SUBJECT: The Road Authority and Products Management (PW06106) - (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That Council endorse the City of Hamilton’s partnership with the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) to develop and maintain an on-line database and work flow for the City’s Approved Products Listing for road, watermain, sewer, lighting and traffic signal related products.

(b) That Council endorse the Standards and Approved Products Committee scope and objectives to undertake the selection; approval and updating of an approved products list as well as the adoption of material standards for Public Works related assets for all road, watermain, sewer, lighting and traffic signal related products.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff are seeking an endorsement of a Standards and Approved Products Committee to undertake the selection; approval and updating of the approved products list as well as the adoption of material standards and to give Council an understanding of the history behind The Road Authority (TRA) and advise Council of our partnership with the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) to improve efficiencies in reviewing and approving road, watermain, sewer, lighting and traffic signal related products for use in the City of Hamilton.
BACKGROUND:

A list of approved materials and products did exist for the former City, Region and area Municipalities.

The list was not only used for Public Works Capital projects but for maintenance and Development related projects as well. Since amalgamation there has not been a formal committee to review, update or augment the list. New products have been introduced on one-off trials or consideration has been deferred due to the lack of a formal format for review and testing.

A Standards and Approved Products Committee was formed to undertake the selection; approval and updating of the approved products list as well as the adoption of material standards. The Committee also reviews, develops and approves Design Guidelines, Construction Specifications and Standard Drawings.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

The Committee develops detailed procedures for general committee actions and administration as well as creating and maintaining a complete and comprehensive listing of products and materials that a) contractors can choose from when bidding; b) that staff can choose from for maintenance replacement activities; and c) that suppliers and manufacturers can view to see if their product has been adopted for use by the City.

The Committee is responsible for the creation and maintenance of complete and comprehensive Design Guidelines, Construction Specifications and Standard Drawings for all road, sewer, and water related infrastructure (exclusive of Plant and building related facilities) for use in all Capital, Maintenance and Development related program projects.

In order to manage the flow of information and deal with the logistics of submissions, approvals and product lists, the Committee is proposing to use an internet based information management service provided to Ontario Municipalities by the Ontario Good Roads Association, known as The Road Authority or “TRA”.

The OGRA represents the transportation and public works interests of over 400 Ontario municipalities through advocacy, member services and education and training programs. The OGRA works closely with the Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) and others to ensure partnership opportunities are realized. In 1998, the OGRA launched a “member service” called The Road Authority (TRA) to enable its municipal members, of which the City of Hamilton is one, to utilize a single database of manufacturers, suppliers and product information to satisfy the requirements of road construction related contracts. This service evolved from the information product known as the Designated Sources of Material (DSM) which was supported and maintained by the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) and used by Ontario municipalities. The support for the Designated Sources of Material from a municipal perspective ended in 1996 as a result of the restructuring of Provincial business practices, programs and subsidy.

The Road Authority is delivered as a member service by OGRA in Ontario and is an internet based information resource that provides a mechanism for infrastructure
owners, consultants, contractors and product suppliers to collaborate and share information. The Road Authority provides users with information on products, services and technical solutions available for use in the public works sector and remains a key membership service to Ontario municipalities.

The Road Authority now operates as a public and private partnership and is making its technology freely available to many jurisdictions. The technology allows organizations to manage information effectively and distribute it across the corporation (as well as agents) through an Internet Browser.

The objective of The Road Authority is to maintain an information portal for the public works sector by providing an electronic gateway that allows users to:

- source products, services and technical solutions
- gather public works related information
- access expertise from participating members including the Ontario Provincial Standards and other infrastructure owners
- review current standards
- participate in discussion forums
- submit products for review and classification
- promote collaboration amongst infrastructure owners

The Road Authority was developed as a web-based system with no requirement for a municipality to install software or update systems, as is typical of most software system implementations. The system requires that the user has access to the Internet. Ontario municipalities that are members of OGRA request access to the system through a Municipal Private Interface (MPI), essentially a private doorway to the information that is specific to the municipality in question. The Municipal Private Interface allows for the municipality to manage information and to manipulate its products and services lists and data relevant to its requirements for business. The Road Authority and the Municipal Private Interface is a free service to member municipalities that is supported by a small fee charged to product manufacturers and suppliers who in return receive direct exposure to their market place.

