

King's roads need attention, report reveals

By Mark PavilonsEditor

While King Township has worked hard maintaining its huge road network, some local roads are in desperate need of attention. Staff presented its 10-Year Paving Strategy recently, noting much more funding is needed to address the shortfalls. The document, passed in 2020, calls for a review every two years and council decided a new Gravel Road Conversion Program needed to be created to consider the unique nature and needs of King's gravel roads. Currently, King has roughly 60 kilometres of gravel roads, and 270 asphalt roads. The Road Needs Study was completed by consultants R.J. Burnside and Associates in 2022, which used the most recent traffic data, road usage information and visual inspection to determine and prioritize the list of roads in King that need attention. The study showed that in order to address the entire road network, King needs roughly \$26.5 million. Another \$9.7 million is needed to upgrade the remaining gravel roads. The study recommended that King set aside an annual reserve fund to include routine and preventive maintenance of hardtop roads. To maintain the roads at a higher level of service, it was recommended that King needs to spend \$4.2 million annually. Currently, the Township sets aside only \$1.5 million each year for road improvements. It doesn't have a separate budget for routine and preventive maintenance. In King's analysis, it was pointed out that 66% of the roads are in good condition, and 34% need some sort of maintenance. Staff noted that 14 gravel roads meet the criteria for conversion to hardtop and King has allocated \$800,000 per year. However, as the consultants pointed out, \$9.5 million is needed to cover it all. The Asset Management Plan advises spending \$3.7 million for maintenance and \$4.2 million each year for the next five years. King has 22 'failed roads' that require immediate attention, to the tune of \$5 million. Staff will assess the need annually and establish minimum service standards. This will likely carry a need for increased spending. Staff noted they will come up with a plan as King enters its 2024 budget deliberations, and present various options to council. Councillor Jennifer Anstey said King has to lobby the Province for all available funding and grants to help out in this area. Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted King has accelerated its road program in the last few years, and they have been pressuring the MPPs for more funding. This plan, he said, sets out a clear priority and an infusion of more dollars. CAO Daniel Kostopoulos noted staff will find the best value to meet the needs.