

Capital Projects in Lower Sackville

Every year during budget, Halifax staff produce a district capital project list to be completed for the upcoming construction season. The list for street and sidewalk improvements for Lower Sackville was posted in my recent district newsletter. The publishing of the capital project list generated discussion with the residents, and understandably, there were questions as to why certain streets were being paved or recapped, and not others. To provide clarity on how staff decide which projects take priority, I will provide the following information from our Transportation and Public Works department.

Halifax faces difficult challenges regarding the condition of the pavement (and sidewalk) infrastructure and the associated rising costs for rehabilitation, which have doubled over the last ten years. Like most governments, businesses and families, we have to manage within our budget levels - which ultimately determines the number of streets and sidewalks that can be upgraded each year.

Streets

The Municipality owns and maintains approximately 1760 kilometres of streets and roads. Staff assess and evaluate the condition of streets and roads using a pavement management software which assigns a Surface Distress Index (SDI). This index assists in the process of deciding which streets will be worked on. The range of the SDI rating system is from 0 (worst condition) to 10 (best condition).

1. How does the municipality decide which streets take priority in a given year?

We use a “blended” pavement management strategy. We devote approximately 25% of the budget to reconstruction (streets in the poorest condition), 50% of the budget to streets in fair condition, and 25% to preventative maintenance on streets that are in better condition and can have their life extended for another five to ten years, as a direct result of the work.

2. Why aren't the roads in the worst shape given higher priority?

Maintaining the better streets costs the taxpayer considerably less per year than allowing a street to deteriorate and doing a complete reconstruction. If the entire budget was allocated to addressing only the worst streets, then those in better condition would continue to deteriorate to a point where they too would become considerably more expensive to repair.

Halifax, like most municipalities across North America, has found that preventative maintenance is the key to avoiding the most expensive road work costs.

The total budget for the entire municipality

Sidewalks:

Decisions on new sidewalk locations are based on a set of criteria including proximity to schools, the classification of the street, the ability or inability to use the shoulder area for walking purposes, and whether or not a sidewalk is already located on one side of the street. When looking at upgrading existing sidewalks, four main distress types are evaluated: faulting, cracking, spalling and patching. In terms of upgrading, the highest rated sidewalk will be given priority, but lower rated sidewalks may be considered if the work can be integrated with the upgrade of another infrastructure asset (i.e., pavement).

For a complete list of the 2014 capital projects in District 15, please visit my website at

www.halifax.ca/district15/news.php