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TOWARDS GREAT REGIONAL STREETS POLICY FOR LAY-BY PARKING ON REGIONAL ROADS

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends:

- 1. The presentation by Dino Basso, Director, Capital Delivery – Roads be received;**
- 2. The written submission by Mayor Michael Di Biase be received;**
- 3. The recommendations contained in the following report, March 24, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be adopted, subject to:**

- (a) amending Section 4.3 – Recommended Policy, to read as follows:**

“Lay-by parking should be considered:

Bullet Point 1:

- At locations that support Regional and local municipal transportation and land-use planning policies, strategies and objectives, examples of which are: the Region’s roads program, local municipal official plan policies, urban design guidelines, urban renewal plans, heritage district plans, master streetscape plans, transit service plans, etc.”**

- (b) Referring the following comments as submitted by Mayor Michael Di Biase to Staff for consideration:**

“Notwithstanding the above any location within the urbanized area should be given consideration for lay-by parking on a Regional road, if it can be demonstrated by the local municipality to be consistent with good land-use and transportation planning.

Bullet Point 3

- If the land-use adjacent to the location of a proposed lay-by is commercial and office in nature, or is mixed-use commercial/residential in nature, and the design/layout of the building face is co-ordinated with the streetscape and lay-by lane design.”**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The policy for lay-by parking on Regional roads attached to this report be adopted by Regional Council.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Clerks of each of the local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

To propose a Regional policy that would provide guidance to Regional staff when assessing requests for lay-by parking on Regional roads. The proposed policy is appended to this report (*See Attachment 1*).

3. BACKGROUND

The Region has received several requests to allow lay-by parking on Regional roads. These requests incorporate lay-by parking into street designs with a view of creating pedestrian and business friendly urban environments.

In a specific response to a request from the City of Vaughan Maple Streetscaping Committee for lay-by parking adjacent to a commercial development on Keele Street, the Region indicated its support, in principle. As lay-by parking has an important relationship to urban development, vehicle and pedestrian safety, traffic congestion and the economic vitality of adjacent businesses, it is recognized that a lay-by parking policy would provide guidance to Regional and local staff, as well as to commercial developers and/or adjacent property owners, on where, and under what conditions, lay-by parking could be permitted.

Lay-by parking occurs where vehicles park in a dedicated parking lane, 2.8 metres wide, adjacent to the through lane. The area affected is beyond the through-lane where traditionally the right-of-way was dedicated to sidewalks, trees, and utility placement.

Lay-by parking has been implemented on a number of roadways in the City of Toronto. However, the City does not have a formal policy that determines where or where not to permit lay-by parking facilities. To date, no formal safety or operational assessment of these parking facilities has been made. City of Toronto staff has indicated its interest in York Region's proposed lay-by parking policy.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Benefits of Lay-by parking

The traditional function of the arterial road system has been to efficiently and effectively carry large volumes of all types of traffic. In designing the arterial road system the emphasis has been on accommodating vehicles. However, in select areas such as downtowns and commercial cores, there is a need to better integrate the Regional road with the surrounding community, resulting in part, in shifting the emphasis away from the singular efficiency of vehicle movement, to a better balance of the use of the right-of-way with a more diverse user group including: pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders.

Furthermore, in response to Regional Council's desire for more streetscaping on Regional roads, staff are pursuing several potential improvements under the theme "Towards Great Regional Street – A Path to Improvement". The initiative includes the following studies, standards, policies and guidelines:

- Street tree planting and maintenance program (reported to the Transportation and Works Committee in January 2006).
- Regional standard for six-lane roads (reported to the Transportation and Works Committee in March 2006).
- Policy guidelines for lay-by parking on Regional roads (the subject of this report).
- Guidelines/Policy for cost-sharing of enhanced local municipal streetscaping initiatives on Regional roads (expected report in May 2006).

These initiatives build upon Council's earlier efforts to implement streetscaping on Regional road widening contracts.

