Crossroads

PASERWARE data convinces finance committee

Washburn County in far northwestern Wisconsin faces some highway challenges. Heavy log and gravel trucks pound the roads, many of which are old, narrow, and surfaced with cold mix. When Mark Servi took over as highway commissioner 18 months ago, he invested in an accurate road condition inventory.

Using PASERWARE, the T.I.C.'s pavement surface rating and evaluation computer software, he found that more than half the county's 200 miles of highway rated 5 or worse on the 10-point scale.

"Using the rating system, we showed the highway committee what kind of shape the roads were in. It was a real eye-opener for them," says Servi. "When we showed the finance committee the condition of the system, they agreed to become more aggressive on our road repairs."

Servi developed a five-year plan with PASERWARE's help. In addition to 4-6

Roads like this rate 5 on PASER's 10-point scale: good structure but needing sealcoat or overlay.

miles of reconstruction and 5-10 miles of resurfacing a year, the county plans to lay 4000-5000 tons of cold mix wedging. The maintenance will help keep the older roads serviceable until the county can afford a major upgrade.

"PASERWARE is a good tool," says Servi. "I would strongly advise anyone who has a road system to use it. It gives you a real good snapshot of what you

have right now. And, if you put in good data, the computer system pretty much does the planning and prioritizing for you." Servi and the Highway Committee applied their judgement and adjusted the computer plans to account for especially bad road geometrics, faster development growth, and heavier truck traffic.

"In my mind the program was real easy to work with," says Servi. "Doing the inventory is a little time consuming, but the end result was definitely worth the time we put into it."

What are PASER and PASERWARE, and how can they help?

The T.I.C. developed and supports both a way to rate roads called PASER and a computer program called PASERWARE. Many Wisconsin towns, villages, cities and counties now use these two tools to help them evaluate and manage their roadway systems. The new state requirement that local governments rate their roads has raised several questions. Here are some answers:

PASERWARE aids planning, accounting

"We're going into budget season soon, so I'm just sitting down to do some 'what ifs?' in PASERWARE," says Beloit City Engineer Mike Flesch. Their annual streets budget stays fairly static, so the computer inventory of surface conditions and costs is a big help in stretching maintenance dollars.

The city, which started using PASERWARE 10 years ago, keeps it a sharp tool by updating cost data from recent bids and adding new subdivision streets each year. Every two years engineering staff go out and do a new physical surface rating.

Using PASERWARE's flexible planning capability, Flesch reviews and refines the

city's five year plan every year. "We do run a number of scenarios," says Flesch. "It makes it easier to visualize and project the work that's going on."

The computer program also makes it easy to check on plans when a citizen calls in, Flesch says. "We can say that we have a five-year plan and it's not in the schedule right now, but when we re-rate the section it may move up in priority."

Flesch is also looking ahead to using data from PASERWARE next year to help Beloit meet new federal accounting standards. The new rules require municipalities to report the value of their infrastructures, including streets and highways.

Idea Exchange

Trailer speeds emergency road closings

Floods and washouts, crashes, smoke from grass fires, emergency response equipment—any number of situations make it necessary to close a road in a hurry. Is your agency ready? You need the right traffic signs, sign supports, warning lights and barricades, and you need to have enough of them. *MUTCD* guidelines for work zone signs have changed recently, so it's a good idea to check whether your signs qualify.

Does the person on call know where the necessary items are? How long will it take them to get the equipment together? One county in South Dakota has set up an emergency trailer. It holds 11 Type III barricades and base supports and can be quickly hooked to a pickup truck and towed to an emergency site. The trailer, which was built in the county's shop, is licensed and has lights so it can legally be towed at night. Also, be sure to routinely check all emergency equipment. Signs get damaged, trailer tires may go flat, batteries go dead, and sandbags rot when you are not looking.

Who is on call for night, weekend and holiday incidents? Do local law enforcement offices know how to reach him or her? The on-call person should be qualified to do road and street closure. This means they need at least a basic knowledge of the *MUTCD's* recommendations for proper traffic control set ups.

Most Wisconsin road agencies are pretty well organized for snow emergencies. Now how about the other kinds? It's worth some serious thought.

Adapted from an article in **The Connection,** *newsletter of the South Dakota LTAP agency.*

Van measures sign reflectivity

Having efficient, accurate ways to measure sign reflectivity has become more urgent with FHWA proposing minimum values. The agency has developed a mobile unit that can measure sign reflectivity at normal highway speeds. This would make it possible to measure several hundred signs in a single day.

WisDOT will demonstrate the retroreflectivity van on June 12-16 at four state locations. Anyone responsible for sign maintenance and management is welcome.
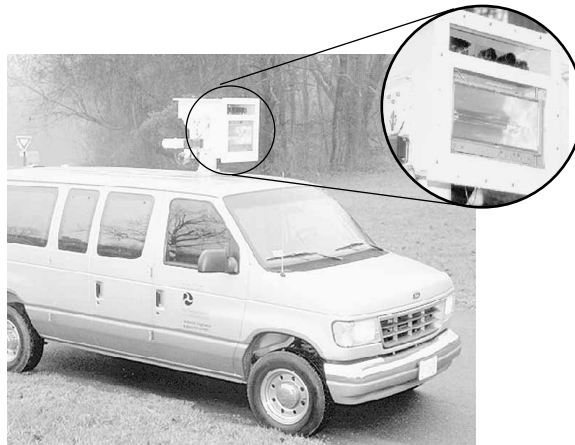
June 12 & 13, LaCrosse
Wisconsin County Highway Association Conference

June 14, Eau Claire
WisDOT District 6

June 15, Green Bay
WisDOT District 3

June 16, Madison
WisDOT Highway Operations Sign Distribution Center

For more information, contact Matt Rauch Bureau of Highway Operations 608/266-0150

PASER pavement surface rating system. With a little training, anyone can use it to rate the condition of streets and roads. The T.I.C. has PASER manuals with pictures and brief text that explain how to rate asphalt, concrete, and gravel roads. T.I.C. workshops also teach how to use it. **It is state approved**.

Local road condition ratings must be reported to WisDOT by December 15, 2001. You have time to rate your roads using any state-approved condition rating system. DOT will explain how to submit condition ratings nearer the due date.

PASERWARE is a computer program to manage pavements. Local officials can use the program to keep an inventory of local roads. It will record physical characteristics like length and width, along with PASER condition ratings, and maintenance and repair actions. An initial inventory of your roads comes from the state's database of local roads. The program makes planning for road maintenance easier. The user can look at different maintenance strategies and budgets and see how they affect future road conditions. Printouts of graphs and tables help explain the alternatives to elected officials and citizens.

New versions of PASERWARE. *1.1*, now available, updates the MS-DOS version for those whose computers don't run Windows. *2.0* is a Windows-based version written in Access 2000.

PASERWARE and ROADWARE are the same. The name was changed to PASER-WARE to avoid confusion with a Canadian business. Call the T.I.C. for information on compatibility between older ROADWARE versions and PASERWARE 2.0

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