
Variety of projects underway for county public works

The County of Lanark's public works department has an ambitious schedule of construction, maintenance and other projects planned for this season.

Part of the department's 2005 budget involves an asset data collection, the purchase of a property to relocate an existing county garage, vehicle acquisitions and the hiring of several summer students.

Steve Allan, public works director, says there is a large concentration of effort on construction and maintenance projects, but these additional items are also a priority. "Many of these projects represent baseline work that will prepare us for the future."

Among some of the public works department's other projects for 2005 are:

Asset Data Collection – Two students will be spending their summer inventorying assets on the county's 567-kilometre road system. "Essentially they will drive along the shoulder of these roads with GPS units getting locations of all entrances, culverts and road signs – everything that is owned by the county on our road allowance," Mr. Allan said. "That will allow us to put information in the public works department's asset management software, which will then help us to better manage our assets in terms of determining the life cycle, replacement and rehabilitation of these items." Mr. Allan said when the county eventually sets up its GIS program, it will be able to map where these assets are for better management. The process is expected to take about two years, with this year's focus being on collecting the data. Once the information is incorporated into the software, it is expected it will lead to better customer service, as public works staff will be able to pinpoint problems and deal with them more efficiently.

Perth Garage Relocation – This year's budget includes money to purchase property for the construction of a new garage for the Perth patrol in the next couple of years. "The property is likely to be on or near an existing county road within 10 km of Perth," Mr. Allan said. "We will be looking at potential sites over the next few months." Mr. Allan explained the existing location in Perth poses difficulties, particularly in the winter, when trucks are attempting to get in and out of the garage through the volume of traffic on Wilson Street West. "Having a public works garage in a built-up, residential area is not really compatible with existing uses in that section of town," Mr. Allan added. "The Town of Perth would also like to see that property used differently, since it is along the gateway to Perth from Hwy. 7."

Fleet and Equipment – The department is making a significant vehicle acquisition in 2005 to update the fleet. A tandem truck is being purchased from Oakes Truck Sales for \$101,000 (including trade in). Malmberg Truck Trailer Equipment Ltd. will be supplying and installing the dump body and snow plough equipment for this truck at a cost of \$117,000. "It will be a state-of-the-art truck that will continue to give us the capability to pre-wet salt and sand, but will also allow us to conduct anti-icing," Mr. Allan said. "With anti-icing, a liquid is applied to a road before a storm begins to prevent it from icing. It's a more efficient way to handle winter maintenance." He adds this is part of the county's plan to improve its winter road maintenance capability while reducing the use of road salt, thereby becoming more environmentally friendly.

Staffing the Department – The department is hiring 11 students this year from mid May to the end of August. Each of the two patrols (Almonte and Perth) will receive four students to help with day-to-day maintenance. Two students are dedicated to the asset data collection program, and the remaining is assigned to construction projects. The department will also be restoring the second mechanic position, which has been vacant for a year after the retirement of an employee. "The size and complexity of our fleet and the dispersion of it requires that we have two mechanics, one for each patrol," Mr. Allan said.

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