

Municipal Asset Management Planning 2.0 - A New Framework For Policy And Program Design In Ontario

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Abstract : Ontario, Canada's largest province, is in the midst of an interesting experiment in mandated asset management planning for local governments. At the beginning of 2021, Ontario's 444 municipalities were responsible for the management of 302,864 lane kilometers of roads that have a replacement cost of \$97.545 billion CDN. Roadways are by far the most complex, expensive, and extensive assets that a municipality is responsible for overseeing. Since adopting Ontario Regulation 588/47: Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure in 2017, the provincial government has established prescriptions for local road authorities regarding asset category and levels of service being provided. This provincial regulation further stipulates that asset data such as extent, condition, and life cycle costing are to be captured in manner compliant with qualitative descriptions and technical metrics. The Ontario Good Roads Association undertook an exercise to aggregate the road-related data contained within the 444 asset management plans that municipalities have filed with the provincial government. This analysis concluded that collectively Ontario municipal roadways have a \$34.7 billion CDN in deferred maintenance. The ill-state of repair of Ontario municipal roads has lasting implications for province's economic competitiveness and has garnered considerable political attention. Municipal efforts to address the maintenance backlog are stymied by the extremely limited fiscal parameters municipalities must operate within in Ontario. Further exacerbating the program are provincially designed programs that are ineffective, administratively burdensome, and not necessarily aligned with local priorities or strategies. This paper addresses how municipal asset management plans - and more specifically, the data contained in these plans - can be used to design innovative policy frameworks, flexible funding programs, and new levels of service that respond to these funding challenges, as well as emerging issues such as local economic development and climate change. To fully unlock the potential that Ontario Regulation 588/17 has imposed will require a resolute commitment to data standardization and horizontal collaboration between municipalities within regions.

Keywords : transportation, municipal asset management, subnational policy design, subnational funding program design

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