

2022 Township of South Algonquin Road Inventory Condition Assessment

By **Mike Riley** Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

South Algonquin Township council got their 2022 Road Inventory Condition Assessment from Jewell Engineering Inc. at their meeting on July 6. The report found that the estimated cost in total of improvements to the road network in South Algonquin was \$20,131,000, including low volume roads, and \$3,306,000 was needed for roads that are deficient and need to be addressed now. It also laid out a preservation schedule in line with the township's budgetary means to keep the roads in good shape. After discussion of the report by council, Mayor Jane Dumas said that council's concerns had been heard and that there would be more opportunity for input when the next report comes back in September.

Mayor Jane Dumas introduced the assessment that was done by Jewell Engineering in the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022.

The study identifies the roads based upon their current condition and the proposed costs to reconstruct or rehabilitate them, and the data collection and road ratings were executed in line with the Ministry of Transportation Inventory Manual for Municipal Roads, 1991.

The estimated cost in total of improvements to the road network in South Algonquin was \$20,131,000, including low volume roads (those that have a daily traffic volume of less than 50 vehicles). The manual gives priority to roads based on their current condition and traffic volumes. Therefore, those in poor condition or those that have high traffic volumes are given a higher priority. Preservation over reconstruction has become the current industry practice, so preservation measures like crack sealing and micro-surfacing are recommended over a complete overhaul. According to Jewell Engineering's report, \$3,306,000 is needed for roads that are deficient now. Based upon the identified needs of the township, budget recommendations for annual capital and maintenance programs have been developed as the following; \$198,000 per year on hot mix resurfacing over a 15 year cycle, \$205,000 per year on single surface treatment based on a seven year cycle, \$370,000 per year for gravel resurfacing based on a three year cycle and \$15,000 per year for annual crack sealing.

Dumas invited any discussion or queries from council about Jewell Engineering's roads' assessment at the July 6 meeting. Councillor Richard Shalla had some issues with regard to safety and liability the township might be in having an 80 kilometre per hour speed limit on some of the back roads when it should be lower.

?I notice we've managed to change Spectacle Lake from Hwy 60 in to 50 kilometres per hour, and the Ayleen Lake Road is 60 kilometres per hour and that all makes sense. But there's many of our roads that are gravel that have extremely sharp corners, they're narrow and I would say much more dangerous and we're they're unposted at 80 kilometres per hour. You just couldn't drive some of these roads at 80 kilometres per hour. I just think it should be changed,? he says.

Public Works superintendent Dave Gatley said that it could be done and the appropriate place would be a review of the township's level of service bylaw, when they do so.

?The unposted speed of 80 kilometres per hour in Ontario is a place marker. It's drive to road conditions. We're doing a sign survey now and they're looking at our curves. We can put some advisory signage about the narrow and twisty roads. They just assessed what we have,? he says.

Bryan Martin, the CAO/clerk-treasurer, agreed with Gatley's assessment, and said that he actually had that on his radar as something that needs to be updated.

?I was kind of waiting for this to come up as they've done some work that I'll take from it to put in the level of service bylaw for minimum maintenance standard requirement as well as undertaking the retro reflexivity sign reviews which is part of that requirement. That review will be done and will come forward to council again for input to correct any speed deficiencies council

feels there may be," he says.

Martin said at that time they can examine the costs associated with additional signage and how frequently the signs need to be placed and will give council an idea of implications of those amendments. He also said it was the start of the legislative requirement for their Asset Management Planning which will be worked on once this is done, bringing that back to council to see all the assets within the township for council to give consideration too.

Gatley said the report has two parts; the road inventory and the condition assessment. He said a separate report was forthcoming about advisory sign recommendations and reflexivity inventory, and that Jewell Engineering were out doing the roads now and they'll be giving the township the geometric data and advisory sign recommendations.

?Any changes including speed limits can be looked at later, although that will come with a cost. The unposted speed limits in Ontario are 50 kilometres per hour in highly built-up areas and 80 kilometres per hour in lesser built-up areas. Under the Highway Traffic Act, you're obligated as a driver to drive to the road conditions. That might mean doing 40, 30 or 20 kilometres per hour. But it's an unposted maximum. The onus is on the driver to drive safely when it's unposted,? he says.

Councillor Joe Florent had a concern about the methodology used in the report regarding the description of Major Lake Road, and that it hadn't been corrected yet. Gatley assured him that this was a document that could be changed and said that he could have Jewell Engineering change that methodology.

Dumas said that she thought the concerns had been heard by staff.

?We can leave it at that and there'll be another opportunity when the next report comes forwa concerns hopefully will be considered as well,? she says.

Martin told The Bancroft Times on July 14 that he wasn't sure exactly when the next report would be delivered by Jewell Engineering as Gatley was away on vacation that week.

?But I believe that we are expecting it back in September.