

Standby tow truck project keeps city traffic flowing

BY SUZANNE WILTON, CALGARY HERALD MAY 17, 2010



Calgary officials report that 333 incidents were attended by standby tow trucks roving on five major routes during peak morning and afternoon times between Feb. 16 and April 16

Photograph by: Archive, Calgary Herald

A city pilot project using standby tow trucks to improve clearance of busy roadways is keeping traffic moving during morning and afternoon rush hours, according to a city report.

City officials report that 333 incidents were attended by standby tow trucks roving on five major routes during peak morning and afternoon times between Feb. 16 and April 16, an average of seven incidents per day.

A report going to a city committee on Wednesday states that 64 per cent of the incidents were during the afternoon hours and the tow trucks responded in less than five minutes.

This compares to five to 35 minutes for incidents detected by 52 cameras keeping an eye on major roadways.

"The roving tow truck service has provided good roadside assistance to motorists and we've been able to keep traffic moving," said Troy McLeod, the city's manager of traffic.

McLeod said motorists have also appreciated help in cases where their vehicles have stalled in traffic, either because of an accident or vehicle failure or in one case, a medical situation. For example, a tow-truck driver came upon a woman slumped over her steering wheel at Deerfoot Trail and Memorial Drive and called EMS.

The woman, who suffered a medical condition, was taken to hospital. In another situation, a woman ran out of gas on Deerfoot Trail at McKnight Boulevard and didn't have a cellphone to call for help.

She was towed to a safe location and the towing company dispatcher called a family member to bring the woman some fuel.

"We also had a road rage incident averted because of the tow truck service," McLeod said.

The one-year trial will cost \$636,000, but how it will be funded into the future, if the program continues, hasn't been decided.

Another update will come to council in November, when it will have to decide whether to continue the program and how to fund it.

swilton@theherald.canwest.com

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