The system also provides a tracking mechanism to manage product approvals and the work flow related to product information management. These key features are critical in a fast-paced municipal environment where information is changing frequently.

Infrastructure owners such as provincial ministries, municipalities and regulatory agencies can use this system to create and manage their own source lists for products and services. Product approvals (pre-qualification or classification), compliance with standards, certification for certain services are all integrated into one management system, simplifying the process for both owners and suppliers.

As a result, The Road Authority has grown to become the “master file” of information on products, services, standards and technical solutions in Ontario. As the need for municipalities to share experience and information grows, The Road Authority has become a key mechanism to foster this collaboration.

The City of Hamilton Standards and Approved Products Committee is planning to implement the Municipal Private Interface technology through The Road Authority's website to better manage product information. Previous and typical practices for staff to
review new product submissions (typically for pipes, light standards, manholes, etc.) from manufacturers and suppliers involved a long and drawn out process conducted on an ad-hoc basis. Many staff members would research a number of products with very little background information or resources available to them. This resulted in a duplication of research and lengthy time devoted to it. Given the nature of our business, often committing the proper amount of time to research and deliberation was not achievable, resulting in a fragmented work flow and unsuccessful business process.

Using the Municipal Private Interface, a Manufacturer would electronically submit their application to have a product reviewed and considered for approval in the City of Hamilton. Key staff members form a virtual committee and have access to the system, instantly making available all research and testing information related to any product. Staff members can then process their comments related to an application for approval securely, on line and as a committee, ultimately decide whether a product is acceptable for use. The Manufacturers, Suppliers and their products are listed on the relevant City of Hamilton, Approved Product Listing of which can then be published to a hard-copy manual or ideally, to the Internet (through The Road Authority website and/or the City of Hamilton website). This system allows committee members to conduct efficient research and make better informed decisions through this public and private partnership. Some of the major benefits that Hamilton receives by participating in this project are:

- Instant access to current and maintained manufacturer and supplier information;
- Instant access to current and maintained product research and testing information;
- Complete access to work flow technology;
- Maintain control over product and supplier approvals as required;
- Access a single authoritative database of information on products, services and standards;
- Direct access to other product evaluations from the Ontario Provincial Standards Committee and other municipalities;
- Sharing and collaboration is key to municipal success;
- The costs related to using the system are minimal.

This system is completely scalable and can be used by other City Departments to manage their similar “like” business needs. ASi is the technology service provider for The Road Authority for OGRA and is funded from the proceeds of the fee paid by the product manufacturers and supplier members of The Road Authority. Staff are embracing this opportunity and demonstrating how the City of Hamilton can be a leader and successfully use the Municipal Private Interface for our Products Management business needs across the Corporation.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

The existing system of informal ad-hoc review can be continued with no additional staff time or resources however tracking or sharing of information between Departments would be restricted, formal documentation limited and the adoption of new standards and/or products would be on an as required basis.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:
N/A

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:
N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:
Public Works Department - Water & Wastewater Division, Capital Planning & Implementation Division and Operations & Maintenance Division
Corporate Services Department - Purchasing Section
Planning and Economic Development Department - Development Engineering Section

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:
By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☑ No
Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Through this partnership and endeavour, staff is providing effective and efficient delivery of service, seeking out and encouraging Public and Private partnerships, strengthening Corporate Image and Identity and embrace technology to realize better work flow and efficiencies.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?
☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?
☑ Yes ☐ No

The ability to deal with issues in an efficient manner, using available technology and sharing of information with peers and other Municipalities enhances the City’s profile in this regard.