



Ministerial Statement
by
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Minister of Public Works

Update on Road Paving & Equipment

Friday, December 15th, 2023

Good Morning, **Mr. Speaker**.

Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions I have risen in this Honourable House to provide updates on the continuing roadwork projects across the Island – namely the BELCO Infrastructure Project, the Ministry of Public Works’ Water and Wastewater Masterplan Phase I works in St. George’s as well as road paving generally.

There have been five (5) Ministerial statements made on this matter since the original project announcements back in February 2020. The most recent being in July of this year. As this is the most pressing issue facing Bermudians followed closely by housing – I shall continue these reports to keep the motoring public informed of progress.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by apologising to the people of Bermuda and those who live here and use our roads for the state they are in. They are in a significant state of disrepair and few of the plans to address this situation have been successful. I will set out the status and the plans underway and forthcoming to address this situation.

Mr. Speaker, I remind that both the BELCO Infrastructure Project and the Water and Wastewater Masterplan Phase I works in St. George’s are inconvenient and uncomfortable in the immediate for the motoring public. However, the sacrifice is worth the wait because when completed we will see the protection of our fresh water supplies, protection of our electrical infrastructure and the ensuring that the sewage we produce is properly disposed of in a more environmentally conscious way.

Mr. Speaker while these works are progressing steadily, the final phase of the Belco trenching works from Franks Bay in Southampton to the Evans Bay Sub Station have been paused until the New Year – I can report that much of this trenching work will occur on the Railway Trail rather than the main road – thus providing some relief to those travelling out of the West.

The trenching for the Water and Wastewater Masterplan Phase I works in St. George's has been completed and we are in the throes of commissioning the new Reverse Osmosis and Sewage Treatment Plants; gradually bringing online residents and businesses in St. George's and Southside.

Mr. Speaker, accolades must be given to the Department of Works and Engineering's asphalt crews ably led by Principal Highways Engineer, Mrs. Tina Beer-Searle - all of whom have worked tirelessly under very trying conditions to address the magnitude of paving requests and pothole complaints that we have received.

This year alone, the Ministry of Public Works asphalt crews have in conjunction with East End Asphalt:

- Completed repair works for uneven surfaces along Mullet Bay Road - near Stokes Point Road, St. David's Road Entrance, Kindley Field Road, Middle Road at Warwick Academy and Middle Road at St. Anthony's Church.
- Completed the permanent paving for trenching works at York Street in St. George's, Harrington Sound Road to the Leamington Caves area, Harrington Sound Road from Shark Hole to Paynter's Road and Devil's Hole to Harrington Hundreds entrance.
- Completed the temporary paving of BELCO trench work along Middle Road in Warwick and Southampton, Palmetto Road, Old Military Road and Frog Lane in Devonshire and multiple road crossings in St. David's Parish.
- Completed drainage Improvements by creating an asphalt lip on Perimeter Lane at the Glebe Road junction and installed a drainage channel at the Glebe Road bus layby to allow for excess rainwater to be redirected into the nearby canal.
- Resurfaced the Netball Courts near the W.E.R Joell Tennis Stadium that are being utilised by schools and the public.
- Paved the Watford Bridge lanes; and
- Fixed hundreds of potholes – most of which were reported to potholes@gov.bm.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure this House that the dedicated crews continue their diligence in working to complete the other scheduled works for this financial year

such as Harrington Sound Road in Hamilton Parish, South Road in Southampton near Henry the VIII, Middle Road in Warwick near T. N Tatem and South Road at Collectors Hill Road junction.

Mr. Speaker, I must mention some of the issues the Ministry has encountered while undertaking road paving that has contributed to the delays.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's physical assets are aging. This is not new. Successive Administrations have stated this. In this case, the machinery that supports road paving works is also aging and therefore routinely out of service for repairs. The unreliability of these machines - the Asphalt plant and Asphalt Miller in particular - cause the asphalt teams to slow their production. Currently, both assets are out of service and have been for most of the year - awaiting repairs.

In addition to this, the excessively complicated administrative procedure to procure asphalt supplies or parts and global supply chain issues have also exacerbated the situation. Simply put, when the machines are working - we may not have the full complement of supplies and conversely, when they aren't working - we likely have the supplies.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, asphalt is an expensive business. The estimated price for paving just 1 kilometre (or half a mile) of roadway on both lanes is Six Hundred Thousand dollars (\$600,000.00). These costs are broken down to a single major component namely the exorbitant price of asphalt material. It currently costs the Ministry \$0.62 cents on every dollar used for road paving for this material.

However, **Mr. Speaker**, the key to success is inherently knowing and understanding the circumstances in which one is placed.

Hence the rationale that before the current inoperability of the assets, the Ministry entered a partnership arrangement with East End Asphalt – the sole private sector provider of bulk asphalt on island. This arrangement sees the sharing of supplies and usage of paving equipment and staffing resources on an as needed basis at fixed rates.

So, currently, **Mr. Speaker**, the asphalt that our crews are using to pave Harrington Sound Road is purchased from East End Asphalt and occasionally we rent their equipment so that paving works can continue. Additionally, we have an agreement with East End Asphalt to carry out paving works on our behalf as well – as recently done for the York Street, St. George's paving works.

This protocol will continue while we work to get the plant operational again and explore options for the purchase of a new plant.

Concurrent with the above activities – over the last few months on two occasions we have hosted representatives from Astec Industries – the providers of the current asphalt plant some 20 years ago and a leading provider of asphalt plants and paving equipment in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, this week a team of 3 experts from Astec have been on Island, out in the field with our asphalt teams observing the process and the operation of equipment. The full Ministry team comprising of myself, the Acting Permanent Secretary, the Acting Chief Engineer, The Quarry Manager, the Principal Highways Engineer and others associated with the highways team participated in a full debrief and discussion with the visiting experts on Wednesday last. The full report and recommendation with costings will come in January but what was discussed was very encouraging.

Firstly, Astec, which is a fully comprehensive construction organisation, have a training school for asphalt workers at their headquarters in Chattanooga, Tennessee and have offered places at the January sessions for several of our workers to attend – which we have accepted. The plan is to train the trainer there and subsequently provide training locally for all the highways staff of new techniques and applications to enhance the asphalt laying process.

Mr. Speaker, Astec have identified several new pieces of equipment that can greatly assist us in being able to pave greater lengths of road in one go. They will present options for a new plant that will be able to deliver asphalt to meet the specific size and demand that Bermuda requires. Technology has advanced significantly since we purchased the current plant 20 years ago and they will help us bring the current asphalt operations into the modern age.

Mr. Speaker, as you know we are currently in the budgetary process for next year. As is customary – not every dollar that is budgeted for a specific project is spent. So, during this process we are also exploring the options to ensure we have enough material and supplies to produce asphalt so that we can accelerate the pace of road paving by transferring funds to the highways budget should the need arise.

But until such time that the new equipment arrives **Mr. Speaker**, the Ministry will continue its efforts with works along Harrington Sound Road heading west towards Middle Road in Flatts along Middle Road to Store Hill and along the North Shore Road to the National Sports Center.

Mr. Speaker, let me summarise:

- In January the paving works will continue with both our highways crew and East End's crew conducting those works with asphalt produced by East End.
- Overseas technicians will return to repair the current plant, so that it is operational until the new plant is purchased and commissioned.
- The specs and costing for a new plant and equipment will be received and acted upon.
- An order will be placed for a new plant and various pieces of new equipment.
- By the 2nd quarter of 2024 the new plant will arrive and be commissioned.
- In the February budget – additional funding for road works will be requested.
- During 2024 paving works throughout the island will be increased.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this update provides all with a clear understanding of the current situation and plan going forward. We are fully committed to addressing the dreadful state of our roads as quickly as possible.

Let me end where I began, **Mr. Speaker**, by apologising to all road users for the delayed delivery of these projects and thank the public for their patience and understanding. We will continue our efforts to advance the paving of our roads at an increased pace.

As always **Mr. Speaker**, I will keep this House and the public informed as we progress.

Thank You **Mr. Speaker**.