The Right Tools at the Right Time

The Center for Technology & Training (CTT) understands the importance for agencies to have the right tools at the right time so that they can make the best data-driven decisions possible. Whether it's new tools, upgrades, minor adjustments, or enhancements, the CTT's goal is to provide our customers with quality products and service to meet their needs.

The new Project Planning & Selection Tool is a perfect example of providing expanded Roadsoft functionality based on customer requests and feedback. Additionally, sometimes having the right tools requires replacing outdated versions. Microsoft's impending extended support termination for SQL Server 2008 and SQL Server 2008R2 means that some agencies will have to update their database server software in the near future. This updated software will provide increased security and functionality over the previous versions.

Making Savvy Candidate Selections: The New Project Planning & Selection Tool

Making pavement management decisions is challenging for road agencies due to the large amount of time and effort needed to gather all the required data. One particularly challenging area of pavement management is predicting future pavement conditions and identifying pavement treatment candidates based on those predictions. Accurately doing so enables agencies to create treatment plans for road segments that are as timely and cost-effective as possible. Roadsoft's new Project Planning & Selection tool (PPST), also called the Project Planner, will help agencies identify their ideal road segments for a selected treatment. This will enable agencies to plan and report on exactly which road segments they want to treat in the future.

The Project Planner is now available starting with the Roadsoft 2017.11 release. The PPST is designed to help with some of the most difficult parts of making informed pavement management decisions, especially estimating future road conditions and identifying road segments that are potential treatment candidates. Candidates are roads whose condition ratings fall within the condition range defined by the minimum and maximum trigger range set for the treatment, making them "ideal" candidates.

Principal Programmer Luke Peterson explains that the PPST will help agencies "drill down into their data in the present and the future" and find these candidate roads by calculating estimated ratings for roads in the future. Roadsoft bases these calculations on each road segment's history of PASER ratings. The PPST is an answer to a question our customers have asked in the past, Peterson noted, "Ever since we implemented the Strategy Evaluation and Optimization Tool, agencies have been asking for a way to plan out their projects in Roadsoft."
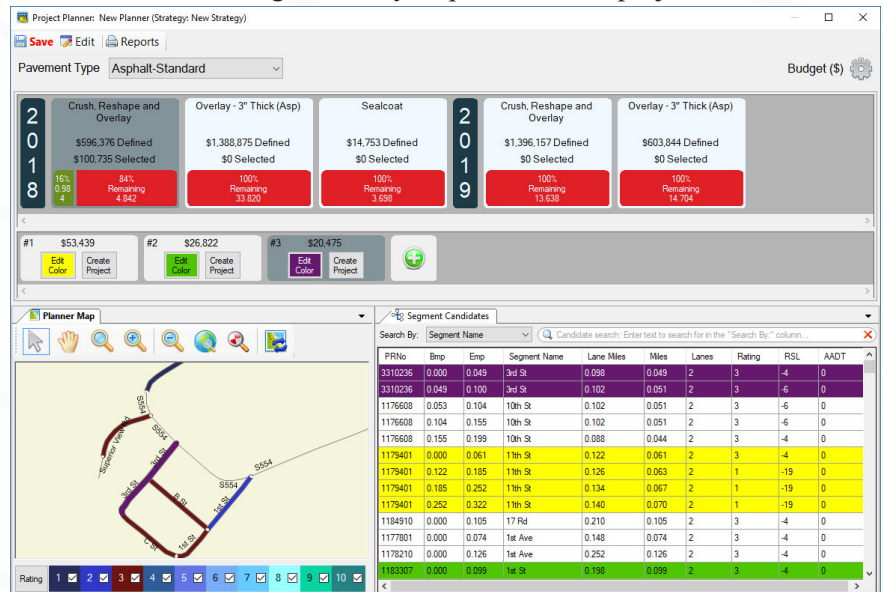

Figure 1: The Project Planning & Selection Tool can help agencies identify road treatment candidates.

In addition, the Project Planner's map displays all roads with their estimated rating for the selected treatment year, allowing agencies to represent their road conditions visually.

The Project Planner picks up where the Roadsoft Strategy Evaluation and Optimization module features end. While the Strategy Module helps agencies make general plans based on funds, mileage, and treatments they want to apply to their road networks, the Project Planner then helps agencies identify specific roads as candidates for treatments and select exactly which road segments to apply those treatments on.

The PPST also makes it easy to create multiple projects based on the same strategy or from scratch using a filter, allowing agencies to compare project plans and find the plan that best fits their needs. In project plans based on strategies, agencies can add segments to plans until meeting the total budget or until the mileage meets the amount specified by the strategy. Projects based on filters add up the total cost and mileage of the plans.

Rick DeVries, assistant city engineer for the City of Grand Rapids, is one Roadsoft customer that is excited about the release of the Project Planner. DeVries said, "The Project Planning and Selection tool will give us the ability to go from broad investment and treatment recommendations to being able to select individual segments that meet the criteria." Using both the Strategy Module and the Project Planner allows agencies to plan their pavement management projects fully in Roadsoft from large-scale funding and mileage amounts, to the treatment of specified road segments.

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>   - Rick DeVries, Assistant City Engineer
>   City of Grand Rapids

Roadsoft continues to provide support for making difficult pavement management decisions. The new Project Planner is a dynamic Roadsoft feature that empowers agencies to make data-driven decisions on future road conditions, identification of road segments meeting ideal conditions for selected treatments, and quickly building future projects based on their data.

Upcoming Microsoft Changes: Preparing Agencies for an Upgrade

Microsoft has announced that two of their products, SQL Server 2008 and SQL Server 2008R2, are reaching the end of their extended support lifecycle in July of 2019. Microsoft's blog contains more information regarding their support termination.

Due to the timing of Microsoft's extended support termination, the CTT has determined that our support of the affected Microsoft products must end prior to our Spring 2019 software release. The CTT is ending Roadsoft and MERL support for both SQL Server 2008 and SQL Server 2008R2 as of January 1, 2019.

After January 1, 2019, the creation of new Roadsoft and MERL databases will cease to function, and existing databases will not update on SQL Server 2008 and SQL Server 2008R2.

The decision to discontinue support on SQL Server 2008 and SQL Server 2008R2 is a necessary step to ensure the safety of the systems that operate our software, and to retain the integrity of agency Roadsoft and MERL data.

Customers with existing databases on SQL Server 2008 and SQL Server 2008R2 (including full SQL Server and SQL Server Express) are encouraged to begin discussions with appropriate parties as soon as possible, particularly if an update or purchase of a newer version of SQL Server is necessary.

Customers using the CTT-provided SQL Server Express will have the opportunity to update their 2008 or 2008R2 SQL Express instances using a CTT provided update installer. We will announce the update installer availability in the upcoming months.

SUPPORTED VERSIONS

The CTT is continuing support for SQL Server versions: 2012, 2014, and 2016.

DETERMINING SQL SERVER VERSION

Help documentation for locating the SQL Server version is available in the Roadsoft Manual at Locate SQL Server Version.

The CTT apologizes to our customers for any inconvenience caused by the discontinuation of support of SQL Server 2008 and SQL Server 2008R2.