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BOULEVARD AND ROADSIDE MAINTENANCE

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, November 16, 2007, from the General Manager, Roads:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The current standard for roadside grass cutting and related debris pick-up be maintained.
2. Staff be authorized to continue the current practice of contracting roadside maintenance with participating local municipalities to maintain boulevards in urban areas.
3. The level of service for clean up of illegal roadside dumping be increased to a routine service during the months from May to October at an estimated cost of \$136,000 be approved.
4. The draft 2008 Roads Operations Budget include \$136,000 for this enhanced service.

2. PURPOSE

This report is to provide information on the Regional practice relating to roadside grass cutting and debris pick-up. In addition, this report provides information on the current practice of staff negotiation of roadside maintenance agreements with the participating local municipalities.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional staff was requested to prepare a report on the Region's practices for debris pick-up on Regional roadside areas.

3.1 Current Roadside Maintenance

The current standards for roadside maintenance, with respect to the number of times the grass is cut and the debris picked up on Regional roads, were approved by Regional Council on October 12, 2000 and are summarized below:

- Urban boulevard maintenance

- Debris pick-up – once in the Spring
- Grass cutting – 11 times per year, debris picked up prior to cutting
- Illegal dumping – as needed
- Rural roadside maintenance
 - Debris pick-up – once in the Spring
 - One swath grass cutting – two times per year
 - Illegal roadside dumping – as required

The boulevard and roadside maintenance is carried out through annual agreements negotiated with the Towns of Markham, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Newmarket and the City of Vaughan to maintain the Regional boulevards within their respective boundaries on a cost-recoverable basis based on 11 cuts per year. The remaining urban areas in other municipalities are receiving 11 cuts per year with work performed by Region staff (previously contracted). The 11 cuts per year average out to approximately one cut every two weeks over the growing season. The boulevard maintenance agreements also include debris pick-up prior to grass cutting.

These standards are found to be generally appropriate for grass cutting activities in terms of providing a reasonable level of service with minimal negative public feedback. However, as the Regional road network continues to grow and as rural roads are reconstructed to urban roads, the grass cutting increases significantly from one swath two times per year to 11 cuts per year.

Historical and projected costs for roadside maintenance costs, between 2004 and 2007, are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1
Roadside Maintenance in Regional Urban Areas
2004 - 2007

	2004	2005	2006	2007
	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)	Estimated (\$)
Aurora	21,876	24,064	44,520	50,880
East Gwillimbury	21,000	21,000	11,400	7,800
Georgina	21,000	21,000	11,400	7,800
King	2,000	2,000	2,100	2,100
Markham	140,227	181,317	181,324	185,857
Newmarket	50,050	53,200	57,000	59,000
Richmond Hill	120,745	133,082	160,683	164,700
Vaughan	253,303	271,297	291,544	330,846
Whitchurch-Stouffville	<u>2,000</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>2,100</u>	<u>2,100</u>
Total Cost	\$632,201	\$708,960	\$762,071	\$818,283

Currently, there are no agreements on Regional roads in municipalities with primarily rural cross section. The upward trend in total costs is attributed to the increased urban areas that require the 11 cuts per season on the boulevard areas compared to only two cuts in rural areas. The increase in boulevard areas occur when rural roadways become urbanized and grassed boulevards are constructed as part the urbanization of the Regional road network. In addition, the reduced costs in the Towns of East Gwillimbury and Georgina are attributed to a change from contracted services to maintenance by Regional staff.

Currently, the Region performs a planned right-of-way clean up once per year, during the spring, to remove the debris that has accumulated during the winter months. To address the remainder of the year, debris pick-up is done prior to boulevard grass cutting in urbanized areas and spot clean ups are performed on an “as needed” basis in rural areas. These costs are included in Table 2.

In addition to the regular debris pick-up prior to grass cutting, pick-up of debris resulting from illegal roadside dumping on Regional roads is done on an “as required” basis. This generally results from resident complaint or the routine area patrol.

Table 2
Roadside Dumping and Garbage Pick-Up in Both Urban and Rural Areas

Reportable Activity	2004 (\$)	2005 (\$)	2006 (\$)	2007 Budgeted (\$)
Debris Pick-up / Spring Clean-up	20,131	22,999	27,883	38,883
Debris Pick-up Spot Locations	85,017	95,559	131,694	138,764
Roadside Dumping	<u>36,958</u>	<u>26,836</u>	<u>47,255</u>	<u>48,683</u>
Total Cost	\$142,106	\$145,394	\$206,832	\$226,330

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Urban Boulevards

The current standard of 11 cuts per year, for grass cutting and related debris pick-up activities are found to be generally appropriate in terms of providing an acceptable level of service. The majority of the urban boulevards are maintained by the local municipalities on a cost-recovery basis. The local municipalities having grassed boulevards within York Region maintain similar standards.

The continuing urbanization of the Regional road system results in an increase in the area of boulevard to maintain and an increase in the annual maintenance costs.

4.2 Roadside Dumping

A steady yearly increase in costs related to illegal roadside dumping has been identified. The most significant increases are in the southern portion of the Region, likely attributable to the closing of the Keele Valley Landfill Site, with a marginal increase in the northern portion. Typically, if debris is not removed quickly, additional incidents of illegal dumping at the same location tend to occur.

The typical material that is illegally dumped is construction and landscaping materials, large furniture and recently there is an increase in the illegal dumping of general household waste, tires, and appliances.

