



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of February 11, 2021

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 28, 2021
From: Philip Bellefontaine, Director, Engineering and Public Works
Subject: Proposed Accessible Parking Requirements and Design Criteria

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Direct staff to proceed with preparing applicable amendments to the City's Zoning Bylaw, the Subdivision and Development Services Bylaw and the Streets and Traffic Bylaw to establish new supply rates and specifications for off-street accessible parking as recommended in this report.
2. Endorse new design criteria for public on-street and City operated parkades provided accessible parking stalls and direct staff to include within the 2021-2025 Financial Plan a budget of up to \$350,000 for accessible parking retrofits and expansion efforts with funding from the Accessibility Reserve Fund.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Victoria is taking deliberate steps to become a more inclusive community by removing barriers and applying universal design principles to its programs, services, and infrastructure. As part of the City's Accessibility Framework implementation, new policies, strategies, and programs are being developed to support people with disabilities.

Following changes initiated by the Province of BC in December 2018, accessible parking requirements were removed from the BC Building Code Regulations. As a result of these updates, municipalities across BC were left to adopt their own accessible standards and supply rates for off-street parking through available regulatory tools and bylaws.

In May 2020, the City initiated a project to work with stakeholders to develop new parking standards that would apply to future development projects through the City's Zoning Bylaw. In tandem with these efforts, the City also initiated a review of the current accessible public parking supply with a goal to develop new design criteria to improve the accessibility of designated on-street, surface and parkade stalls.

In addition to modified paint markings and signage, the proposed off-street accessible parking requirements include new supply rates and parking stall dimensions, as well as the introduction of van-accessible parking stalls. New design criteria are also proposed for the City's publicly

provided on-street, surface lot and parkade inventories to provide a consistent, predictable and inclusive parking experience for users.

Recommendations are based on policy directions within *Go Victoria*, municipal best practice, feedback from the development industry and users with lived experience, as well as input from accessibility service organizations.

With Council's endorsement, staff will prepare and bring forward applicable bylaw amendments for a public hearing process and initiate a multi-year retrofit and expansion strategy for publicly provided stalls using dedicated resources from the Accessibility Reserve Fund.

PURPOSE

To present to Council recommendations to establish new regulations for the supply and design of off-street accessible parking for new developments as well as new design criteria for City supplied accessible parking stalls.

BACKGROUND

Following changes initiated by the Province of BC in December 2018, accessible parking requirements were removed from BC Building Code Regulations. As a result of these updates, municipalities across BC were left to adopt their own accessible standards and supply rates for off-street parking through available regulatory tools and bylaws. This project was identified in Council's 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan and is also included in the Accessibility Framework's Short Term Action Plan.

In April 2020, the City engaged an external consulting team who specialize in accessible built environment standards. The scope of work included research on current and anticipated demand for accessible parking, municipal best practices, identifying constraints and opportunities, and reviewing feedback from the community.

In 2017 there were approximately 15,000 accessible parking permits distributed to residents in Victoria, Saanich and Oak Bay. Approximately 21% of the population in the City of Victoria, or about 19,000 people over the age of 15, experiences at least one disability. Of these, 43% report having a flexibility disability and 42% have a mobility disability.

To inform the recommendations for Victoria, a comparative analysis was undertaken of parking regulations in 29 other municipalities including the Township of Esquimalt, Central Saanich, City of Colwood, and the City of Nanaimo. Consultants also reviewed *American Disability Act* accessible parking standards.

Some of the key findings included:

- The most common supply rate was one accessible parking space per 25 or more conventional parking spaces.
- Required minimum dimensions for accessible stalls varied. Widths ranged from 3.7m to 4.0m and lengths were from 5.5m to 5.8m. Some included transfer space in their regulations with an additional 1.2m and 1.5m of space required.
- Few of the regulations introduced rate requirements for van-accessible parking as this approach has emerged since many of the regulations were established.
- Regulations on signage varied, however the most common reference was the use of the new International Symbol of Access for People with Disability.
- Many municipalities regulated the location of accessible parking spaces within parking facilities, not just the number of stalls and dimensions.

