

October 20, 2016

**DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES REPORT
ENGINEERING SERVICES 2016-45**

TO: Committee of the Whole
SUBJECT: Public Consultation and Support Plan – Transportation Services
ORIGIN: Director, Engineering Services

RECOMMENDATIONS

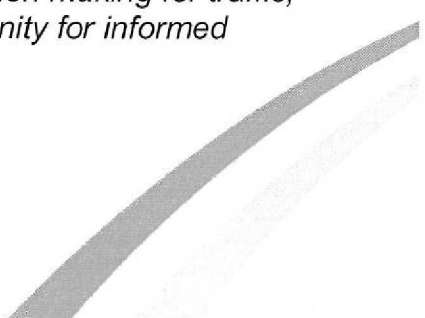
THAT Development and Infrastructure Services Report – Engineering Services 2016-45 dated October 20, 2016 entitled “Public Consultation and Support Plan – Transportation Services” be received and the following recommendations be adopted:

- 1. THAT the Public Consultation and Support Plan as outlined in Appendix A be adopted for use starting January 1, 2017;**
- 2. AND THAT the Public Consultation and Support Plan be reviewed both internally and by the public throughout 2017 for improvements for 2018, if necessary.**

BACKGROUND

At its regular meeting of June 7, 2016, Town Council adopted the following recommendation as part of Development and Infrastructure Services Report – Engineering Services 2016-26, entitled “Woodspring Avenue – Bonshaw Avenue to Town Limit Bicycle Lanes and On-Street Parking – Report #2”, dated May 11, 2016, stating:

“ii) AND THAT an improved approach to community consultation and decision making for traffic, parking and bicycle lane issues be developed that ensures greater opportunity for informed discussion of any associated uses.”



This recommendation resulted mainly from a situation where a survey was conducted on Woodspring Avenue by the Town as per its consultation policy. Consistent with the survey results, bicycle lanes were implemented on both sides of the road, and a turning lane was created in the centre of Woodspring Avenue. No on-street parking was implemented in order to protect the bike lanes and the cyclists using them. Experience has shown in many other municipalities that parking and bike lanes cannot co-exist without a certain degree of risk to public safety.

The Town then became aware of some dissatisfaction regarding the fact that there was no on-street parking allowed alongside or in the bike lanes. Although the Town provided several alternative solutions to residents for additional parking (e.g.: using a parking lot at the local community park, sharing with a neighbour, temporary exemptions necessitated by construction work being done on a home, etc.), this did not seem to be satisfactory for some.

It became evident that the question at hand affected a much broader sector of the Town than just the Woodspring Avenue community. Therefore, the consultation area needed to be expanded so that the question of bike lanes versus parking could be addressed throughout the Town. This broader consultation would help establish criteria that could apply to the implementation of the remainder of the Town's active transportation plan.

Transportation Services is currently developing several policies for the implementation of the Traffic Mitigation Strategy. The "Public Consultation" piece was therefore accelerated so that it could be brought forward for discussion as a stand-alone policy in advance of the remainder of the Traffic Mitigation Strategy policies.

COMMENTS

At the present time, Engineering Services functions under three main Council-approved policies that are administered through the Transportation Services business unit. They are:

- A) The Transportation Management Policy;
- B) The Corporate Parking Policy; and
- C) The Sidewalk Policy (which is also used to govern the implementation of sidewalks in capital and development projects).

Each of the three existing policies has a public consultation component. However, the Parking Policy has, by far, the most comprehensive public consultation requirement.

There are three major concerns regarding public consultation for transportation projects:

1. How to define the extent of the community that might be impacted
2. How to disseminate the information through to the community
3. At what level of community support should the Town implement any change

All three are discussed below.

1. How to define the extent of the community that might be impacted

The Parking Policy is clear in this respect by stating that all fronting and flanking households are to be contacted as part of a survey. However, it is not as simple in the other policies. The extent of the community to be surveyed varies by the type of change that is being requested. More specifically, there are three different types of changes generally being sought. These are:

- point or single impact location
- linear or street impact location
- community-wide impact location

A community-wide impact location can be initiated as a point or single impact location or as a street specific change that is being requested, but it could, in fact, impact the larger community or even the entire Town.

Examples of point or single impact locations can include:

- All-way stop controls
- Signage
- Crossing guard locations

Linear or street specific impact locations can include the following requests:

- Parking restrictions
- Traffic calming measures (street specific)

Community-wide impact locations can be listed as follows:

- Active transportation Routes
- Traffic Calming measures (area)

Point or single impact location issues are generally based on warrants or strict criteria for implementation, so the decision on whether to implement them or not would not be based on public input. However, the directly impacted households are notified via mail of the study and/or results. "Directly impacted households" consist of at least two households on either side of the point location or can be more depending on the type of measure.

