

Permit Central in Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry

CASE STUDY

Background

During the summer months in the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry, Ontario (SDG), the volume of permit applications for several types of road permits (in particular, oversize overweight load permits) tends to spike, largely due to seasonal construction. SDG issues more than 640 over-dimensional permits per year.

Before 2019, there was a single email address for receiving completed application forms for the united counties. This email address was monitored by one reviewer, Kate Coristine, Administrative Assistant - Transportation. Applicants would fill out a PDF document that, when received, would be transferred into an internal Google Docs form. Approximately 75% of Coristine's work consisted of processing and reviewing permits, with a single permit taking about 20-25 minutes to process. Payments were processed in-house and had to be reconciled with the permits.

The Problem

If the reviewer was away, someone else had to take over permit processing – typically this would be Ben de Haan, the Director of Transportation and Services, although student hires were able to help with some permit types during the summer season.

During the busy season, the SDG offices would receive 5-10 new permit applications per day. The reviewer would have to spend time on each permit manually emailing applicants and requesting updated or corrected details. In addition, the office was using Transnomis' Municipal511 platform to compare the routes requested against emergency road closures in the county and road construction in the summer.

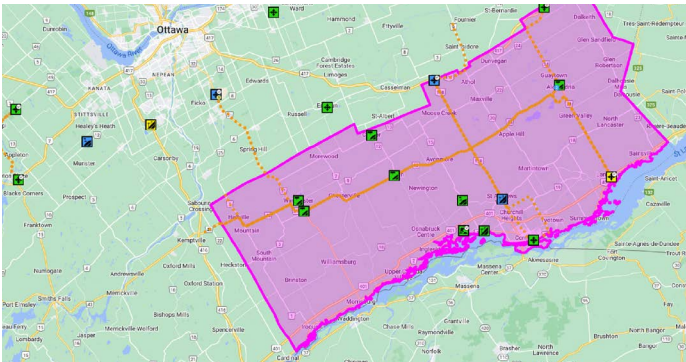
Improvements needed to be made to reduce the time spent processing permits by allowing for better communication between the office and permit applicants, and by reducing the number of platforms and steps needed to intake a permit, compare the information against what was required, assess the route for approval, store the information, and finally process and reconcile permit payments with applications.



Solution and Impact

Implementing Permit Central from Transnomis was a game-changer for the department. SDG now had a platform that required applicants to map their route, for which the system would describe the route or location using the municipalities official road names, reducing communication errors. Many processes were automated, allowing for reviewers to process a permit without typing, including auto-generated permit certificates once approved. All communications and changes for the permit were logged.

The integration with Municipal511 presents truck routes, cautions, restrictions, and road or lane closures for construction to the applicant during their application submission, so that they may route differently to avoid conflicting use of SDG roads. Municipal511 also provides applicants with real-time information on the day of their move, improving delivery times, and preventing road use conflicts.



Permit applicants were surprised at how much more quickly they were receiving approvals on their applications. SDG even created a workflow in the system that allowed for annual permits (issued to trucking companies with multiple trucks and trailers within a set size) to be automatically approved, cutting down application times for carriers and SDG.

While the transition from the old system to Permit Central required some training for legacy applicants, it did not prove to be difficult to train them. On the whole, carriers loved the new system, with some suggesting that they wished other road authorities would use the system.

Impact

The integrated payment system removed steps for applicants and SDG, providing both with a record of the transactions. Minor amendments now take seconds for applicant and SDG. Permits within the system are easily searched for and found. And consulting others, including lower tier municipalities, are completed with a click rather than composing an email.

The SDG Transportation office itself considers the system to be the best thing that has ever happened to their permitting processes.

Next Steps

The office is very excited about the possibilities of the system, and is in the process of implementing the many other permit types supported by the service. This will lead to cost and time savings for the office as well as local applicants in the construction, signage, and special events sectors. Integrating the system with Sharepoint is also being considered.

Conclusion

What used to take the municipality 25 minutes (processing an average permit application) now takes less than 5 minutes, saving an estimated 14 days annually in processing time for the one permit type alone. This has led to huge time savings for the department, and significant time and cost savings for carriers. The carriers have shown their appreciation for the permit processing system and are advocating for the platform to be implemented by other road authorities.

Other road authorities that rely on a variety of patchwork systems, as SDG did prior to their adoption of Permit Central, should take note of the potential benefits available to any authority that's prepared to save time and money on their permit application processes.