Lay-by parking is an important streetscape design feature that can contribute significantly to the appearance of a safe and attractive streetscape and a more urban street environment. Strategically placed lay-by parking has been shown to:

- Increase economic activity in urban areas by improving public access to local businesses and by making urban areas more vibrant and attractive to consumers and is therefore an important tool in urban renewal and revitalization initiatives.
- Effectively "communicate" to drivers that they are entering a distinctively different road way environment where the emphasis is no longer on speed and efficiency, but on the safe accommodation of traffic and other road user groups such as pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders.
- Reduce the travel speeds of vehicles (and hence the severity of collisions) to levels that are more appropriate for urban street environments.

- Increase the perceived safety of pedestrians on sidewalks by providing a barrier between them and vehicles in the travel lanes.

4.2 Issues for Consideration

Although the benefits of lay-by parking are many, there are a number of issues which staff have had to carefully consider to ensure that these facilities are carefully integrated into the overall use, design and operation of the road facility.

4.2.1 Winter Maintenance

Lay-by parking, poses significant challenges to winter maintenance operations. The lay-by lane needs to be a minimum length of three parking bays (32.1 metres, tapers included) to allow the normal road snow clearing equipment to turn into the lay-by lane without any additional manoeuvres, such as reversing. If this is not feasible, smaller equipment would be required to clear the lay-by lane.

In addition, when a normal snow-plow is used, a windrow of snow would be created along the edge of the lay-by lane. This windrow could be an impediment to people going to and from their vehicles to the sidewalk and should, therefore, be removed.

The Region is not equipped to carry out this type of snow removal, where the local municipalities are. Local municipalities are responsible for sidewalk clearing and use smaller equipment and front-end loaders to remove snow.

The lay-by lane needs to be clear of parked vehicles, therefore, parking control during and after a storm event would be required.

There are several options for the winter maintenance of lay-by lanes:

Option 1: Maintenance by Local Municipality

The local authority would be responsible for maintaining the lay-by lane including the removal of snow and any other maintenance that may be required to keep the lay-by lane in good condition.

Option 2: Maintenance by the Region

The Region would be responsible for maintaining the lay-by lane. During a winter storm event, the Region's first objective is to clear the through-lanes for traffic. The other lanes are second priority and intersections and boulevards are the last to be cleaned. Parking areas would be the lowest priority for Regional snow clearing.

To effectively clear lay-by lanes, the Region's snow-plows will require a minimum lay-by lane length of 32.1 metres (three parking bays plus tapers). Shorter distances may result in the Region requiring additional, more specialized snow removal equipment.

Option 3: Shared Maintenance

Under this option, the winter maintenance responsibilities would be shared. The Region would plow the snow in the lay-by to the side of the road to form a windrow. Afterwards, the local municipality would then use their own equipment and staff to remove the windrow if and where necessary.

The lay-by lane snow clearing would be a low priority and could be done with existing equipment.

4.2.2 Non-Winter Maintenance

Maintenance of lay-by lanes will be minimal provided that they have been designed and constructed properly. Minor curb and asphalt repair may occur over time. As such, the non-winter maintenance of lay-by lanes would be the responsibility of the Region.

4.2.3 Right-of-Way Constraints

A lay-by lane reduces the space available in the boulevard for trees, pedestrian walkways, utilities and other landscaping features. Many of the Region's four or five lane roadways have a sufficient right-of-way to implement lay-by lanes. However, due to right-of-way limitations, it may not be feasible to provide lay-by lanes on all existing or proposed six or seven lane roadways.

4.2.4 Safety

A review of some engineering literature indicates that safety concerns may arise in certain situations where lay-by parking is introduced. These safety concerns are:

- Vehicles leaving and entering the parked position.
- Occupants exiting parked vehicles on the street side.
- Sight distance restrictions at driveways and intersections caused by parked vehicles.
- Lack of pedestrian visibility at uncontrolled crossing locations.
- Conflicts between cyclists and the opening of vehicle doors.

The degree of hazard posed by these safety concerns are related to:

- **Operating speed.** The higher the operating speed, the more space is required for vehicles to avoid collisions.
- **Density of parking.** The denser the parking, the more the number of parking manoeuvres and the higher the risk of parking related conflicts and collisions.
- **Parking turnover.** A higher parking turnover will result in an increased number of parking manoeuvres and hence parking related conflicts and collisions.
- **Width of street.** Wider streets are associated with higher speeds, but also provide more space for drivers to avoid collisions and for more separation between through-traffic and cyclists with parked vehicles.
- **Functional classification of street.** Parking has been found to be more hazardous on major arterial roads/streets due to their higher operating speeds.