Linear or street impact locations can be based on safety considerations, but they are generally subject to a majority of the residents impacted being in favour. The community to be surveyed would consist of the street itself, with the households directly fronting or flanking the impact location being considered as "directly impacted".

Community-wide locations would have to be determined on a case by case basis, but would generally consist of the households that are directly impacted, as noted above in "linear or street impact locations". In addition to surveying those households, an invitation to the broader community would also be made through advertising Town-wide via the Town's normal communications channels.

In all cases, Town staff would be solely responsible for contact and all related communications.

2. How to disseminate the information through to the community

The majority of the information sent out by the Town regarding transportation-related matters is by regular mail. On occasion, residents may call or come directly to the Town office to express their views. The use of mail is the most effective way to ensure that all impacted households have received contact. Replies via email or by return letter are the best methods to track responses. The system functions with one household receiving one vote. The process normally ends with a follow-up report and recommendations being presented for discussion and consideration by Council.

This process has worked well but can be improved. For example, to ensure tracking and follow-up on requests, all transportation matters could be raised as "New Business" at a Town Council meeting or preferably, at a Committee of the Whole meeting. This way, all matters to be addressed are placed on an Outstanding List for follow-up. The Councillor can then track when certain matters will be coming back to Council, or if there are any delays and the reason for any delay. Because this is a public process, residents whose homes are outside of the survey limits and who would not normally receive an initial mailing, can be included in the process, or they can be surveyed separately while still being consulted.

3. At what level of community support should the Town implement any change

There are two factors to consider when reviewing change. The first is at what level of community support should a review/survey be initiated, and the second is what level of community support will be required for the community to accept the change.

All traffic and transportation reviews require resources in the form of staff and budgets. Current policies are such that full reviews are often triggered as soon as one individual lodges a complaint or requests a change. The Parking Policy is specific about receiving written confirmation from the Ward Councillor prior to proceeding. Some other elements in the Transportation Management Policy have a similar requirement.

However, on many occasions, Engineering staff will initiate a process as a result of a single-individual complaint and, only to find out that the remainder of the affected community does not support the change or that they are in fact angered by the possibility of that particular change. Exacerbating the process is the fact that there is minimal response from the community until the changes (like new signs) appear, and then opposition begins to be expressed after completion of the study and implementation of the change.

In either case, staff has found that this way of proceeding to respond to complaints or requests is highly inefficient and results in a usage of the Town's resources that could be much improved. As the Town grows, in order to maintain acceptable service levels, staff must do more with less resources in order to meet community and Council expectations. Finding measures for increased efficiency is necessary to be able to provide a reasonable level of service without over-extending budgets and other resources. Therefore, a new level of commitment to change by the community should be required before any resources are expended to initiate a transportation or traffic review.

The second part of the equation is what level of community support will be required for the community to accept the change that was requested. The Town's current practice is to implement the change if a majority of the affected households is in favour. Unfortunately, response rates to surveys are often low and, on occasion, they are minimal. Staff has experienced some situations where only three responses were received in a 60 household affected community, meaning that two households have dictated the change. There is a cost associated with change, and if a community truly wants change, their position should be known and there must be a better way to gauge that response.

A review of practices in other municipalities lends insight into different strategies. Many municipalities have much more effective and efficient methods. Some use a two-step process, whereby a certain number or a given percentage of households must petition to trigger the process of exploring whether there should be a change (i.e. 25% of the impacted households or a minimum of 10 households). Once the review is done, change is only implemented if a follow-up majority is in favour (which could be anywhere from "50 +1" to 75 percent of households impacted being in favour of the change). Some municipalities have an initial high percentage requirement of a minimum of 50% to 75% support from the community to trigger the review process whereas some municipalities use a combination of different elements to determine whether a review should proceed.

A very important factor in the triggering and review/consultation processes is to have the Ward Councillor as an active participant in the process. Consideration should also be given to Council's strategic direction on public consultation, and the transparency and tracking of the request and the entire process.

Based on the above, staff recommends that the Town implement a two-step process that will guide when to initiate a review, and how much community support will be required to implement change. The percentage and determination for each of the steps being recommended for various types of changes that are being requested are listed in Appendix A. Irrespective of the type of change being sought, all requests should be presented via the Council process, and all decisions for change should be approved by Town Council.

RECOMMENDATION

As a result of the findings presented in this report, it is recommended that the Public Consultation and Support Plan in Appendix A, which is being presented as an efficiency measure and which is based on considerable research conducted by Town staff, be considered and adopted for use starting in January 2017.

BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES

This Consultation and Acceptance Plan address three Council Strategic Priorities: Community Engagement, Efficiency/Financial Management, and Traffic Safety & Mitigation.

