

Roving tow trucks clear disabled cars

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD FEBRUARY 17, 2010

At least four vehicles were cleared from busy city streets Tuesday on the first day of using standby tow trucks during rush hour.

Approved by council just last week, the five trucks are now stationed in areas where an accident or a stalled car can create a bottleneck for other drivers.

"Having roving tow trucks allows them to get there a lot quicker than dispatching," said Troy McLeod, the city's manager of traffic.

On Tuesday morning, two stalled vehicles on northbound Deerfoot Trail were spotted by a tow-truck driver and removed from the road.

During the afternoon rush hour, a vehicle on Deerfoot and one on Memorial Drive were taken away, again after a truck driver saw them.

The city's traffic management centre will also be monitoring roads using traffic cameras to alert the trucks if they spot trouble.

McLeod said in a 2005-06 trial, during the Glenmore Trail-Elbow Drive-5th Street work, the tow truck drivers were the first to find the problems about half the time.

"It gives us eyes on the street as well as the 50 traffic cams," he added.

Last week, council approved \$636,000 from its rainy-day fund to test the project, based on an estimate of the trucks costing \$84.80 an hour to stand by during morning and evening rush hours.

"It's nice to have it underway," said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who proposed this trial run. "I think this shows it's a pretty easy fix that can be implemented pretty quickly."

While the tow trucks will help clear the roadway, allowing traffic to move along, McLeod said removing disabled vehicles also improves the safety of those drivers whose cars have stopped. Vehicles are moved to the closest safe location and drivers can then call for their own assistance.

Trucks will be located near:

- Crowchild Trail at the Bow River crossing;
- Memorial Drive between Deerfoot Trail and downtown;

- Macleod Trail between Anderson Road and 162nd Avenue S.;
- Glenmore Trail between Crowchild Trail and 14th Street S.W.;
- along Deerfoot Trail. Over the past three months, the city has logged more than 1,400 incidents when disabled vehicles held up traffic.

kguttormson@theherald.canwest.com

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald