COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - (WORKING SESSION) - NOVEMBER 9, 2004

THE ROAD AUTHORITY AND PRODUCTS MANAGEMENT

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works recommends:

1. That this report and presentation by the Ontario Good Roads Association (including material handouts) be received as information;

2. That the City of Vaughan continues to participate in "The Road Authority" project and support the Ontario Good Roads Association in its efforts to provide member services that benefit Ontario's municipalities, and;

3. That Council endorse the Engineering and Public Works Department's partnership with the Ontario Good Roads Association to develop and maintain an on-line database and work flow for the City of Vaughan's Approved Products Listing for road, watermain, sewer, lighting and traffic signal related products.

Purpose

To give Council an understanding of the history behind The Road Authority and advise Council of our partnership with the Ontario Good Roads Association to improve efficiencies in reviewing and approving road, watermain, sewer, lighting and traffic signal related products for use in the City of Vaughan.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) represents the transportation and public works interests of over 400 Ontario municipalities through advocacy, member services and education and training programs. The OGRA works closely with the Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) and others to ensure partnership opportunities are realized.

In 1998, the OGRA launched a "member service" called The Road Authority (TRA) to enable its municipal members, of which the City of Vaughan is one, to utilize a single database of manufacturers, suppliers and product information to satisfy the requirements of road construction related contracts. This service evolved from the information product known as the Designated Sources of Material (DSM) which was supported and maintained by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and used by Ontario municipalities. The support for the Designated Sources of Material from a municipal perspective ended in 1996 as a result of the restructuring of Provincial business practices, programs and subsidy.

The Road Authority is delivered as a member service by OGRA in Ontario and is an Internet-based information resource that provides a mechanism for infrastructure owners, consultants, contractors and product suppliers to collaborate and share information. The Road Authority provides users with information on products, services and technical solutions available for use in the public works sector and remains a key membership service to Ontario municipalities. The May 1997 issue of Municipal Routes, the official newsletter of OGRA, quoted then President Denis Merrall saying, "This service will, for the first time, electronically link our members to their marketplace. It gives value-added service to our members and has vast potential for the public works community at large."

The Road Authority now operates as a public and private partnership and is making its technology freely available to many jurisdictions. The technology allows organizations to manage

information effectively and distribute it across the corporation (as well as agents) through a simple Internet Browser.

Since its official launch, The Road Authority database has continued to expand in size, dramatically increasing its value as a comprehensive information resource tool. The objective of The Road Authority is to maintain an information portal for the public works sector by providing an electronic gateway that allows users to:

- source products, services and technical solutions
- gather public works related information
- access expertise from participating members including the Ontario Provincial Standards and other infrastructure owners
- review current standards
- participate in discussion forums
- submit products for review and classification
- promote collaboration amongst infrastructure owners

The Road Authority was developed as a web-based system with no requirement for a municipality to install software or update systems, as is typical of most software system implementations. The system requires that the user has access to the Internet. Ontario municipalities that are members of OGRA request access to the system through a Municipal Private Interface (MPI), essentially a private doorway to the information that is specific to the municipality in question. The Municipal Private Interface allows for the municipality to manage information and to manipulate its products and services lists and data relevant to its requirements for business. The Road Authority and the Municipal Private Interface is a free service to member municipalities that is supported by a small fee charged to product manufacturers and suppliers who in return receive direct exposure to their market place.

The system also provides a tracking mechanism to manage product approvals and the work flow related to product information management. These key features are critical in a fast-paced municipal environment where information is changing frequently.

Infrastructure owners such as provincial ministries, municipalities and regulatory agencies can use this system to create and manage their own source lists for products and services. Product approvals (pre-qualification or classification), compliance with standards, certification for certain services are all integrated into one management system, simplifying the process for both owners and suppliers.

As a result, The Road Authority has grown to become the "master file" of information on products, services, standards and technical solutions in Ontario. As the need for municipalities to share experience and information grows, The Road Authority has become a key mechanism to foster this collaboration.

The City of Vaughan has implemented the Municipal Private Interface technology through the Road Authority's website and is one of several municipalities utilizing the system to better manage product information. As it stands today, the OGRA considers the City of Vaughan a leader amongst all municipalities for its implementation and partnership with The Road Authority.

Previous and typical practices for Staff to review new product submissions (typically for pipes, light standards, manholes, etc.) from manufacturers and suppliers involved a long and drawn out process conducted on an ad-hoc basis. Many Staff members would research a number of products with very little background information nor resources available to them. This resulted in a duplication of research and lengthy time devoted to it. Given the nature of our business, often committing the proper amount of time to research and deliberation was not achievable, resulting in a fragmented work flow and unsuccessful business process.

Using the Municipal Private Interface, a Manufacturer would electronically submit their application to have a product reviewed and considered for approval in the City of Vaughan. Key Staff members form a virtual committee and have access to the system, instantly making available all research and testing information related to any product. Staff members can then process their comments related to an application for approval securely, on line and as a committee, ultimately decide whether a product is acceptable for use. The Manufacturers, Suppliers and their products are listed on the relevant Vaughan Approved Product Listing of which can then be published to a hard-copy manual or ideally, to the Internet (through The Road Authority website and/or the City of Vaughan website). This system allows Staff Members to conduct efficient research and make better informed decisions through this public and private partnership.

Some of the major benefits that Vaughan receives by participating in this project are:

- Instant access to current and maintained manufacturer and supplier information;
- Instant access to current and maintained product research and testing information;
- Complete access to work flow technology;
- Maintain control over product and supplier approvals as required;
- Access a single authoritative database of information on products, services and standards;
- Direct access to other product evaluations from the Ontario Provincial Standards Committee and other municipalities;
- Sharing and collaboration is key to municipal success;
- The costs related to using the system are minimal.

This system is completely scalable and can be used by other City Departments such as Purchasing, Urban Design and Parks to manage their similar "like" business needs.

ASi Technologies Inc. provides information technology services to a variety of clients in Ontario. With a technical staff of 16, ASi delivers services through its Workbench technology and manages a number of public-private partnerships with the Province and the OGRA. ASi is the technology service provider for The Road Authority for OGRA and is funded from the proceeds of the fee paid by the product manufacturers and supplier members of The Road Authority.

Staff are embracing this opportunity and demonstrating how the City of Vaughan can be a leader in public-private partnerships and successfully use the Municipal Private Interface for our Products Management business needs across the Corporation.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

Through this partnership and endeavor, staff are providing effective and efficient delivery of service, seeking out and encouraging Public and Private partnerships, strengthening Corporate Image and Identity and embrace technology to realize better work flow and efficiencies.

Conclusion

That Council endorse the Engineering and Public Works Department's partnership with the OGRA to develop and maintain an on-line database and work flow for the City's Approved Products Listing for road, watermain, sewer, lighting and traffic signal related products.

Attachments

None.

<u>Report prepared by:</u>

Denny S. Boskovski, Infrastructure Management Systems Supervisor, Ext. 3105

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Robinson, P. Eng.,   Gary P. Carroll, P. Eng.,
Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works   Director of Engineering Services

DSB:mc