CONSULTATION

This report is the result of the Town's experience with years of public consultation on traffic and transportation matters, and on research of what is being done in other municipalities. Modifications are being proposed to serve the public and Town Council more effectively and with a more efficient use of the Town's resources. There was no direct consultation in the production of this report. However, Appendix A will be posted on the Town's website and staff will receive feedback from the public throughout 2017 as the process is adjusted for final consideration in 2018.

HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

There would be no human resource impacts, other than a more efficient use of resources so that more staff time can be devoted to developing and implementing traffic mitigation strategies.

BUDGET IMPACT

Operating Budget

The Operating Budget may see a small increase in mailing costs, but it would be difficult to determine the extent as it would depend on the number and complexity of issues being reviewed in a given year.

Capital Budget

The Capital Budget would not be impacted.

CONTACT

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Appendix A

Public Consultation and Support Plan – Transportation Services

1. POINT OR SINGLE LOCATION ISSUES:

1.1 All-way stop controls:

Initiation Requirement:	Ward Councillor through Committee of the Whole
Staff Decision:	Based on the Policy Warrants, or sound engineering judgment
Reporting:	Staff reporting to Committee of the Whole
Notification/Consultation:	Households directly impacted (3 households on either side of the requested stop sign location)
Moratorium:	This issue shall not be reconsidered for a minimum period of 2 years after the decision has been approved by Council

1.2 Signage:

Initiation Requirement:	Ward Councillor to Director of Engineering
Staff Decision:	Based on the Policy Warrants/OTM Book Requirements, or sound engineering judgment
Reporting:	Staff reporting directly back to Councillor/households
Notification/Consultation:	Households directly impacted (3 households on either side of the sign location) if warranted
Moratorium:	This issue shall not be reconsidered for a minimum period of 2 years after the decision has been made by staff

1.3 School Crossing Locations:

Initiation Requirement:	School Board/School Council request to Ward Councillor through Committee of the Whole request
Staff Decision:	Based on the Policy Warrants/OTM Book Requirements, or sound engineering judgment
Reporting:	Staff reporting to Committee of the Whole
Notification/Consultation:	Households directly impacted (3 households on either side of the crossing location)
Moratorium:	This issue shall not be reconsidered for a minimum period of 2 years after the decision has been accepted by Council

2. LINEAR OR STREET SPECIFIC LOCATION ISSUES

2.1 Parking Restrictions:

Initiation Requirement:	25% of all households between 2 intersections, or 25% of households on an entire street, depending on the nature of the request; to be presented by residents as a petition request to the Ward Councillor through a Committee of the Whole meeting
Staff Decision:	A minimum 50% return on the survey is required to continue the process (if a 50% return is not achieved, the matter will not be considered further); of the returns received, 60% of all returns received from within the study area must support the change to proceed to a safety review if necessary; the findings of the safety review can void the change if warranted.
Reporting:	Staff reporting to Committee of the Whole
Notification/Consultation:	All households fronting or flanking the street/study area.
Moratorium:	This issue shall not be reconsidered for a minimum period of 2 years after the decision has been accepted by Council.

2.2 Traffic Calming measures/speed mitigation (street specific):

Initiation Requirement:	25% of households on a street, with a minimum of 10 households in favour; to be presented by residents as a petition request to the Ward Councillor through Committee of the Whole meeting.
Staff Decision:	A minimum 50% return on the survey is required to continue the process (if a 50% return is not achieved, the matter will not be considered further); of the returns received, 60% of all returns received from within the study area must support the change to proceed to a safety review if necessary; the findings of the safety review can void the change if warranted.
Reporting:	Staff reporting to Committee of the Whole
Notification/Consultation:	All households fronting or flanking the street/study area
Moratorium:	This issue shall not be reconsidered for a minimum period of 2 years after the decision has been approved by Council.

3. COMMUNITY-WIDE ISSUES

3.1 Active Transportation Routes:

Initiation Requirement:	Staff notification of commencement to Town Council
Staff Decision:	OP as Approved (OPA#11)
Reporting:	Staff reporting to Committee of the Whole
Notification/Consultation:	All households fronting or flanking the street/study area along with notification (Town page, Town web site) of public information session
Moratorium:	Not applicable.

4. ISSUES NOT LISTED – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Initiation Requirement:	Important that a level of support of the issue come through the Ward Councillor via the Committee of the Whole
Staff Decision:	It will depend on whether it is an operational/safety issue or not. Community decision issues must meet a 50% return on surveys and 60% of the responses must be in favour; a safety review may be conducted before recommending any change.
Reporting:	Staff reporting to Committee of the Whole
Notification/Consultation:	All households that are directly impacted with consideration of expanding the contact Town-wide if it is a community-wide issue.
Moratorium:	An issue shall not be reconsidered for a minimum period of 2 years after the decision has been approved by Council