- ***Pedestrian crossing demand at uncontrolled locations.*** Pedestrians (especially children) crossing between parked vehicles are often not visible to approaching vehicles on the major road.
- ***Cyclist volumes.*** Cyclists are often confronted with people opening doors into their path.

It can be concluded, therefore, that lay-by parking is most suitable in core urban areas where speeds are likely lower and drivers are more likely to expect, and to be on the lookout for pedestrians and cyclists.

4.2.5 Capacity and Traffic Operations

Due to the 'friction' caused by parking manoeuvres, lay-by parking lanes have been found to decrease the capacity of adjacent through-lanes by up to 30%. This translates to an overall 15% reduction in the capacity of roadways with two through lanes per direction.

Parking manoeuvres associated with lay-by lanes could significantly compromise the efficiency of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes.

4.2.6 Future Reconstruction of the Roadway

To allow the Region to remove a lay-by lane, if necessary, during future road reconstruction projects without exposure to claims for compensation, an applicant should be required to agree in the site plan agreement to waive any claims for compensation (including injurious affection for business loss) in the event that the Region elects in the future to remove the lay-by parking.

4.2.7 On-site Parking Requirements

Lay-by parking is not intended to be a substitute for on-site parking requirements. Lay-by parking should, therefore, only be permitted where all on-site parking requirements have been satisfied.

4.3 Recommended Policy

Notwithstanding the issues in Section 4.2, lay-by parking lanes at locations where appropriate mitigation measures, as outlined in the policy guidelines below, are applied, will result in an overall net benefit.

Lay-by parking should be considered:

- At locations that support Regional and local transportation and land-use planning policies, strategies and objectives, examples of which are: the Region's roads program, local zoning plans, urban design/renewal plans, transit service plans, etc.
- At locations where Regional work has not been programmed within the next five years.

- If the land-use adjacent to the location of a proposed lay-by lane is commercial and/or office in nature, and the design/layout of the building face is co-ordinated with the streetscape and lay-by lane design.
- If the lay-by lane design is integrated with site plan and boulevard design.
- On Regional roadways where there are no designated HOV lanes in operation.
- On Regional roadways where the speed limit is 60-km per hour or less.

In addition:

- The design of the lay-by lane is satisfactorily integrated with:
 - Right turn lanes.
 - Pedestrian walkways.
 - Transit facilities.
 - Driveway visibility.
- The design of the lay-by lane meets the following design criteria:
 - Orientation of parking bays: Parallel to through-lanes.
 - Minimum width = 2.8 metres
 - Minimum length = 6.7 metres
 - Minimum uninterrupted length of lay-by lane = 32.1 metres (beginning and end tapers included) (i.e. three parking bays).
 - Curb extensions/bulb-outs are provided at all driveway accesses.
 - Any section of a lay-by lane must commence and end with a taper not less than six metres in length.
- The lay-by parking is not counted towards on-site parking requirements.
- The following are in place:
 - A maintenance agreement with the local municipality.
 - A site plan agreement with the applicant that waives any claims against the Region for compensation (including injurious affection for business loss) in the event the Region elects in the future to remove the lay-by parking.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Lay-by lanes have been proposed in conjunction with a site plan development and incorporated into the boulevard streetscaping design. In this situation, and most others, the cost of the lay-by lane will be carried through the development, site plan agreement.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

By adopting a lay-by parking policy, York Region will help to contribute to the establishment of vibrant core areas along the Regional road system. Lay-by parking is supported in principle by York Region due to the positive implications to community character, the establishment of commercial districts, the : and the pedestrian environment. The proposed policy will have a direct impact on local municipal streetscaping practices, site plan review, and parking policies.

7. CONCLUSION

The policy for lay-by parking on Regional roads will provide guidance on where it would be acceptable to allow lay-by parking and what measures could be taken to further mitigate the negative effects that lay-by parking has on traffic safety, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, road function and winter maintenance.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)