- Most municipalities who had introduced new regulations only focused on off-street supply for private land - few had adopted public parking criteria.

ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

Off-Street Accessible Parking Requirements for New Development

The City is proposing new parking supply rates and specifications associated with off-street parking in private development projects, described below. With Council’s endorsement, staff will prepare amendments to the City’s Zoning Bylaw, Sub-division and Development Services Bylaw, and Streets and Traffic Bylaw and will bring forward through a public hearing and Council approval process.

Design Standard recommendations include:

- Adoption of the new International Symbol of Access.
- New pavement and curb markings.
- Implementing a path of travel (“crosshatch”) from stall to the curb ramp, if applicable.
- Establishing a new standard dimension for an accessible space, including transfer space.
- Creating a new classification of stalls to include “van-accessible” which are intentionally wider to accommodate loading and unloading.



Figure 1: The International Symbol of Access (left) is proposed to replace the conventional wheelchair symbol (right) on signage, pavement markings and other visual materials

The B.C. Building Code had previously required a minimum accessible parking stall width of 3.7 metres with no provisions for van-accessible vehicles. Staff recommend revised dimensions for accessible parking stalls of a minimum of 4.1 metres wide and for van-accessible stalls, a minimum of 4.9 metres wide, including a dedicated transfer space. Two adjacent accessible parking spaces may share a single transfer space. Examples of accessible parking spot layouts are shown below in Figure 2.

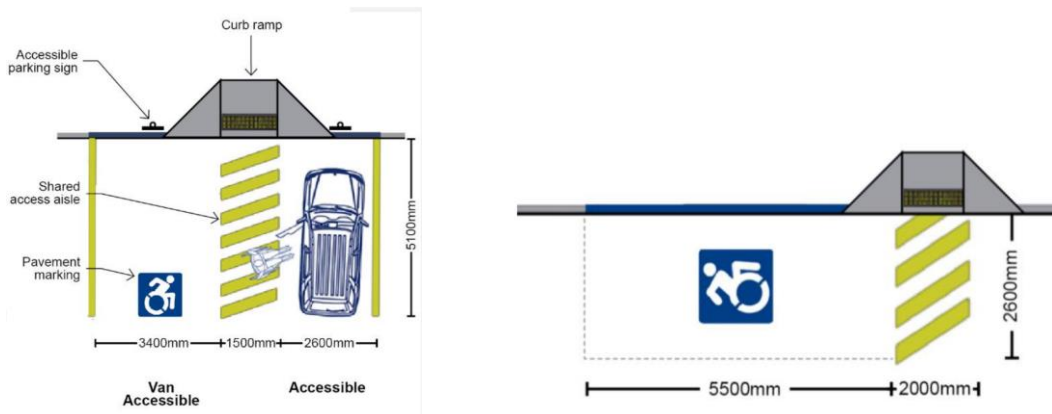


Figure 2: Proposed dimensions for perpendicular and parallel parking.

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Recommendations include new accessible parking stall supply rates, shown in Table 1 below, as well as updated stall dimensions and details on proximity to curb ramps and entrances. These rates would reflect parking requirements of associated land uses and location including the downtown core, villages, and other areas as defined by Schedule C of the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.. In recognition that assisted living facilities and hospitals generate higher demand for accessible parking, specific supply requirements are proposed in place of typical Residential and Institutional rates.

The supply rates reflect the City’s community profile, consider anticipated demographic changes, and are consistent with requirements in communities such as Richmond, Surrey, Central Saanich and Kelowna, who are acknowledged as municipal leaders in this area. The rates exceed requirements in comparable communities such as Saanich, Nanaimo, North Vancouver and Coquitlam.

Land Use Category	BC Building Code Supply Rate (2012)	Proposed Zoning Bylaw Supply Rate
Commercial (eg: office, personal services, restaurants, grocery)	1:100	1 accessible stall required for every 25 conventional stalls*
Residential (eg: condominium, apartment)	1:100	1 accessible stall required for every 50 conventional stalls*
Institutional (eg: schools, places of worship, art galleries, gyms)	1:100	1 accessible stall required for every 50 conventional stalls*
Industrial (eg: warehouse)	1:100	1 accessible stall required for every 50 conventional stalls*
Hospital	1:100	5% of all required parking spaces are accessible
Assisted Living	1: 100	15% of all required parking spaces are accessible

*first accessible stall required after 5 conventional parking stalls

Table 1: Proposed supply rates for Schedule C of Zoning Bylaw updates.

