

Idea Exchange

Flashing stop/slow paddle gains fans

Patrolmen and flaggers in Chippewa County have taken a real shine to the new stop/slow paddles with flashing lights, according to Highway Commissioner Bruce Stelzner.

"They feel that motorists are paying more attention to the signs and that's making the work zone safer for them," Stelzner says. "They're a great tool."

The paddles, which were developed under a FHWA program called SHRP (Strategic Highway Research Program) are still being evaluated according to WisDOT's Bob Fasick. The four models under consideration range in cost from \$125 to \$450. They are available commercially from several manufacturers.

For more information on the paddles and their evaluation contact WisDOT Highway Operations Engineer Bob Fasick, P.O. Box 7986, Madison, WI 53707-7986, phone: 608/266-3438, e-mail: fasicr@mail.state.wi.us.

Double the blades and halve the time

Mounting a second blade at the back of a grader has made shouldering operations safer and more efficient, says Walworth County's Highway Commissioner Ben Coopman.

"It's faster and it's safer. You don't have to put a grader on the pavement in live traffic," Coopman says.

The second blade, which is a small moldboard with a standard cutting edge, mounts at the back using the same controls and hydraulic hoses as the benching wing blade. A small "bogy" wheel supports the blade allowing it to be raised or lowered to match the slope of the shoulder.



Trailing a second blade eases shoulder repairs

"One operator went around our whole 200 mile system this year, and went back in the fall to hit some bad spots," says Coopman. "Usually two graders only do about 150 miles."

For more information, contact Kray Brown, Patrol Superintendent, or Shop Foreman Larry Hensel at the Walworth County Highway Department, 414/741-3114.

Writing better bid documents

Ensuring high quality work and reasonable cost for road projects is a challenge. Getting competitive bids, as required on most road projects, can add to the challenge, especially if bidders have different understandings of the project.

The bid documents you prepare are your primary way of communicating with contractors. These written materials describe the nature of the project so that all bidders have the same understanding and can offer fair and competitive prices. To help local officials with preparing these documents, the T.I.C. has developed some guidelines and sample bid documents.

Initial decisions A checklist for highway and street owners in sample documents prepared by the T.I.C. reminds you of the critical decisions you must make. Talking with contractors and other knowledgeable experts can help you make these initial project decisions. You decide on the **type** and **quality** of the work. It's usually a good idea to let the contractor decide **how** to do the work.

Timing The warm summer months are the best time to complete asphalt paving and sealcoating. The owner needs to ask for bids early enough in the spring or winter to let the contractor finish the project in favorable weather.

Qualification You must assure that the contractor can do quality work on your project. It may be easiest just to require that all bidders be pre-qualified by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. If this excludes qualified local contractors, however, you must check their qualifications yourself. Check their references, determine that they have the equipment needed for the job, and find out how much experience the work force has.

Preparation work On paving and sealcoat projects there can be confusion over who is responsible for pavement repairs and exactly what will be done before the overlaying or

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Crossroads

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