



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of April 9, 2020

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** April 6, 2020
From: Susanne Thompson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer
Subject: Potential Adjustments to Parking Fees due to COVID-19 Impacts

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff, for the month of April 2020 to:

1. Reduce rates in all parkades as follows:
 - a. Daily rate - \$1 per hour to a maximum of \$5, with the 1st hour free
 - b. Monthly rate - \$85
2. Reduce on-street metered rates to \$1 per hour
3. Reduce parking lot rates to \$1 per hour with a \$5 daily maximum
4. Suspend enforcement of time-limited zones, except for 30 minute zones

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 2, 2020 Council considered a Council Member motion to provide free parking in parkades for the month of April, and requested more information from staff on options for alleviating the financial burden for those who still use the parkades.

Parking has historically been managed based on the demand on parking capacity and desired turnover. In areas where high turnover is desired, time limits are shorter and prices are higher. Council may recall approximately a decade ago when demand in parkades was low and on-street demand was high. At that time, the City increased rates on-street, and lowered rates in the parkades and offered the first hour free. The strategy worked and on-street turnover increased and parkades became busier, to a point where capacity became a challenge in the parkades. As a response, the City increased rates in parkades setting the rate structure to encourage short-term use and increase turnover and therefore available capacity. More recently, with the introduction of a climate lens, how parking is managed can have an impact related to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The rates charged for parking can change behaviour and encourage alternate modes of transportation. Continuing to charge for parking, even at reduced rates, maintains the integrity of the overall parking management operations in place.

Regardless of the price charged for parking, it is important to still enforce parking rules, especially those related to safety. Enforcement continues for yellow lines, bus stops, fire hydrants and other 'no parking' areas – both downtown and in outlying areas. In addition, deliveries throughout the City continue and managing the use of loading zones remains a priority. Furthermore, the Parking Ambassadors' role in being the extra eyes and ears on the street remains a valuable asset as they continue to raise any issues encountered with other departments such as Public Works and VicPD.

Today, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the community is facing many challenges. Parking capacity is not an issue in either the parkades or on-street. Many of those who continue to work in various essential services, including employees of the Federal and Provincial governments as well as the private sector, have expressed concern over the price of parking. Some had previously used a different mode of transportation, such as public transit, but no longer do so perhaps due to social distancing concerns.

In response to this, the City has adjusted some of its enforcement activities in recognition of those who may be self-isolating and are unable to move their vehicles. As such, residential zones and short-term (30 minute) zones continue to be responded to on a complaint basis, but other time limited zones now have reduced enforcement focused on capacity only to ensure spaces are available, which currently does not appear to be an issue. Requests have been made by some essential services workers and residents to allow even longer time limits in these zones.

In looking at temporary options for Council's consideration, staff first reviewed the current usage of the various parking areas. Staff also reviewed internal capacity for administering any type of program that provides different rates for those suffering financial hardship due to the pandemic or those who are essential services workers. Currently, such systems are not in place. Staff recommend that adjustments be made both on-street and in parkades. Taking a holistic approach may result in better options while managing the available parking capacity and avoiding unintended consequences of relieving an issue in one area but creating one in another. Staff do not recommend providing all parking for free; however adjustments to rates and time-limits are recommended. For any of the options, it is difficult to accurately estimate what the financial impact would be. Currently, due to the pandemic, the net revenue decrease for parking is approximately \$1.2 million per month. Regardless of revenue generation, the City continues to have ongoing costs for the parkades including costs related to facility cleaning, security and hydro. Staff would continue to monitor and report back to Council on the impacts as they become known.

Staff recommend implementing any changes for one month at a time only, starting with the month of April. Staff will assess on a weekly basis any extensions, taking into account the advice/orders in place at that time from the Provincial Health Officer.

Option 1 –Reduce Rates in Parkades, Lots and On-street, and Suspend Enforcement of Time-limited Zones for April (*Recommended*)

On-street parking:

Most streets in the downtown core have available parking, but a few are very busy, typically where construction is occurring or where residential properties do not have parking. Reduced rates and extension of the time limit in metered spaces downtown would provide options that address concerns over pricing and time limits. Staff believe there is sufficient capacity of spaces on-street to accommodate the expected increase in usage and still allow enough spaces for those who only need to stay for short periods of time.

