

Public Works Directors Meeting
November 18th, 2009 Minutes
9:00 a.m

Members present: Erik Street, Chair (Yarmouth); Shawn Bennett (Pownal); Doug Fortier (Windham); Roger Mosley (Standish); Dan Nowell (Sebago); Kevin Noyes (Portland); Jim Plummer (Freeport); Mike Shaw (Scarborough)

Guests & staff: John Cannell (MaineDOT); Tim Cusack (MaineDOT); Eben Marsh (GPCOG); Lynne Powers (GPCOG)

- 1) **Call to order:** Erik Street, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. Erik welcomed those present and introductions were made.
- 2) **Acceptance of minutes from October 14, 2009.** *Dan Nowell made a motion for approval of the October 14, 2009 minutes, seconded by Roger Mosley. All were in favor.*
- 3) **Presentation from John Cannell & Tim Cusack, MaineDOT.**
John Cannell and Tim Cusack from MaineDOT attended the meeting in an effort to keep the line of communication open between MaineDOT and municipal public works departments.

John distributed the winter snow and ice book, which provides area supervisors and their contact information, safety guidelines, etc. He can provide electronic copies as well. He and Tim discussed some of the changes that MaineDOT has seen recently. The department had a great deal of problems with its European spreaders and shipped them to Bangor, where they have had better luck. When asked, Tim said that the Schmidt spreaders were demanding on the operating system and required a lot of pressure, and that workers struggled to get the spreaders running correctly.

Erik asked about changes in plowing and about priorities for routes. Tim said that MaineDOT has recently tried to redefine its priorities a little bit when it comes to salt allotments. The allotment for Priority 3 routes used to be 13 tons per lane mile, and they have now dropped roads designated as Priority 3's down to 10 tons of salt per lane mile. Priority 1 routes went up to 14 tons per lane mile. There was also a change in subsections of Priority 1's. Priority 1 Plus (routes with traffic of over 21,000) went to 20 tons per lane mile, and Priority 1 Plus Plus (traffic count over 30,000, which is primarily from the toll booth in Scarborough to Falmouth) went to 22 tons per lane mile. MaineDOT last year tried 18 tons of salt per lane mile on the stretch between Portland and Brunswick but that wasn't enough salt, so they've readjusted. They have extended plow routes to 30-35 miles per truck.

John pointed out that these revisions to the salt chart aren't necessarily that MaineDOT changed what it was doing; it's more that they changed the chart to reflect what they were already doing. The targets will be reevaluated if this winter is rough. There was some talk of Priority 3 roads potentially being forgotten or left behind, but John pointed out that MaineDOT has never abandoned routes for as long as he has been there.

There was a brief discussion of measures taken due to the emergence of the H1N1 virus. John said that illness among drivers is currently more of a concern than trucks breaking down. MaineDOT has had serious discussions regarding contingencies if the Scarborough or Freeport camps became inundated with swine flu. MaineDOT has no shots and no influence in order to get drivers the shots; most drivers have not even been able to get the regular flu shot yet this year. The majority of their drivers are able-bodied adults without underlying health concerns so they aren't in the focus groups that are being vaccinated now. MaineDOT's policy is to monitor family situations and keep people

out of work if they're sick. They're dealing as best as they can with signage, awareness, and hand sanitizers. Mike pointed out that with the way that things are currently running, the plows will probably be put away for the spring before drivers get vaccinated; John acknowledged the point and said that MaineDOT's best bet is prevention, education, and monitoring people.

John and Tim took some questions on plowing for particular routes. John made the point that almost every road is a Priority 1 or 2, and that there are few Priority 3's; 94 lane miles of them. The night crew works out of Yarmouth on an 11 p.m. – 7:30 a.m. shift, two guys on two trucks. The Yarmouth night crew also does interstate work all year round, as MaineDOT does everything possible at night in terms of construction to avoid the complaints and trucks getting hit. Erik asked if the trucks run on biodiesel yet; the answer was that despite heavy discussions on the subject, biodiesel fuel hasn't been instituted yet.

