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GRASS BOULEVARD MAINTENANCE - STATUS UPDATE

The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated June 8, 2010, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Staff be directed to develop a business case(s) for enhanced grass boulevard maintenance options for consideration as part of the draft 2011 Roads Operating Budget.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides information on the Regional practice relating to boulevard grass cutting.

3. BACKGROUND

Boulevard lawn maintenance is carried out through annual agreements negotiated with some of our local municipalities to maintain the Regional road boulevards within their respective boundaries on a cost-recoverable basis. In municipalities where there are no agreements, boulevard grass cutting services are delivered by the Region.

Regional staff was requested to prepare a report on the Region's practices for boulevard maintenance on Regional roadside areas.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Current standards for roadside maintenance were approved by Council in 2000

The current standards for roadside maintenance, with respect to the number of times grass is cut and 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 and prior to each grass cutting.
 - Grass cutting – up to 11 times per year.
- Rural roadside maintenance
 - Debris pick-up – once in the spring and prior to each grass cutting.
 - One swath grass cutting – two times per year.

Boulevard maintenance on Regional roads is carried out through annual agreements with local municipalities and by Regional staff

Boulevard lawn maintenance is carried out through annual agreements negotiated with some of our local municipalities to maintain the Regional boulevards within their respective boundaries on a cost-recoverable basis, to a maximum of 11 cuts per year. The remaining urban areas in other municipalities are receiving up to 11 cuts per year with work performed or coordinated by Transportation Services staff. The 11 cuts per year averages approximately one cut every two weeks over the growing season. The boulevard maintenance agreements also include debris pick-up prior to grass cutting.

Grass cutting effort is increasing as the Regional road network continues to grow and roads are urbanized

During normal growing seasons (early May to mid October), these standards are generally sufficient for grass cutting activities in terms of providing a reasonable level of service with minimal negative public feedback. Local municipalities have grassed boulevards on local streets generally maintained to a similar standard. The Regional road network continues to grow and as rural roads are reconstructed to urban standards, the grass cutting effort increases from one swath undertaken twice a year to the urban maintenance standard of up to 11 cuts per year. As a result, the annual maintenance costs continue to rise.

Differences in costs for grass boulevards maintained by Regional staff reflect differences in the types and length of boulevard in the municipalities

Currently, there are no agreements for boulevard grass maintenance on Regional roads in the four municipalities where Regional roads are predominantly rural in nature. In these municipalities; namely the Towns of East Gwillimbury, Georgina, Whitchurch-Stouffville and the Township of King, boulevard maintenance services are provided by Regional staff of Transportation Services. The small urbanized areas of boulevards within these municipalities are maintained to the same level of service of up to 11 cuts per year. The difference in costs for grass boulevards maintained by Regional staff reflects the differences in the quantities and locations of boulevards in these municipalities. The grass boulevards in the small urbanized areas are not in one central

location and travel time for staff to get to the varying locations, and mobilization/demobilization times have an impact on costs.

Ongoing analysis to address increasing scope and rising expectation

Staff continue to investigate and analyze the level of service requirements for urban boulevard maintenance. It is anticipated the construction of Regional arterial roads in urban areas, with emphasis on transit, pedestrian and cycle traffic, will result in boulevards with increased requirements for grass cutting and debris pickup.

To comply with the restricted use of herbicides to kill noxious weeds, more frequent grass cutting may be required on urban Regional road grass boulevards to minimize weed growth. Considering the new changing urban landscape, it is now appropriate for Region staff, in consultation with local municipal staff, to evaluate the potential for enhanced level of service delivery options for urban boulevard maintenance. Staff are now initiating these consultations and it is proposed to consider alternative business case(s) as part of the draft 2011 Roads Operating Budget submission.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost for grass boulevard maintenance in 2009 across the Region was \$1,110,245. Any proposed changes to the current standards will be reflected in the draft 2011 Roads Operating Budget submission.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Currently agreements exist with a number of local municipalities to compensate for local municipal staff maintenance of Regional boulevards in urban areas. The Region compensates these local municipalities for up to a maximum of 11 cuts per year, although in some municipalities the rate may be exceeded at local municipal cost. In other municipalities, the Regional road boulevards are maintained by Regional staff or a Regional contractor to a maximum of 11 cuts per season, as directed by Regional Council.

7. CONCLUSION

Regional staff continue to work to the level of service prescribed by Regional Council in 2000 for urban boulevards, of a maximum of 11 cuts per growing season. Consultations are now getting underway with staff of local municipalities for potential changes to this level of service, and to consider potential service delivery options. Regional staff propose to include alternatives in the submission of the draft 2011 Roads Operating Budget.

For more information on this report, contact Paul Jankowski, General Manager, Roads Branch at extension 5901 in the Transportation Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.