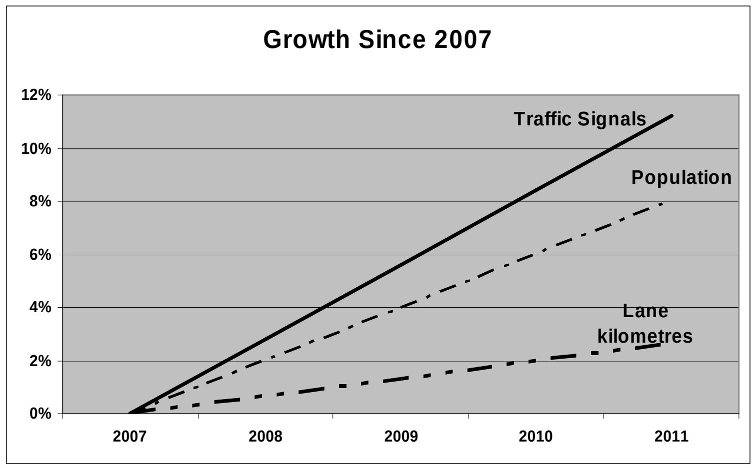
Regional Council approved the 2011 operating budget including funds for additional road maintenance resources and an enhanced pavement marking program

On March 24, 2011 Regional Council approved the 2011 Operating and Capital budgets for Transportation Services including funding for additional Roads maintenance staff; two transportation maintenance workers and a pavement marking superintendent. The hiring of these positions was postponed pending a report back to Regional Council with further information.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Three factors contribute to the need for additional road maintenance resources; the Regional road network is growing, the Region is urbanizing and our residents are expecting continued and improved levels of cleanliness

The Regional road network is growing due to Regional Council's continued investment in capacity improvements through the Capital Program.



Over the last five years, ninety additional lane kilometres and eighty additional traffic signals have been added to the Region's road infrastructure. The graph illustrates growth in traffic signals of 11.2%, population of 8.0% and lane kilometres of 2.6%. During this time four additional maintenance staff have been added to accommodate the growth But even with the additional staff approved by Regional Council, our staff resources have been inadequate to keep ahead of the volume of work and public complaints.

Moreover, road widenings with urbanized cross-sections provide mobility for a wider variety of users than Regional roads were providing in the past, accommodating pedestrians, cyclists, transit customers and car-poolers. Maintaining urbanizing areas requires greater resources as there is more wear-and-tear resulting from multiple users and a higher level of care is needed for vulnerable users such as sweeping cycling lanes and removing hazards for pedestrians. Road maintenance crews working in heavier traffic are less efficient over time and require more care for occupational health and safety reasons. Our best practices for the safety of road maintenance staff now require a minimum of two staff when working on Regional roadways.

Currently, service level standards are maintained through overtime and at the expense of other services

Road operations staff have met the increased demands caused by urbanization through overtime and by prioritizing the work staff carry out to ensure that road safety and compliance with the *Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways (Ontario regulation 239/02/10)* have been completed first. Activities of lesser risk, such as litter pick up and removal of nuisance signs have received less attention.

In 2010, overtime costs accounted for $145,000. This work is paid for at 1.5 times the hourly rate and accordingly has a 50% cost premium attached to it.

The increased number of nuisance signs requires increased maintenance resources

The increase in nuisance signs is one result of urbanization; simply put there are more people selling services and more people in the Region to sell them to. With more traffic signals and light standards, there are more places where advertising signs can be affixed. Nuisance signs create driver distraction, create litter and undermine other Regional investments in the improvement of our roads infrastructure; particularly in areas where we have partnered with local municipalities to provide enhanced streetscape and aesthetic features.

It is challenging to address the issue of nuisance sign posting through enforcement activities

It is almost impossible to address the issue of nuisance sign posting through enforcement activities because the company advertising their services on the sign are not responsible for posting the signs. Offenders are the parties who post the signs and they must be caught in the act of posting the sign for successful prosecution. The cost of enforcement and attempted prosecution would far out-weight the cost of maintenance.

Election signs are not considered nuisance signs and are governed by an entirely different policy from the nuisance signs which appear on traffic signal poles, light standards and traffic sign posts.

To assess the resources needed to deal with the removal of nuisance signs, two summer students were employed for four months in each of 2010 and 2011 and 8,000 and 9,000 signs were removed from Regional rights-of-way, respectively.

The following alternatives were considered prior to including a staff increase in the department's proposed 2011 budget.

Alternative 1: Maintain current staff levels and target only the most problematic locations – Not Recommended

The issue of nuisance signs could be partially addressed by redirecting existing resources to target only the most problematic locations. As already described, this alternative would not provide a Region-wide solution and would reduce already busy resources committed to higher priority maintenance activities. This alternative is considered to be only a short-term solution as the issue of nuisance signs is expected to grow with urbanization.

