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Residents and businesses on six Burleson streets have reaped the benefits of the City's new paving machine in just one month's time.

The City's Public Works Department got a new Cat AP500E paving machine in May. Since then, the public works staff has completed paving Cozby Lane, Broad Valley, Broad Valley Court, CR 714, Forrest Lane and, most recently, Boone Road.

The new machine replaced the old paving machine that had been used for 15-17 years before it could no longer do the work. Assistant Director of Public Works Rey Gonzales said the new asphalt paver "is the most technically advanced machine and it has proven to be significantly more efficient than the previous model."

The paver is larger than the old one and it has on-board electronics and computers that provide an almost hands-free operation on a standard overlay operation. The paver will set the depth and slope of the materials being applied and it has an auto level system that adapts intuitively to any anomalies in the surface of the pavement. The hands-on work of raking and shoveling the asphalt by a City crew member has been reduced by as much as 80 percent and the quality of the asphalt mat is far superior, according to Gonzales.

The next street on the list for a full-width maintenance overlay is CR 1020 off of Southwest Hulen Street. The crew has some full depth repairs to do on this road before putting the asphalt paver on the road for an overlay. Once this is completed, the list of in-house streets will be completed for this year. You can see the asphalt paver in action all over town as the crew does spot repairs where large segments of residential streets require full depth repairs.

The paving machine requires three people to operate it, including one driver and two ground crew members who monitor depth, slope and volume. The additional staff includes a steel wheel roller operator, a rubber tire roller operator, dump truck drivers (minimum of four), safety flaggers, one at each end of the project and an additional ground crew member to shovel or rake material as needed during the operation. The minimum total of staff is 12.

Each year, the City's public works department does an inventory of all City streets. Each street is given a rating of zero-10, depending on condition. Streets that fall within the five-six rating are generally those considered for overlay operations.

As of now, in-town residential street mill and overlays are performed through a contract. The primary use of this new asphalt paver is for in-house maintenance overlays on county type roads where you would normally see a chip seal application instead of an asphalt overlay.

"This sets Burleson apart from most other municipalities when it comes to in-house maintenance on our low volume roads," Gonzales said.

In the future, it may be possible for the pavement division staff to perform all of the funded overlay projects within the city limits, including the neighborhood street projects currently performed by contract.