

Project 2015

Onondaga County

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION: INTERNAL SCAN

- A. The demographic trend that is applicable to the Department of Transportation is the increase in the number of residents sixty years of age and older. As people age, they may have increasing visual problems. There are three main areas that concern this Department:
- **Traffic Control Signals:** These devices control the flow of traffic at intersections. In the past, we used incandescent bulbs for most of our signals. By law, these had to be changed twice per year. We have eighty-eight intersections with traffic signals, each with many bulbs. This constant changing of bulbs has become very expensive. Technology has allowed us to install LED bulbs in these lights. These bulbs are considerably brighter than the incandescent, require changing much less frequently and use ninety percent less electricity to run. At the present time, our traffic control signals are using the latest upgrades to increase visibility. We will be in contact with other transportation departments and manufacturers to keep current with technological changes. Those involved in completing our internal scan are Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Civil Engineer III and Traffic Signal Repair Supervisor.
 - **Road Signs:** The Department of Transportation has approximately 45,000 road signs on 800 miles of County highways. These include among others, stop signs, curve indicators, road name signs, hazard warning signs, etc. We will consider changing our current standards for signs. We will consider larger signs with larger lettering and greater reflectivity. The large number of signs that we have and the cost to replace them will take approximately eight to ten years. We will contact other transportation departments and manufacturers to determine the nature and cost of upgraded materials. Those involved in completing our internal scan are Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Civil Engineer III and Traffic Signal Repair Supervisor.
 - **The Department of Transportation applies approximately 2,400 miles of road striping during each construction season. This striping has several purposes. First, it delineates the center of the road. Second, it informs drivers where passing can and cannot be done safely. Third, they inform the driver of the location of the right edge of the road. The striping is usually worn away, or at the least experiences a diminished reflectivity after a year. Much of this diminishment is directly the result of the Department's snow and ice removal programs. The act of plowing with steel blades, the chemical interaction of the road salt and the erosive properties of sand all reduce the effectiveness of the road striping. We will contact other transportation departments and manufacturers to determine alternatives to the current striping paint. We hope to achieve a longer lifetime and greater reflectivity while maintaining a nature friendly operation. We will perform a feasibility study to determine the cost effectiveness of an alternative program. If funding is made available, this program could be accomplished in several years. Those involved in completing our internal scan are Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Civil Engineer III and Traffic Signal Repair Supervisor.**

- B. Our customers include anyone who drives on, is transported upon or in any way uses the County highway system. If the statistical analysis is accurate, that portion of the population over the age of sixty will increase by fifteen thousand individuals by the year 2015. As a Department, we will attempt to increase the visibility of our traffic control signals, road signs and road striping.
- C. The major mandate of the Department of Transportation is to keep the County highway system safe for its customers. Other than focusing on increasing the visibility of those items described in B above, we do not foresee a change in policies.
- D. We do not foresee any new or expanding areas of responsibility as the Department is currently structured.
- E. If the current trend toward decreasing funding continues, we will need to determine which services can be eliminated or reduced while continuing to meet our mandate.

PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS

The areas listed in BRIEF PART I are those that are most important to this Department. In priority order, they are traffic signals, road signs and road striping. The management issue with which we will have to deal is how to obtain funding for these issues.

ACTIONS AND RESULTS

In the next five years, this Department could determine the cost of the programs discussed earlier. The cost and benefit of these programs will have to be measured against the many other programs with which the Department is involved. Decisions will have to be made. It would then be necessary to enter into discussions with the Executive Department and the Legislature to resolve the question of funding these programs.

Following through with the action steps outlined within the internal scan will yield significant results. The County of Onondaga, County residents and anyone using the County highway system will be the beneficiaries. When all of the traffic signals in our system have been converted to LED bulbs, they will be brighter and easier to see. Drivers with eye impairments will be most effected. Additionally, we should realize a significant saving in electrical costs as a result of the conversion.

Similarly, when the approximately 45,000 road signs in our system have been changed to a larger size with larger lettering and greater reflectivity, all drivers will be better able to understand their meaning. Those with impaired vision will gain the most.

Road striping is the third item we will be addressing. With changes in technology, these road markings will be brighter and easier to see. This will make driving safer. Technological advances are expected to yield a longer lasting road stripe. Currently, paint is applied once or more per year. If new materials allow the stripes to last longer, savings will be realized in both personnel and equipment. The cost of the new materials will have to be factored in to determine overall savings.

The first, and most significant, benchmark should be a reduction in motor vehicle accidents. With traffic signals, road signs and road stripes all being easier to see and to understand the number of traffic accidents is expected to be reduced. Secondly, there should be a decrease in the amount of electricity used to power traffic signals with a corresponding decrease in cost. There should also be a decrease in the cost of bulb replacement due to the longer life of LED bulbs.

The Department of Transportation is committed to making our roads ever safer for the driving public. The action steps outlined in Project 2015 will make our roads safer and bring the Department closer to realizing its' commitment.