It is recommended that 1 van-accessible stall is provided for every 6 accessible stalls. Where only 1 accessible space is provided, that space must be van-accessible.

New requirements for accessible parking will result in some increased costs to the development industry but still represent only a fraction of the overall costs of surface or underground parking stalls in an urban environment. The proposed ratios above acknowledge competing needs while making a substantial improvement to the quality, location and layout of accessible parking stalls within new developments.

As part of the Bylaw amendment process, staff will include transitional provisions to allow the industry a period to integrate new requirements into proposals and address those projects which are already “in stream”. After bylaw adoption, staff will continue to work with developers, consultants and architects to ensure they are aware of the new requirements and provide informational resources through the Development Planning process. As the City seeks to modernize parking requirements, accessible parking will likely continue to be required in zoning regulations.

City-Supplied Parking Design Criteria

The current inventory of city-supplied accessible stalls includes 22 on-street stalls and 30 stalls distributed throughout the five city-owned parkades, in addition to designated stalls located in

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surface lots within the downtown core, parks, and recreation centres. Locations have typically been selected based on user feedback, proximity to destinations and available roadway / parking lot geometries.

City staff have also prepared new design criteria for publicly provided accessible parking stalls. Similar to changes recommended for off-street requirements, proposed criteria includes:

- Adoption of the new International Symbol of Access.
- New pavement markings.
- Painting adjacent curbs with blue paint, if applicable.
- Implementing a path of travel (“crosshatch”) to curb ramps, if applicable.
- Establishing new standard dimensions for accessible stalls, including transfer space.
- Creating a new classification of stalls to include “van-accessible” which are intentionally wider to accommodate loading and unloading.

The City has not identified a proposed supply rate for its public inventory. Accessible parking stall locations have traditionally been installed based on user feedback and demand, proximity to destinations and community amenities, and available streetscape / parking lot geometries. The approach moving forward will be to increase the number of accessible stalls within the downtown core and village centres based on user demand and opportunities presented through roadway and facility capital investments.

The adoption of new design criteria will impact all accessible stalls, with some locations requiring more substantive investments than others to meet the new criteria. There are several locations where current on-street accessible parking stalls will not be conducive to retrofits because of constraints from adjacent sidewalk, light poles, boulevard trees or travel lanes. These stalls may be transitioned into other uses, such as passenger loading zones, as the City establishes new accessible stalls elsewhere.

Trade-offs to accommodate new criteria for public stalls include the potential loss of general-purpose parking and in cases of on-street locations, removal of boulevard space or furnishings such as seating or garbage cans. There will also be increased operating costs to maintain specialized paint markings that are proposed within the criteria.

Recommendations in this report also include developing and initiating a multi-year accessible parking retrofit and expansion strategy across the municipality. Initial priorities within this strategy will focus on reviewing the existing stalls in city operated parkades and public surface lots as well as on-street locations that are able to be retrofitted in tandem with major capital projects.

Stakeholder Engagement

In Summer 2020, the City conducted the first round of targeted stakeholder engagement through interviews with people with lived experience, accessibility organizations and the Urban Development Institute. The main objective was to gain insights and perspectives on the current state of accessible parking and to understand the needs and barriers for people using and/or providing accessible parking. Later in 2020, the City held two virtual workshops with stakeholders to review recommendations.

The feedback received informed recommendations that are presented in this report. Insights and observations from stakeholders included:

- **Ensuring paint and signage is well defined and consistent in public and private stalls.** Transportation staff have consulted with staff in Bylaw, Legal and Parking Services

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to ensure proposed paint and signage recommendations are practical and enforceable. Existing off-street parking stalls will not be affected by the proposed changes to the Zoning Bylaw; however, the City anticipates that some landowners may voluntarily adopt new sign and paint approaches.