Most of the illegal dumping occurs in rural, low volume roads. Although there is a by-law governing the dumping, it is difficult to lay charges under the by-law for this dumping and enforcement is generally non-existent as the perpetrator needs to be caught dumping.

4.3 Options

The following options have been considered by staff as a means to improving the boulevard and roadside maintenance.

4.3.1 Option 1. Increase Permanent Staff Complement (2 FTEs)

Increase staff to provide additional and timely debris pick-up capability. Currently, staff are redirected from other planned activities as required to deal with incidences of illegal roadside dumping. Region-wide labour costs per year, specifically attributable to illegal roadside dumping, are approximately the equivalent of 1.5 full time employees. To ensure that critical maintenance activities are not neglected, additional staffing should be dedicated to all debris removal. It is estimated that the cost of two permanent full time employees would be \$140,000 (payroll burden included) per year and would require an increase in the debris removal portion of the maintenance budget by approximately \$195,000 for two FTEs including vehicle costs (tandem dump truck and loader) and the increase in disposal costs. During the winter months, debris pick-up can continue, as larger debris items can be collected rather than wait until spring clean up. During winter snow events, these two staff would be able to be redeployed to work with winter maintenance crews in winter related maintenance activities such as salting and ploughing operations.

4.3.2 Option 2. Hire Two Temporary Staff Summer Only (2 TFTs)

Increase staff on a temporary basis to provide additional and timely debris pick-up capability in the spring/summer months only (May to October). Region labour costs incurred for this option based on two temporary employees during the non-winter months would be \$81,000 per year. This would require an increase in the debris removal portion

of the maintenance budget by approximately \$136,000 for two TFTs including vehicle and disposal costs.

Regional staff has access to various equipment if required and only internal operating costs would be incurred. Region equipment costs for front-end loaders are \$76.60 per hour and dump truck costs are \$50.00 per hour.

Regional equipment could be made available with the assistance of staff planning to use the additional equipment when it will not impact other operational maintenance activities and only for the time period required not bound to a four hour minimum charge.

4.3.3 Option 3. Contract Out Debris Pick-up

Consideration has been given to contracting out services for debris pick-up. Staff has found that it is difficult to develop a basis for payment for this. Roadside dumping could require the use of front-end loaders or dump trucks which would be very costly to rent and contractor rates for the common four-hour minimal rental would drive debris pick-up costs substantially higher. Contractor front-end loader rental rates start from approximately \$81.00 per hour with four hour minimum and contractor dump truck rental rates start from approximately \$60.00 per hour with a four hour minimum.

An estimated cost for contracted service for debris pick-up for a six-month period would be approximately \$220,000, this includes the rental of a loader, tandem dump truck, pick-up truck, labour and disposal costs. The contractor would have to ensure that a loader, a tandem dump truck and pick-up truck would be available for eight hours per day. This equipment stand-by cost would be added to the overall debris pick-up contracted service.

4.3.4 New Waste Transfer Facility

The construction of a waste transfer facility to service the southern areas of the Region is currently underway by the Solid Waste and Administration Branch of the Transportation and Works Department. One facility will be constructed in the City of Vaughan and in operation by mid 2008. A second facility in Richmond Hill is scheduled to be in operation in 2009. The provision of these facilities is expected to reduce the amount of illegal dumping.

4.4 Analysis of Options

Option 1 would have an impact on the operating budget of \$195,000 for pick-up of illegally dumped debris and also provide an opportunity to increase the garbage pick-up portion of boulevard maintenance. This option would also provide two additional FTEs to assist with winter maintenance.

Option 2 would also have an impact on the operating budget of \$136,000 for pick-up of illegally dumped debris and would also provide an opportunity to increase the garbage pick-up portion of boulevard maintenance, however would be limited to the summer months only. Once the new Solid Waste Transfer Facilities are in operation, staff will assess the requirement for the additional two TFT staff.

Option 3 would also have an impact on the operating budget for pick-up of illegally dumped debris. The estimated cost of \$220,000 for this service due to the varied external rental of various equipment would create a difficult budgeting situation. The increased service of debris pick-up would also have increased costs associated.

As the new Solid Waste Transfer Facilities start operation in the southern area of the Region, it is anticipated that the incidences of illegal roadside dumping should be reduced and therefore reduce related costs to the Roads Branch, but there would be an increase in the cost to the Solid Waste and Administration Branch for the provision of a new facility.

As a result, Option 2 is the preferred option.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If the recommendations in this report are adopted, there are financial implications to the Roads Branch maintenance budget.

An increase in the 2008 Roads Operation Budget of \$136,000 is being requested to cover the cost of two TFTs and equipment to carry out this enhanced service.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Currently, agreements are made with local municipalities to cut the boulevards in some urban areas. The Region compensates these local municipalities for up to a maximum of 11 cuts per year. Included in the agreements is the removal of garbage prior to cutting.

The addition of two temporary staff for debris pick-up will provide staff with the ability to be proactive in removing debris before receiving complaints, thus providing a cleaner and aesthetically pleasing road for the residents.

7. CONCLUSION

At this time, the current level of service for grass boulevard maintenance is satisfactory. The negotiation process with the local municipalities for boulevard maintenance should be maintained and additional funding should be allocated to the 2008 Roads operating budget to increase the level of service for debris removal resulting from illegal roadside dumping.

For more information on this report, contact Brian Harrison, Director, Operations, Roads Branch at extension 5205 in the Transportation and Works Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.