There was a discussion on salt and salt brine. Tim said that de-icing roads is very temperature sensitive. Last year wasn't good as it was too cold; the temperature needs to be 20 degrees and rising in order for the roads to be sprayed. MaineDOT tries to spray within six to eight hours of the storm starting. De-icing has its places and times; it's not as effective as had been hoped. It gives them about an hour of time to get out on the roads, as the initial 45 minutes will wet it up. MaineDOT still pre-wets everything that is sprayed. The modified hoppers that they are currently using carry more liquids. At this time of year, they are using salt brine, trying to blend it with ice-be-gone in a solution that is 70% salt brine. MaineDOT saw good luck with the combination in Topsham last year and are now rolling it out into a wider area. Wherever there are two tanks, one will be the blend and one will be salt brine. At tank locations inland, where there is only one tank, MaineDOT is sticking with straight ice-be-gone. Yarmouth has both the blend and the salt brine; it has no calcium left and uses ice-be-gone magnesium. Shawn said that Pownal switched to magnesium last year and didn't note any difference from calcium. The price is cheaper, and if the weather is warmer, they're using salt brine to pre-wet the roads.

In Alfred, the trucks are on the Sirius system, which downloads information straight to a computer when the truck drives past the garage window. MaineDOT has tried Data Shack and Compu-Spread and has been the most satisfied with Sirius; the new trucks are coming equipped with it. There is no more going out with a handheld box to try to download compu-spreads from trucks; Sirius is instantaneous and does it automatically. Using the road temperature sensor provided by Sirius saves material, as it senses temperatures and automatically adjusts output. It's also a possibility to do live GPS, or to take an option that sends information on the truck at fixed intervals, which is less expensive than live GPS. The gate height sensor featured by Sirius will save communities money on salt, as the sensor automatically adjusts the gate. There was a lot of frustration with Compu-Serve and its proprietary parts, while many of the parts for Sirius are off-the-shelf. There was a general consensus that Sirius is the way to go. Every single truck had Compu-Spread, John said, and now MaineDOT is going through the process of converting them to Sirius.

There was a brief discussion of the UMaine salt report. The meeting didn't involve any conservation groups and by all accounts went well, though there was not much new information to be had. A general discussion on road salt followed. The GPCOG salt vendor recently changed from ISCO to Eastern Salt. Eben negotiated a \$1/ton discount during the transition. Communities that have already started receiving salt and that have been charged the old price will be reimbursed for the value of the discount. Rather than carrying that cost until the end of the season, communities will receive that reimbursement by January 1. By mid-December, any deliveries should be charged at the discounted price. There was some concern over the moisture content, as several loads received by Yarmouth had

2% and 3% moisture levels, but all loads since then have been fine; others spoke up to say that they were generally pleased with Eastern so far.

Returning to a discussion of MaineDOT, John and Tim established that it is against MaineDOT policy to cast snow over a bridge while plowing, and that drivers doing so will not be tolerated. They also briefly discussed MaineDOT's budget, which is not in a good situation. Stimulus funds pumped in a good deal of money and projects to work on, but now that it's gone, the department is going from a huge amount of work to very little. John believed that the bond issue that recently passed was already factored into the budget and that there aren't any new projects coming out of it, just the continuation of old ones.

4) Roundtable Discussion – Discussion on Winter Operations

See above.

5) Other Business

Shawn brought up the fact that the legislature recently went to the PUC and wanted them to do a study to see if there were ways to improve dig safe laws and underground facility protection laws. He mentioned it as an opportunity for others to put a word in as municipalities. They are looking for comments by December 4.

Melissa Innes, a representative for Yarmouth, is working on a bill that is an act to provide leadership, tax fairness, and responsible recycling for consumer products. The bill would direct the state to systematically evaluate which products are viable. Erik will keep the group posted.

Eben reminded the group of the Christmas tree recycling program and that he wanted to have the public works directors fill in an evaluation form for cooperative services/joint purchasing, in order to maximize the benefits that the program can provide.

There has been some discussion on the August 2010 APWA national convention in Boston, with the possibility of reserving a bus to ride down. Shawn reported that in attending board meetings, people talked about creating a subcommittee to raise public awareness of public works. Nomination requests for the public works leader of the year will come out soon.

6) Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for December 9.

7) Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.