

Somerset County – Public Works

Roads & Waterways Division Strategic Plan

Background

The Somerset County Department of Public Works consists of three divisions: Roads & Waterways Division, Solid Waste & Drainage Division and General Services Division.

The Roads & Waterways Division is responsible for maintaining 351 miles of roads, 24 bridges, 13 boat ramps, 11 docks, 6 marinas and 3 dredge material placement (DMP) sites. Its fleet consists of 42 tagged vehicles, 33 pieces of specialty equipment and 31 implements. The division oversees the county's only fuel depot and maintains the fleet of most county departments. The normal workforce is approximately 35 employees, but has been scaled back to 23 due to severe budget cuts. The Roads & Waterways Complex which is located on Sign Post Road in Westover includes an administrative office, shop, equipment shed, dry storage shed, stockpile areas and fuel depot. There is also a borrow pit on Cedar Drive in Eden and a heliport in Ewell.

Similar strategic plans are in place to guide the Department's other two Divisions.

Mission

The Somerset County Department of Public Works is committed to enhancing the quality of life of our citizens by striving to plan, construct and maintain the county's public works infrastructure.

The Roads & Waterways Division is determined to provide a safe and efficient transportation network to promote economic development while protecting Somerset County's beautiful and unique environment.

Functions

The functions of the Roads & Waterways Division are numerous and vary greatly. Most are performed in-house, some are contracted out and a few performed by inmates. Those associated with safety are emphasized to protect our staff, inmates, interns, contractual employees and general public. These functions are as follows:

In-house:

- Emergency Response
- Accounting
- Administration
- Pothole Repair
- Storm Drain Maintenance
- Driveway Culvert Installation
- Signage
- Herbicide Spraying
- Fueling
- Traffic Control
- Inspection
- Inventory Control
- Snow Removal and Deicing

- Limbing
- Ditching
- Mowing
- Sweeping
- Grading

Partially Contracted:

- Legal Services
- Engineering
- Surveying
- Right-of-way Acquisition
- Striping
- Bridge Maintenance
- Guardrail Maintenance
- Fleet Maintenance
- Resurfacing
- Porta-potty Service
- Marine Maintenance

Inmate Assisted:

- Litter Control
- Grass Trimming

Infrastructure

The Roads & Waterways Infrastructure is distributed throughout the county and forms the backbone of the transportation network. Some are obvious such as bridges and marinas, while others are more subdued such as ditches and tidal gates. There's even infrastructure underground including inlets and pipes. Each plays an important role to the county's transportation network. The division's current infrastructure is as follows:

Type	Quantity
Roads	351 (mi.)
Bridges	24
Railroad Crossings	16
Tidal Gates	10
Boat Ramps	13
Docks	11
Marinas	6
Dredge Material Placement Sites	3
Buildings	4
Fueling Depot	1
Heliport	1
Borrow Pits	1
Guardrails	14,045 (ft.)
Inlets	Unk.
Pipes	Unk. (ft.)
Signs	1425
Ditches	Unk. (ft.)

Assets

The property, improvements, inventory and fleet managed by the Roads & Waterways Division has a considerable value. The properties and their improvements were assessed by the state's Department of Assessments and Taxation. The value of the roads infrastructure was based upon engineering cost estimates. The value of the division's inventory and fleet was based upon Blue Book values where possible and best judgment for the remainder. The values of these assets are found below:

Asset	Value
Roads & Waterways Complex	310,600
Eden Borrow Pit	547,500
Smith Island Heliport	10,000
Websters Cove Marina	1,416,700
Dames Quarters Dock & Boat Ramp	675,000
Deal Island Marina	942,700
Wenona Marina	1,735,500
St. Peters Creek Marina	990,500
Rumbley Marina	736,500
Coulbourn Creek Boat Ramp	543,000
Jenkins Creek Dock & Boat Ramp	550,000
Rumbly Point Boat Ramp	370,700
Shelltown Boat Ramp	437,000
Rehobeth Boat Ramp	337,100
Crisfield Dock	750,000
Ewell Dock & Boat Ramp	1,554,700
Rhodes Point Dock	570,800
Tylerton Marina	657,600
Mt. Vernon DMP	32,600
Webster's Cove DMP	N/A
Champ DMP	N/A
Roads & Incidentals	19,000,000
Fleet	1,312,723
Inventory	\$146,500
Total Asset Value	\$33,627,723