Alternative 2: Retain external contracted services - would require $270,000 as well as additional staff training to provide contract supervision – Not Recommended

External contracted services could be employed to address nuisance signs but this is a more costly alternative and does not allow opportunity for assisting on other maintenance activities. Similar services provided under contract to YRT/Viva at transit terminals and bus stop pads are provided at a cost of $345 per location. Using this benchmark cost, with an estimated 792 signalized intersections by the end of 2011, this alternative would cost $270,000.

Alternative 3: Cost-sharing with local municipalities - would cost $154,000 annually – Not Recommended

Cost-sharing with local municipal by-law officers is another alternative. The equivalent of two additional by-law officers from the local municipalities Sign Unit would be required to patrol Regional corridors. Salaries and benefits for local municipal by-law officers is $77,000. The total cost for this alternative is approximately $154,000, which is $3,000 more than the recommended alternative.

Alternative 4: Two Additional internal staff – Recommended

A fourth alternative would be to hire two full-time maintenance staff who would provide the resources necessary to address the issue of nuisance signs. During the winter months when nuisance signs are less prevalent, these staff would provide other maintenance services. It is anticipated that this alternative would reduce overtime hours related to winter maintenance activities during the winter months, thus reducing the total costs for the same levels of service and ensuring the Region stays in compliance with the maximum hours road maintenance staff are allowed to work under the *Employment Standards Act*.

The fourth alternative is recommended as it provides the most benefit at the least cost, and provides flexibility for road maintenance supervisory staff to deploy resources where most needed in the winter. This option would cost $148,000.

Table 1 below summarizes the four alternatives:

Table 1
Summary of Nuisance Sign Alternatives

Consideration	**Alternative 1**	**Alternative 2**	**Alternative 3**	**Alternative 4**
Community Impact – effectiveness of sign removal	Not fully effective. Entire Region not covered, activity subject to more critical activities replacing nuisance sign removal	Effective but higher cost solution	Not fully effective. Rely on local municipalities	Effective
Cost	$ 0	$ 270,000	$ 154,000	$ 148,000

There are two major reasons for management resources for the pavement marking program: a change in environmental regulations in 2010 has meant painted pavement markings do not last as long and levels of service need to improve as we urbanize

Although pavement marking is not a legislated requirement, maintaining the program in a state of good repair is important as it supports public safety and reduces the risk of liability claims. Pavement markings also impact the aesthetics of the road network which has been an emerging priority. All of the 3,455 km of roads maintained by the Region are re-marked annually.

The first challenge facing our pavement management program is that the oil-based paints upon which the Region's program was previously based, are now prohibited under environmental legislation of *The Environmental Protection Act 1999* "Volatile Organic Compound Concentration Limits For Architectural Coatings Regulation". These new limits for traffic paint came into effect September 9, 2010. The water-based paints only have about half the life of the oil-based paint therefore requiring twice as much painting in order to maintain historical levels of service.

Urban roads are multi-purposed and require additional effort to assist in the guidance for vehicles, cyclist and pedestrians. Recent initiatives that demonstrate our growing urbanization include the VivaNext construction project which will add 30 kilometres of rapidways requiring extensive pavement markings, and the 2011 Regional Council approval of $2.5 million per year for a Zebra Marking program of pedestrian crosswalks at signalized intersections.

Past practice has been that the pavement marking program has responded to queries or complaints from residents and staff to prioritize locations for re-marking. Management oversight will improve efficiency through proactive coordination with capital delivery and optimizing the use of in-house water-based (less expensive but shorter lifespan) versus externally contracted polymer-based pavement markings.

Link to Key Regional Council-approved Plans

From Vision to Results: 2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan
Priority Area – Continue to Deliver and Sustain Critical Infrastructure – ensuring a state-of-good-repair of our road assets.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The funding for the recommended three positions was approved by Regional Council in the 2011 Budget and therefore would not have any additional financial impact on the 2011 budget year. The financial impact of each alternative is outlined in Table 1.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Enhancing the existing Road Maintenance and Pavement Marking service levels benefit all local municipalities, as we share the same customers and, local municipalities themselves are the Region's customers. This increased performance and service level will result in safe and well-maintained transportation corridors within each local municipality while reducing the number of resident complaints.

7. CONCLUSION

The approved 2011 Transportation Services operating budget included funding for three new Roads Operations positions. This report is in response to Regional Council's request for further information prior to the filling of the positions.

The Region's urbanizing road infrastructure requires increased maintenance resources. Maintaining a state-of-good repair is a critical part of pro-active asset management.
For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Petrungaro, Manager, Road Maintenance at Ext.5220.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.