- **Applying site context to the recommended supply rates.** Staff have modified proposed supply rates based on the second phase of engagement feedback to increase ratios within commercial zones.
- **Discussion of the benefits of cross-hatching and transfer space.** Transfer space adjacent to parking stalls and cross-hatched areas at the back of parallel parking stalls are intended to increase the visibility and support safer unloading.

Comments related to user education, pay parking rates, and overall enforcement were common among participants. Stakeholders reported that new paint and signage would likely support improved compliance and reduce the misuse of stalls. The concept of “limited mobility stalls” was discussed among stakeholders as a complimentary initiative to designated accessible stalls. These are parking spaces that are not fully accessible, but which offer a higher level of assistance to disabled drivers. This type of parking will be explored in the future through the City’s parking programs. Recommendations for increased parking enforcement and associated fines will also be considered as a part of the City’s bylaw updates.

Stakeholders also identified a need for a regional education and communications strategy to emphasize the importance of accessible stalls for people with disabilities. The Victoria Disability Resource Centre and SPARC BC have offered to support the City and other local governments. A full Engagement Summary can be found in Appendix A.

OPTIONS AND IMPACTS

Option 1: Direct staff to proceed with preparing applicable amendments to the City’s Zoning Bylaws, the Subdivision and Development Services Bylaw and the Streets and Traffic Bylaw to establish new supply rates and specifications for off-street accessible parking as recommended in this report; Endorse new design criteria for publicly provided accessible parking stalls and direct staff to include within the 2021-2025 Financial Plan a budget of \$350,000 for accessible parking retrofits and expansion efforts with funding from the Accessibility Reserve Fund. (RECOMMENDED)

Staff recommend Council endorse the recommendations contained in this report which have been informed by subject matter experts, research, and targeted stakeholder engagement. Next steps will include drafting relevant bylaw amendments, which will be a subject of a future staff report. The associated Public Hearing process will provide a final opportunity for public comment.

The recommended design criteria for the City’s public accessible parking supply are widely supported by stakeholders and supports the implementation of the 2020 Accessibility Framework. These criteria will result in required capital investments as well as increases in long term operating costs. A strategic approach to retrofitting and expanding accessible parking stalls over five-years using funds from the Accessibility Reserve will help to initiate a consistent and predictable parking experience. In addition to Transportation, staff from Parks, Recreation and Facilities as well as Parking Services will be closely involved in planning and delivery.

Option 2: Direct staff to conduct further analysis and/or public consultation. (NOT RECOMMENDED)

Recommendations thus far have been informed by research findings from cities across B.C. and North America, as well as targeted stakeholder input. This option would have staff undertake further analysis or see additional feedback from the broader public before proceeding to the bylaw amendment process.

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Accessibility Considerations

This project aligns with the objectives in the 2020 Accessibility Framework and fulfills the associated action identified in the City's Short Term Action Plan. Accessibility advocates, service organizations and people with lived experience helped to inform proposed recommendations. Staff will continue to liaise with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee to provide updates on progress and seek advice on retrofits and expansion efforts.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Reviewing and implementing new accessible parking standards and guidelines is consistent with the Official Community Plan under Goal 7: Transportation and Mobility (7.11) and Goal 15: Community Well-being (15A, 15B and 15F)

Financial Plan Considerations

Up to \$350,000 from the Accessibility Reserve Fund is recommended to support a city-wide accessible parking retrofit and expansion strategy. Priority locations will be selected based on ease of implementation and opportunities to integrate with planned capital investments.

Applying the new design criteria to the public inventory will result in associated annual increases to the City's operating budget to maintain the sign and paint treatment levels. These forced growth costs will be included in the Public Works annual operating budget for the next five years, starting in 2022, and integrated into the City's asset management framework for maintenance.

Summary

Introducing new supply rates and design specifications for the provision of off-street accessible parking in private developments is necessary after changes were introduced to the BC Building Code Regulations. New criteria will also support initial retrofit efforts and the development of new public accessible parking stalls within the public realm to provide a consistent parking experience for people with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

Appendix A - Engagement Summary and Email Submissions