

## Mono's road budget needs \$600,000 more annually

Written By **James Matthews**

Mono has a clearer picture of the current and future needs of its roads inventory.

Council was walked through its 2024 Road Management Plan during its Sept. 10 meeting. The report was written by R.J. Burnside and Associates Ltd.

The management plan identifies all roads that require attention within a 10-year period. It spells out the recommended action for rehabilitation, preventative maintenance, and the timing and financial impact of the best course of action to maintain roads.

The financial analysis indicates that an average annual capital and maintenance budget increase of \$600,000 is required to maintain the overall road network condition at the current level.

Deputy Mayor Fred Nix said that much extra money for roads in the 2024 capital budget would have rendered a 6.4 per cent tax increase. As it is, residents were faced with a six per cent increase this year.

Nix said the suggestion is the town should have had a 12 per cent tax increase had the extra \$600,000 been earmarked for roads as is outlined in the plan.

Currently, the town budgets about \$3.6 million annually towards road capital and maintenance improvements for the entire road network.

"We're looking at a million dollars a year just to take the recommendations of this report," Nix said. "I don't know politically how we can do it. I don't know where the money is going to come from."

Although the report does not recommend converting any gravel roads to asphalt, it has established pre-screening criteria for upgrading gravel roads. This screening tool will be helpful for guiding council and staff on decision-making in the future.

The municipality has about 250 kilometres of gravel, asphalt, and concrete roads in its inventory.

The assessment was based on a rating system developed by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. The system allowed the town to update its existing road inventory, condition indexes, and define the maintenance and capital requirements over a 10-year period.

Henry Centen, the senior transportation engineer at R.J. Burnside, said 68 per cent of the roads are gravel in Mono. The remainder are hardtop roads with a small number of concrete thoroughfares.

Traffic will grow over time, but the road network itself won't have a lot of corresponding growth, he said.

Four per cent of Mono's hardtop roads are considered to be in the poor category. That leaves 96 per cent in the fair or better assessment range.

Gravel roads were assessed according to structural and drainage adequacy and a ride comfort rating.

He said six per cent of the municipality's gravel roads were pegged to be in a poor state of repair.

"The work that is done for the condition rating is done in the spring to get it (the road) at its worst," Centen said. "So you end up with the period before it has theoretically been graded in the spring."

?It should give you an indication of the worst part of the year because after that normal maintenance will take care of those stresses.?

The overall network has a 73 pavement condition index (PCI) rating, he said.

?That puts you in what we call the fair category,? Centen said.

Historically, Public Works has been able to maintain the asphalt and concrete hardtop road network at a satisfactory average of about 73 PCI. Industry standards generally acknowledge that the average hardtop road network should be managed at a PCI of 70 or greater for the asset to reach its full useful life.

?That, of course, is determined by your available budgets that you have for road work,? he said. ?If you can stay in that (70 PCI) category then your level of service is considered to be a reasonable level of service comparatively.?

Mayor John Creelman asked if there's any increase in speeding on a road that is newly paved or an increased volume of vehicles on that road.

?Taking a gravel road and paving it, I've always assumed, creates greater opportunity for speeding and possibly more traffic,? Creelman said.

?If you're paving your roads, you're going to attract more traffic,? Centen said. ?You're going to attract higher speeds on those roads.?