

Pavement Management

Pay Me Now or Pay Me Later

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One of the greatest assets a municipality has is their transportation network. Maintaining the network of roadways, sidewalks and bike paths has a profound impact on everyone in a community.

Poorly maintained roadways result in hundreds of millions of dollars per year in vehicle repairs. Additionally, poorly maintained roadways can result in higher accident rates.

It is incumbent on Public Works departments to maintain and protect their infrastructure to ensure motorists have a transportation network they can rely upon for safe and efficient travel. Communicate and coordinate with local utilities to reduce the likelihood of roads being trench patched for repairs, service extensions, and expansion of a utility soon after a roadway has been resurfaced. Roads are like tuxedos...No matter how good the patch they're still not as good as new.

The General Accounting Standards Board (GASB) statement 34 adopted in 1999 mandates that municipalities depreciate capital assets such as roads and bridges. There is an alternative approach which is to maintain an up to date inventory and conduct regular condition assessments to ensure the asset does not depreciate. While this task may seem burdensome, it is actually a great instrument that a Public Works Department can utilize to ensure that their roadway management program is properly funded.

Historically, municipal leaders have always found it easier to defer funding for roadways in order to balance budgets. While Fire Departments and Police Departments rarely experienced cuts under the umbrella of life safety. The result was often catastrophic to the infrastructure of a municipality. After decades of neglect, towns found themselves in an unpopular position of taking out large bonds to try and repair their roadway network. These one time expenditures while helpful are not usually followed up by regular funding on an annual basis and the network falls back into disrepair while the town pays down a long term bond.

Educating the elected leaders of the municipality on the importance of adequately funding a roadway maintenance program is imperative. Invite newly elected selectmen, council members, or aldermen (depending on your form of government) to sit down with you and explain to them how roadways break down over time and the need to treat roadways before they fall into complete disrepair.

Roads are one of the few investments taxpayers all benefit from. Some may not have children in the school system. Not everyone recognizes the need for emergency services unless they have a need for them, but everyone travels the roadways of your community. Make your roads a priority! Educate your constituents and leaders of the importance of maintaining this network and preserve your road system.