Funding

Until recently the Roads & Waterways Division was financially self-sufficient with no dependency upon the General Fund. A majority of its funding came from Highway User Revenues (HUR) which is generated by the state gas tax and Motor Vehicle Administration user fees. They are dispersed to counties and municipalities by a complicated formula based upon the number of registered vehicles and miles of roads. The State chose to withhold 90% of these funds in order to balance the state's budget. In turn the County chose to make significant cuts to the Roads & Waterways Division and subsidize the remainder from the General Fund. Many core functions were reduced or eliminated. Staff, equipment and overtime were minimized. Although there is some hope that these revenues will be restored in the future, expectations are relatively low.

A majority of the county's waterway facility improvements are funded from DNR's Waterways Improvement Program which has significantly benefited the county. It is anticipated that this funding source will continue for the foreseeable future.

S.W.O.T. Analysis

This plan includes an analysis of the Roads & Waterways Division's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (S.W.O.T.). Each of these attributes is documented below as perceived by the staff who participated in this process. All employees of the division were given the opportunity to participate in the preparation of this strategic plan.

Strengths

- Administrative support of the Department.
- Cooperation with the other divisions, departments and agencies.
- Reputation for good roads system.
- A highly skilled technical, professional and administrative staff.
- Knowledge of environmental permitting process for waterway projects.

Weaknesses

- The age and reliability of vehicles, equipment and implements.
- Staff reductions affect core functions.
- Cannot raise necessary funds to support Division.
- Adequate inventory of current infrastructure.
- Relatively shallow waterways which limit marine access.

Opportunities

- Access to grant funds through use of in-kind labor.
- Use of media to increase public awareness of importance of our road system.
- Use of college interns and inmates for inventory and manual labor.
- The ability to generate additional revenue.
- Cooperation with the COE and DNR to improve waterborne transportation.

Threats

- Sustaining great workplace under current budget constraints.
- Lack of appreciation for importance of efficient road system including fleet.
- Ability to fund necessary resources and facilities in current economic downturn.
- Regulatory changes which increase Division responsibilities, i.e. MDE, MDOT, SHA, DNR, MOSHA, OSHA, COE and EPA.
- Significant damage or erosion caused by severe weather events.

Strategic Plan Objectives and Tactics

Objectives are benchmarks established to accomplish the Department's mission. They change only slightly from year to year and are broken down into short and long term. Short term is usually accomplished within 1 year. Long term is expected to be accomplished within 5 years.

Tactics are functions that accomplish the objectives. These change from year to year as market conditions warrant.

Based on analysis by the department's leadership and staff, the following objectives and tactics have been identified to fulfill the Department's mission:

Short Term

Objective #1 Foster a good working relationship among other entities with similar needs.

- a. Work with municipalities and SHA to update highway inventory data annually for additions, deletions and modifications.
- b. Establish MOU's with municipalities for trading/sharing of maintenance responsibilities, i.e. deicing and snow removal operations, sweeping operations and traffic studies.
- c. Delineate county and corporate limits for use by maintenance crews and general public.
- d. Retain an active role in transportation planning issues via Planning Commission, CEAM, DWTC, Shore Transit, SHA, municipalities, BOE and UMES.

Objective #2 Fill vacant positions, retain qualified staff and increase morale.

