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Council-In-Committee Meeting – June 11, 2024

Subject: Comprehensive Parking Study Staff Recommendations
Report Number: OPS-24-010
Division: Operations
Department: Roads
Ward: All Wards
Purpose: For Decision

Recommendation(s):

That Staff Report OPS-24-010 Comprehensive Parking Study be received as information:

And That Council direct staff to amend the parking by-law 2011-189 to implement the 2-hour parking restriction on both sides of Colborne St North from Union St to Young St. in Simcoe with completion in 2024;

And That Council direct staff to amend the parking by-law 2011-189 to prohibit overnight parking in the downtown business districts of Simcoe, Delhi, Waterford and Port Dover during the winter control season – Dec 1st to April 15th 3am-6am anticipated completion in 2025;

And That Council direct staff to develop a comprehensive parking database and mapping for all Norfolk to be completed in conjunction with creating a single comprehensive parking bylaw;

And That Council directs staff to review and create a database of roadway widths in urban areas following the LEA recommendations for on-street parking restrictions, staff will present findings in future staff reports with anticipated completion in 2025;

And That Council direct staff to review the downtown core business areas as per the LEA report to ensure that 2-hour parking restrictions are in place. To be completed in 2024;

And That Council direct staff to investigate the redesign of the Abigail Becker lot in Long Point to be implemented in 2025;

And That Council direct staff to review all existing 15-minute parking zones that were installed to ensure that they are still required by end of 2024;

And That Council direct staff to begin the Provincial application process for the redesign of Ordnance Ave in Turkey Point;

And That Council direct staff to bring forward a 2025 capital budget item for the completion of the parking lot improvements at the intersection of St. James St. South and Alice St Waterford;

And That Council direct staff to enter into conversations with the Province for the requirements and approvals to convert the baseball diamond in Turkey Point to a parking lot and budget accordingly in future years for building costs.

Executive Summary:

Staff report CAO-21-73 was presented and accepted by Council on November 09, 2021, outlining the need for an independent and comprehensive assessment of the parking supply, needs, policies, programs, and enforcement within the County. This assessment would provide a strong foundation for a parking strategy to meet existing and future needs.

Discussion:

Parking-related issues and functions in the past were distributed amongst several departments with no real guidance or written policies to follow and decisions were often made on an ad hoc basis. An internal Parking Group was established in the spring of 2021 to address the parking service gap.

Staff continuously receive numerous public requests for parking restriction changes, signage upgrades, and enforcement concerns in county owned lots and on street parking. To address these matters in a consistent and viable manner, staff recognized the need for a formal process with criteria to ensure sound traffic decisions are made across the County.

The lack of policies and strategies results in an inconsistency related to the application of parking requirements throughout the County, and a lack of process for addressing requests and by-law amendments.

The Comprehensive Parking Study was proposed to close this gap and give the County a formal working document that would be used when making decisions on parking related matters, establish policies, guidance for future parking programs, by-law amendments and a formal corporate-wide parking strategy.

Staff went out to market with a request for proposals with LEA Consulting being awarded the project for the Norfolk County Comprehensive Parking Study.

Study Purpose and Background

The County has several distinct communities including rural areas, extensive lakefront resort area and downtown cores. The provision for adequate parking is a balancing act between meeting the needs of residents, businesses, visitors, restaurants, and employees, while responding to a fluctuating demand from seasonal visitors, and the physical and economic constraints unique to parking particularly in the downtown urban areas.

The Comprehensive Parking Study was undertaken in two phases.

- Phase One was to establish a vision, guiding principles, and policy framework for the study.
- Phase Two involved the formulation and evaluation of policy options to be implemented as part of a broader policy framework for the County.

Parking Enforcement

Parking enforcement occurs year-round with more enforcement occurring during the peak parking season in the summer months in comparison to the off-peak period (September-April). The County employs five (5) full-time By-law officers that conduct reactive or complaint-driven parking enforcement in their respective zones. There is significantly less parking enforcement during the off-peak period, especially for parking over the permitted time limit. By-law officers dedicate most of their time to other regular by-law investigations outside of parking enforcement. In the past the county hired 3 summer students with 2024 seeing an additional summer student being hired to deal with paid parking enforcement for the peak parking season which generates a significant increase in parking enforcement tickets and income.

LEA Consulting examined the comparative municipalities of Central Elgin, Haldimand County, Lambton Shores, Prince Edward County, Wasaga Beach and South Bruce Peninsula to identify how parking enforcement is conducted, with the following results.

- The number of full-time By-law Parking Enforcement Officers ranged from 1-6 although not hired exclusively for parking enforcement.
- The number of summer student By-law Parking Enforcement Officers ranged from 1-12, with some municipalities summer students hired exclusively for parking enforcement.

