

Collaborative Asset Management System Improves Services While Saving Money

“A Red Tape Cutting Machine”

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When the Oakland County Board of Commissioners voted recently to fund the revolutionary Collaborative Asset Management System (CAMS), it took a major step toward significant financial savings for municipalities in Oakland County. At the same time, it promoted a model that can be used throughout the region and even throughout the nation.

CAMS is a standardized, countywide infrastructure management system that will allow Oakland County and its local units of government to proactively manage assets and mitigate long-term costs associated with the operation and maintenance of critical infrastructure such as water systems, wastewater and storm drains and even roads.

In short, this new system represents an opportunity to standardize our entire countywide infrastructure. With this innovative tool, communities can manage their assets and reduce long-term costs usually tied to the operation and maintenance of critical infrastructure systems.

It is no secret that the cities, villages and townships in Oakland County, and indeed throughout the region, are facing serious financial challenges. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the regional planning agency, estimates that more than \$52 billion will be needed to adequately address the region's aging infrastructure problem. That amount continues to grow. Complicating the problem is the fact that the federal funds once available to fund the lion's share of infrastructure costs, is gone. There simply is no federal money available to assist local communities deal with their aging infrastructure challenges. As these municipalities struggle to cope with decreasing revenues resulting from a declining property tax base, it becomes more important than ever to save money wherever possible. That's where CAMS comes in.

One aspect of this program allows for feedback from customers and makes it easier and faster to take corrective measures. By promoting collaboration and improving the workflow, CAMS is able to reduce redundancy among users handling service requests. In other words, the capital investment is maximized and our customers enjoy the cost savings.

But the benefits don't stop there. Even in areas where communities already cooperate, such as with their mutual aid contracts, CAMS promotes data sharing and, by extension, improves and promotes governmental accountability and efficiency. What that means for Oakland County residents is that communication and coordination can extend across and beyond jurisdictional boundaries. It also means that the expertise in one community now is available to other municipalities further reducing costs.

Oakland County Commissioner Eric Coleman, who also is the president of the National Association of Counties, said he endorsed CAMS because, besides saving money in the long term, it allows communities to address an aging infrastructure problem "before it develops into a calamity."

"It's going to save our citizens money and inconvenience," he said.

He's correct. This Collaborative Asset Management System also makes access to government easier and far less complex. One might call it a red tape cutting machine. After all, government is intended to serve the people. CAMS allows us to improve that service and save money while doing it.