- a. Review job descriptions, advertise vacant positions, schedule interviews and hire highly qualified applicants.
- b. Create a training database for the entire division staff, assess training needs, schedule necessary training and routinely update.
- c. Reinforce productivity through annual department meetings, monthly operations meetings and weekly staff meetings.
- d. Emphasize team culture throughout division by being open to new ideas (Suggestion Box), providing employee assistance (Open Door Policy), assessing compensation (Salary Adjustments/New Benefits), evaluating responsibilities (Job Descriptions) and showing appreciation for efforts (service awards).

Objective #3 Maintain an efficient and effective communication system throughout the division.

- a. Coordinate upgrades to existing radio system with Emergency Management to ensure reliable communication during routine and emergency operations.
- b. Provide quality cell phones to technical and supervisory personnel.
- c. Retain a high quality machine to fax, copy and scan for office purposes, thereby reducing the need for desktop machines.
- d. Update the Division's phone-tree just prior to the hurricane and snow seasons.

Objective #4 Establish an efficient fleet management system.

- a. Evaluate the life cycle of the current fleet and develop a replacement plan via purchase or lease.
- b. Track DOT certifications using fleet management software.
- c. Maintain an efficient and secure fuel system using the State contract.
- d. Purchase and implement scheduling software for routine fleet maintenance.

Objective #5 Provide an effective Safety Program for the Division.

- a. Retain the services of a safety consultant for necessary guidance on safety issues to minimize MOSHA and OSHA enforcement actions.
- b. Maintain an active role in safety inspections as overseen by the County's insurance company.
- c. Keep facilities, vehicles and equipment properly maintained.
- d. Provide necessary safety training and gear to entire staff.

Long Term

Objective #1 Establish a usable asset management system for the division's infrastructure.

- a. Prepare simple asset report forms for use by inspectors, interns and inventory specialists in order to finish collecting field data on county roads infrastructure.
- b. Transfer data into GIS system accessible to end users via existing GIS software and update routinely for additions, deletions and modifications.
- c. Maintain inventory of division's parts and supplies with assistance from mechanics and inventory specialists.
- d. Use data for beneficial purposes, i.e. update asset value, maintenance needs and budgeting.

Objective #2 Prepare a strategic road maintenance plan to provide necessary maintenance in a cost effective manner.

- a. Research the life cycle of each type of surface treatment including the use of crack sealing to extend the life of the surface treatment.
- b. Perform a cost benefit analysis for each type of surface treatment.
- c. Evaluate the functional classification of the roads inventory to determine surface treatment options.
- d. Assess the feasibility of providing surface treatment in-house.

Objective #3 Prepare a strategic marine maintenance plan to provide necessary maintenance in a cost effective manner.

- a. Research the life cycle of each type of marine construction product to extend the life of our waterway facilities.
- b. Perform a cost benefit analysis for each type of marine construction product.
- c. Keep marinas, docks and boat ramps properly maintained.
- d. Provide necessary amenities to improve the watermen's and recreational boater's experience.

Objective #4 Explore reliable funding sources to support the Division.

- a. Promote restoration of the highway user revenues (HUR) from the state.
- b. Minimize County road maintenance by reducing road inventory through annexation, SHA transfers and privatization.
- c. Continue to use federal, state and private grant opportunities and low interest loans.
- d. Consider establishing or increasing user fees, i.e. review fees, inspection fees, utility permit fees, driveway permit fees, fuel surcharge and slip fees.

Objective #5 Establish a marketing strategy to promote the importance of the Division.

- a. Update and improve information on County website.
- b. Use press releases to better inform the public of construction projects, road/lane closures and maintenance work.
- c. Promote cost saving measures, i.e. use of interns and inmates.
- d. Request assistance from public in reporting pot holes, dead animals and other problems.

Summary

In order to accomplish the Department's mission, the Roads & Waterways Division must be able to perform its functions efficiently. This cannot occur without a highly qualified and motivated staff which has the necessary resources to complete this goal. Objectives and tactics have been established based upon current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This strategic plan will be implemented in the most effective manner possible.