The report from LEA Consulting recommends the County should -

- consider emerging technologies with respect to parking enforcement, such as license plate readers to assist with enforcement year-round.
- Establish a new dedicated parking enforcement officer position, either full or part-time, to assist with parking enforcement and turnover in commercial areas. This FTE request will be reviewed during 2025 budget deliberations with a business case to support the request.

Best Practices Recommendations

- Time Limits: On-street parking should have reduced time limits in comparison to off-street parking in commercial cores.
- Permanent Paid Parking: Permanent paid parking should be implemented in commercial core areas to help increase parking turnover. Paid parking hours should remain at 10:00AM-6:00PM and continue with the current payment options to pay for parking.
- Winter Overnight Parking Restrictions: Norfolk should consider implementing time restrictions that provide more clarity on when winter overnight on-street parking is prohibited.
- Overnight Parking Permits: Overnight on-street parking permits should not be considered at this time as it will hinder snow removal activities. It is recommended that overnight parking continue to be allowed in municipal off-street parking.

Challenges and Opportunities

A review was completed of the existing conditions with respect to parking and curbside loading activity in Norfolk and the following challenges and opportunities were identified.

Challenges:

- Lack of parking due to low turnover rates
- Inconsistent right-of-way (ROW) widths in residential areas
- Inadequate on-site residential parking spaces leads to on-street parking spillover.
- Illegal parking on public and private properties due to lack of enforcement.

Opportunities

- Develop a Parking Permit Program to provide flexible parking solutions in residential areas.
- Include paid parking in commercial areas to create a higher turnover rate to support local business activity.
- Update parking policies, by-laws, and regulations to reflect future parking demand and travel behaviors.
- Improve and expand parking enforcement to ensure compliance with parking regulations.

Recommendations

Recommendations from this study are targeted towards parking policies, processes and design standards. These recommendations are divided into short term, being 5-year, and long term, within the next 5 to 10 years.

Policy and Process Recommendations

Immediate/short-term Recommendations

- Create a comprehensive parking database and mapping for all parking in Norfolk.
- Reduce on-street parking limits in the downtown cores or business/commercial areas to a maximum of 2-hour limit.
- Create and enforce time restrictions for overnight parking from 3am-6am December 1st to April 15th.
- Continue and possibly increase the paid parking program during the summer months.
- Hire and dedicate a parking enforcement officer on a full-time or part-time basis. Parking enforcement will be the primary function, with other by-law activities when time permits. This FTE request will be reviewed during budget deliberations with a business case to support the request.
- Implement decision making framework for 15-minute parking zones, on-street accessible parking and commercial loading zones.

Design Based Recommendations

Immediate/short-term Recommendations

- Adoption of design standards for on-street parking design and upgrades as recommended within the LEA Comprehensive Parking Study. This includes the review of existing roadway widths in comparison to the allowable on-street parking and adopting the design standards on all future roadway designs. Table 7-1 on page 57 of the LEA Parking Comprehensive Parking Study.
- Implementation of 2-hour parking on Colborne St North between Union St and Young St. as its predominately businesses in this stretch of roadway. Some businesses have their own parking facilities while others rely on the turnover of on-street parking spaces. Currently on-street parking is designated as 48 hour which does not facilitate turnover. Conversion to 2-hour parking will better align with the comparable business areas and streets within the downtown area. This can be accomplished at a minimal cost and accommodated within the current Roads approved budget.
- Ordnance Dr. on-street parking implementation. Currently there is a stone wall that sits between the roadway and beach/water. The county entered discussions with the Ministry several years ago about moving the stone wall 3 metres closer to the water's edge for erosion control. A spinoff benefit of moving the stone wall closer to the water is the County can improve both the parking and pedestrian safety situation along that stretch of roadway. The design would see the current pedestrian paved walkway moved to the front of the parking spaces instead of roadside to eliminate pedestrian vehicle conflicts. Additionally, the parking spaces would be more formalized with designated parking stalls. An estimated 375 parking spaces would be

created. For 2024 staff to begin the approval process for the work and create a new budget initiative for the completion of the work in 2025

