



## Regulation is Rx for driveway headaches



Driveways can affect the safety, capacity, structure, and drainage of a roadway—as much on a rural town road as on a busy four-lane. Emergency vehicle access is also a concern. As a result, more and more municipalities are restricting where a driveway goes and how it's built.

"Hilly places like New Glarus have more problems," says J.R. Habeck of the Wisconsin Towns Association. "If someone puts in a driveway that is right over a hilltop, there's not much line of sight there and you're just asking for an accident," he says. He consults with towns interested in passing permit ordinances and offers them sample regulations.

In addition to controlling entrance locations, towns may also address land slope, driveway width, surface material, side slope, and culvert size. Some ordinances require erosion control plans and address potential driveway washouts or other hazards to the town road.

"Mostly towns seem to be administering the permits themselves," says Habeck. "That includes enforcement. You have to name somebody to oversee it. If all you do is pass an ordinance people will ignore it." Permit and inspection fees can help defray some of the costs. Having effective support from the county is also important.

Driveways are a major expense, so some home builders may ask for waivers or changes. "We had some conflicts at first but the last four years now we haven't had any serious problems," says New Glarus Town Chairman John Freitag. "So far our county has supported the township and they will not issue a land use permit for a house until the town has approved and given the driveway permit."

The town enacted its driveway ordinance about eight years ago after a house burned to the ground because fire trucks could not get up its driveway. Just recently the town amended the ordinance to cut construction costs, reducing width requirements from 20 feet to 14 or 16 feet. Required sight lines remain 250 feet in either direction. The town requires both a permit fee and a refundable \$500 deposit to ensure the driveway meets ordinance guidelines.

### Counties face driveway pressures too

In the last three years, three different subdivision developers have paid to rebuild a Waukesha County road section to get a driveway entrance permit, reports Highway Commissioner Rich Bolte. The reason is the county's thorough and detailed access/driveway policy and the Highway Committee's strong commitment to it.

"We don't change the policy, period," says Bolte. Nearly all of the 50 to 100 driveway applicants each year simply follow the requirements, he says, though one or two will choose to change the development or move the access point to a local street or road.

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*Driveway entrances affect highway safety. To meet county highway permit requirements, a developer paid to lower the hilltop on this Waukesha County highway.*

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## PASERWARE update from page 6

In addition, T.I.C.'s computer programming staff is hard at work on a PASERWARE version that runs under the Windows operating system. Testing will be completed in the fall and initial distribution is planned for January 2000. User training sessions are scheduled for February and March.

PASERWARE 2.0 will work with existing data files and offer a number of new features (determined by a user survey). Enhancements include:

- Three five-year budgets, one each for preventive maintenance, restoration, and reconstruction.
- Budget recommendations based on current pavement condition.
- Selection of specific projects and years for simulation.
- Three categories of pavements by traffic load and volumes—"heavy", "medium", and "light". Deterioration, treatments, and costs could be related to those groups.
- Ability to project condition for more than five years to see long term results of alternative budgets and treatment priorities.

Current and prospective PASERWARE users should expect to hear more details by the end of the year.

## R<sub>x</sub> for driveway headaches from page 1

Keeping driveways 500 feet back from an intersection and spacing them at least 600 feet apart is important for safety and to keep traffic moving. The distances are measured before a land parcel is subdivided. "We get people who want to carve off a small piece of land and put in another driveway," says Bolte. "We tell them, no. Use what you've got or give up one of them."

In some situations, they will make an exception. "We try to work with the community," Bolte says. "If most of the land is already developed and a driveway pattern is

established, it would be arbitrary not to permit an access point. One more driveway will not change the character of the area."

Permit fees range from \$75 for a single family driveway without a culvert to \$330 for each subdivision or commercial drive. Fees are intended to recover the costs of plan review and on-site inspection.

## Safety, capacity, expansion are state concerns

Higher speeds and larger traffic volumes make driveway control even more critical on state trunk highways. "Our goal is to minimize the number of access points by consolidating driveways or re-directing them to local streets or roads," says Norm DeVries, planning engineer at WisDOT District 1. He can point to examples where the policy has succeeded including Hwy 12 from Middleton to Sauk City, and north of Baraboo.

Under a section of the Highway Administrative Code revised in February 1999, WisDOT is required to review all land divisions that could affect a state highway. In addition to access they consider drainage and setbacks. Setbacks may require developers to keep any permanent structure or signs out of the area directly abutting the road.

"In some locations we're trying to preserve the land in the corridor in case we have to expand the highway to four lanes," says DeVries. "When we go in there buying land for the expansion we won't have to buy houses, businesses, et cetera." WisDOT also sometimes buys development rights for the same reason. More counties are requiring proof of access before a parcel is sold, even on property with an existing driveway, he notes.

Compliance with access controls is good, according to DeVries. "We work things out with the property owner. It's crucial to have a good process," he says.

*For copies of sample town driveway ordinances contact J.R. Habeck, Wisconsin Towns Association, 715/526-3157. Use the form below to get copies of county ordinances from the T.I.C.*

## Reader Response

If you have a comment on a **Crossroads** story, a question about roadways or equipment, an item for the *Idea Exchange*, a request for workshop information or resources, or a name for our mailing list, fill in this form and mail *in an envelope* to:

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