

Burlington 2021 budget approved with investments in the renewal of city assets

Dena Fehir February 3, 2021



Burlington City Council has approved its 2021 capital budget of \$72.1 million with a 10-year program of \$786.4 million.

Seventy per cent of the 10-year program will be invested in infrastructure renewal projects, such as the repair, refurbishment or replacement of an existing asset to extend its useful life, in accordance with the city's asset management plan.

“The business of the city continues throughout COVID-19 and we continue to invest in services that our Burlington residents expect and need. Some of the new items the public will see are changes to building codes, as well as enhancements to accessibility that are legislated – it's all about building for today's community and today's needs. This has been a truly difficult budget year,” said Mayor Marianne Meed Ward.

A breakdown of spending for 2021 includes:

- Roadways: \$27.1 million
- Facilities and buildings: \$13.3 million
- Fleet vehicles, accessories and equipment: \$11.1 million
- Parks and open spaces: \$7.9 million
- Storm water management: \$7.7 million
- Information technology: \$5.1 million

Highlights among the top planned infrastructure projects of the 2021 capital budget are:

Burloak Grade Separation — cost of \$8.35 million in 2021 towards a full city contribution of \$15.85 million. (The total project cost is \$60 million). This project is the construction of an underpass structure to replace the existing at-grade crossing that will eliminate potential car/rail conflicts as well as improve emergency response in the area. Planning will be carried out jointly with the Town of Oakville and Metrolinx.

Rexway Drive Area Minor Reconstruction — cost of \$6.1 million in 2021. The reconstruction involves the removal and replacement of all road asphalt and the replacement of deficient curbs and sections of sidewalk where required. Halton Region has pinpointed the need to replace one or more services under the identified roads. The project will be co-ordinated with storm water management projects in the same area. Traffic improvements are also being considered for the area.

Plains Road West Project — cost of \$3.7 million in 2021. Work includes arterial road resurfacing and other necessary rehabilitation of storm sewers, curb and gutter and sidewalks. The work scheduled along Plains Road will be completed in several phases, with the first phase beginning in 2021 from Waterdown Road to Spring Gardens Road. The project will include state of good repair work that includes replacement of all pavement, curb, sidewalk, street lighting and traffic signal infrastructure. Corridor enhancements are also recommended within each phase. Included in the project is funding for transit stop improvements as well as protected cycling facilities on both sides of the road. The roadwork and active transportation facility construction will take place in 2022.

For facilities and buildings investment this year, a key project is a \$2.5 million City Hall Revitalization. Among the details is the creation of a new 21st century workforce space design standard that will focus on customer service and technology strategies.

There is also \$3.1 million intended for various repair and renewal projects for recreation/community centres as well as \$1.3 million geared towards the repair and renewal of the Burlington Operation Centre.

“The 2021 capital budget continues to focus on investing in our existing infrastructure to ensure the continued delivery of high-quality services residents rely on. Early approval of the capital budget allows projects to proceed to tender, be completed in a timely fashion, and help stimulate

the economy during these challenging economic times,” said Joan Ford, Burlington’s chief financial officer.

According to a city statement, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic resulted in considerable pressure on the city’s financial position with over \$18 million in revenue losses in 2020.

It is anticipated the challenges of the pandemic will continue to impact city finances in 2021, until such time as provincial restrictions are fully lifted.

To partially mitigate the 2021 impact of COVID-19 on the city’s operating budget, the planned increase to the city’s dedicated infrastructure renewal levy in 2021 (1.25 per cent) has been temporarily redirected to the operating budget for one year.

This will provide \$2.18 million of one-time funding to offset the anticipated one-time COVID-19 impacts in 2021, reducing the amount of 2021 capital funding.

“From a roadways, parks and storm water perspective, COVID-19 has not impacted the delivery of the capital program. The city will continue to design in house and tender the construction of the projects through an open bidding process,” said Ford.