- Parking on Abigail Becker Parkway and parking lot upgrades in Long Point. The LEA report shows one option for increasing the parking spaces in and around the Abigail Becker parking lot. Converting the angled parking to perpendicular will increase the number by one and with a further redesign of the lot by moving the wooden boundary stakes there could be an additional increase of 4 spots. Adding parallel parking on the east side of Abigail Becker would also see an additional 6 spaces. Recommend a 15-minute parking space with implementation in 2025.
- St. James Street South/Alice Street boat launch and parking area delineation and signage Waterford. The area is already used as a parking lot and an area to launch boats, kayaks, etc. With the design suggested by LEA it would formalize the parking area by creating designated parking for vehicles with trailers, a boat launch area and 11 standard parking stalls.
- Conversion of former baseball diamond in Turkey Point to a parking area. The baseball diamond has not been used for many years and with a high demand of parking in Turkey Point LEA reviewed the possibilities of converting the ball diamond to a parking area with either a full conversion, creating 108 parking spaces, or a partial conversion creating 53 new parking spaces. This proposal has both a short term and medium-term aspect to the project. The first step would be for staff to enter discussions with the Ministry to see if the conversion is possible as the ball diamond sits on Conservation land (Long Point Biosphere) where the county has a Conservation Covenant Agreement with the Ministry and may be prohibited from establishing a parking lot. If the property could be converted, then the following steps would be to get the proper applications and approvals for the property. This could be a lengthy process and therefore the project could enter the medium term.

Financial Services Comments:

It is anticipated that the time and costs required to complete the revisions to the parking by-law, reviews of current practices, restrictions, and the development of a comprehensive parking database including mapping will be accommodated within the current operating budgets.

If additional staff resources and/or change in scope of activities requiring additional budget are needed to accommodate these tasks, the information will be brought forward during the 2025 Operating Budget process, with a New Budget Initiative (NBI) as required. The NBI will be reviewed with other NBIs brought forth for alignment with County wide priorities, needs and funds available.

The large capital projects addressed in the report including but not limited to the redesign of Abigail Breaker parking lot, the redesign of Ordnance Dr in Turkey Point, improvements at the intersection of St. James St South and Alice Street, Waterford and the potential conversion of the baseball diamond in Turkey point be brought forward

during the 2025 capital budget process, to be included in the 2025 to 2034 Capital Plan for Council approval. Potential impacts and funding sources cannot be evaluated until more details are available during budget development.

Interdepartmental Implications:

Economic Development comments:

The Importance of Parking Enforcement in Norfolk County

Parking enforcement is crucial for the economic vitality and quality of life in Norfolk County. The Comprehensive Parking Study report from LEA Consulting underscores the need for structured and consistent parking policies. Addressing parking challenges, recognizing the value of enforcement, employing a full-time Parking By-law Enforcement Officer, and considering supplementary strategies are crucial. These measures support local businesses, improve residential parking, enhance the visitor experience, and ensure an organized and accessible parking system for all.

Additional Strategy Consideration – Public Transit – Active Transportation

As an additional consideration, increasing the availability of public transit and bicycle racks could be supplementary strategy components. This would have the potential to reduce the parking needs and personal vehicle use for local residents, employees, and visitors in areas where availability of spaces is at a premium. Increasing local bus service would provide an affordable means of transportation, improve environmental welfare, and increase access to employment opportunities.

Adding bike racks to buses (as well as providing an increased number of public bike rack locations) would also provide access to unique areas of Norfolk while reducing the need for personal vehicle travel and promoting more active transportation methods.

Consultation(s):

Operations staff have had discussions with staff from Bylaw, Purchasing, Economic Development and the Office of the CAO.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

This report aligns with the 2022-2026 Council Strategic Priority Building Norfolk - Develop the infrastructure and supports needed to ensure complete communities.

Explanation: Facilitating innovative solutions that address infrastructure management strategies, modernize Norfolk County's approach to by-law development and enforcement and that engage employees to work collaboratively across multiple divisions with the goal of finding savings and efficiencies which support a fiscally responsible organization.

Conclusion:

Addressing Norfolk County's parking challenges, recognizing the value of parking enforcement, and ensuring the availability of a dedicated full-time Parking By-law Enforcement Officer are essential for the success of a comprehensive parking strategy.

As noted in the report, implementing clear regulations and providing consistent enforcement can significantly alleviate current parking issues. In addition, having a dedicated officer will be vital for supporting economic development, facilitating tourism, and ensuring a reliable and accessible parking system for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. In addition, considering complementary strategies around public transit and active transportation will only strengthen the impact of all these efforts.

It needs to be noted that as of June 30th, 2024, Norfolk County will no longer have a dedicated Project Manager, Traffic Services as this position was a temporary contract.

Moving forward the work plans and initiatives within the comprehensive parking study will be difficult to implement without additional staffing.

Attachment(s):

- Attachment 'A' – Norfolk County Comprehensive Parking Study
- Attachment 'B' – Appendices of Parking Study
- Attachment 'C' – Maps of Overnight Parking Restriction

Approval:

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