Currently, rates range from \$3 in the downtown core with staggered lower rates down to \$1 the further away from the core the streets are. Staff recommend reducing the rate at meters across the city to \$1 per hour with no maximum, and allow extended use of limited time zones; that is, promote that the time limits are currently not in effect. This would provide residents in those areas respite from moving their vehicle every 2 or 3 hours and provides essential services workers in the downtown core an option that is at the most a 10-15 minute walk to most offices downtown. Enforcement, and ticketing, of metered areas, loading zones and on-street occupancy permitted spaces would continue. Complaint based enforcement would be in place for all other areas. Parking

Ambassadors would monitor usage and flag areas that have capacity issues and may require higher turnover.

Parkades:

The City's five parkades currently have large capacity. Although some monthly parkers continue using spaces, others have temporality cancelled their passes because their place of work is closed or they are now working from home. Current usage is approximately 20% of the previous total of monthly parkers; in other words almost 80% are not longer using the parkades. Increasing usage in the parkades would have the benefit of reducing use on-street, although that is not an issue at the moment.

Current daily rates in parkades are as follows:

Parkades	1st hour	2nd and 3rd hour	4th hour and beyond	Daily Max
View Street, Broughton Street, Johnson Street, Centennial Square	Free	\$2 (\$0.50 per 15 min)	\$3 (\$0.75 per 15 min)	\$16.00
Bastion (Yates)	Free	\$2 (\$0.50 per 15 min)	\$3 (\$0.75 per 15 min)	\$17.50

Monthly rates are \$240 in View, Broughton and Bastion, \$200 in Johnson and \$180 for Centennial.

It is recommended that daily rates in all parkades be reduced to 1st hour free, \$1/hour with a \$5/day maximum (equivalent to a BC Transit day pass) Monday through Saturday, with Sundays remaining free. Council could consider making Saturdays free as well due to very low current usage.

For monthly parking, it is recommended that the rate be reduced to \$85 (equivalent to a BC Transit adult ProPass). Staff evaluated options to consider some sort of financial hardship testing, and are unable to establish an operationally efficient or effective way to achieve this that is also reliable. As mentioned at last week's Committee of the Whole meeting, many of those who are continuing to use the parkades are those who come downtown for work and therefore do have income. However, some of them used to take public transit and are therefore now incurring higher costs. Staff considered an option to provide a reduced rate only to those who have a ProPass. However, because this would only be a temporary rate structure, establishing a new administrative process at this time is not recommended.

Staff will continue to assist people with payments at the pay stations as required and clean pay stations periodically. In addition, staff advise daily parkers as they enter the parkades of the newly installed "Tap in – Tap out" credit card solution, which allows the public to simply tap in/out without having to take a ticket or touch any machines. Upon entry, by tapping a credit card, a "virtual" ticket is created so there is no need to take a paper ticket.

Parking lots

The City's three parking lots also have capacity at this time.

The current daily rates are as follows:

RAP \$1.50/hour, \$10 maximum

Wharf Street and Royal Theatre \$2.50/hour, \$15 maximum

To encourage use of those as opposed to metered spaces on-street, staff recommend reducing the daily rates to \$1/hour to a daily maximum of \$5.

This recommended option provides opportunities for free parking further away from the core, a higher cost option at meters that may be more convenient for some, and options within parkades that mirror the cost of public transit.

Option 2 – Reduce Rates in Parkades Only for April

Council could consider making the above rate reductions for parkades only. However, staff recommend taking a holistic approach that provides a number of options for those parking.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking a holistic approach to rate setting for the parking system is recommended to avoid unintended consequences.

The recommended option provides a range of parking alternatives for those who come to Victoria in their vehicles and aligns with the current approach for managing parking capacity. Free options would be available for those who park in outlying areas, the parkades would have rates equivalent to public transit rates, and the more convenient on-street meters would have a higher rate.

Respectfully submitted,


Ismo Husu
Manager of Parking Services


Susanne Thompson
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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:


Date: April 7, 2020