



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the Meeting of May 22, 2014

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** May 9, 2014
From: Katie Hamilton, Director of Communications and Civic Engagement
Subject: Summary of Public Feedback on Proposed Changes to Parking Services

Executive Summary

Over the past year, a review of parking services has been completed and several changes are recommended to support greater on-street turnover and an improved downtown parking experience. Recommendations relate to managing demand to shift motorists from on-street parking to parkades and strategies to improve interactions with customers and the overall downtown parking experience.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with feedback received during public consultation on proposed changes and seek approval to implement recommendations to improve parking downtown.

Public feedback was received from 1,056 respondents through online and manual surveys, in addition to stakeholder consultation and an open house.

Somewhat expectedly, respondents were most supportive of recommendations to introduce first hour free parking and free evening parking in parkades. The least supported recommendation was related to variable rates on street. There was also a high "neutral" response rate for several recommendations.

The public provided volumes of helpful qualitative input in terms of how customer service, enforcement and information can be improved. This will directly inform the implementation and communications plan in terms of improved signage and communications, customer service training, and engagement with staff in parkades.

Opportunities to provide input were promoted through a variety of means and input was collected through an online and print survey, an open house, and meetings with a variety of stakeholders between April 7 and May 7, 2014. The City also received letters from Tourism Victoria, the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Victoria Business Association, and correspondence from Commissioners.

City staff met with the Victoria Youth Council to obtain feedback on the proposed parking changes. As well, two focus group meetings with parkade attendants were completed; resulting in increased understanding of the recommendations among staff and valuable, practical input on how to improve the customer service experience in parkades.

The City also received a petition with 2,826 signatures against automation of City parkades. However, important to note that the recommendations being considered do not contemplate automation of parkades nor do the recommendations anticipate a reduction in staff hours.

All input related to this topic has been compiled and is attached as appendices to this report.

Upon Council approval, work to implement recommended changes will begin and proposed rate changes and improvements can be effective Monday, September 15, 2014.

Recommendation:

- 1.) That Council endorse the following recommendations:
 - a) Introduce standard "First Hour Free" in all parkades
 - b) Reduce and standardize parkade rates
 - c) Introduce variable rate structure for metered on-street parking
 - d) Offer free parking in parkades after 6 p.m.
 - e) Designate longer term parking on upper floors in parkades
 - f) Eliminate use of on-street parking permits for staff and elected officials within the Downtown Parkade Zone
 - g) Develop communications and customer service program to effectively communicate changes to parking services and support on-going service delivery
- 2.) Council direct staff to implement recommendations and report back in January 2015.

Respectfully submitted



Dwayne Kalynchuk
Director of Engineering and Public Works



Katie Hamilton
Director of Communications and Civic Engagement

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:


May 15, 2014

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with feedback received during public consultation on proposed changes to Parking Services and seek approval to implement recommendations to improve parking services.

Background

High turnover in short term on-street parking spots is critical to the well-being of a healthy downtown. In urban centres, creating turnover is facilitated through time limits and fees for parking. Over the past year, a review has been completed and several changes are recommended to support greater on-street turnover and an improved downtown parking experience.

In March, Council directed staff to seek public feedback on the following recommendations:

- a) Introduce standard "First Hour Free" in all parkades
- b) Reduce and standardize parkade rates
- c) Introduce variable rate structure for metered on-street parking
- d) Offer free parking in parkades after 6 p.m.
- e) Designate longer term parking on upper floors in parkades
- f) Eliminate use of on-street parking permits for staff and elected officials within the Downtown Parkade Zone
- g) Develop communications and customer service program to effectively communicate changes to parking services and support on-going service delivery

Issues & Analysis

Public input was solicited through a variety of methods between April 7 and May 7, 2014. All input received is compiled and included as appendices to this report.

1,056 surveys were completed and submitted to the City. The City also received letters from Tourism Victoria, the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Victoria Business Association noting the importance of the downtown experience and encouraging the City to increase information and communications support for this City service.

A petition including 2,826 signatures, opposing automation of parkades was also received. It is important to note that automation is not contemplated within the recommendations.

City staff met with the Victoria Youth Council to obtain feedback on the proposed parking changes. As well, two focus group meetings with parkade staff were completed. Initially, awareness among staff of the proposed changes was low and discussions resulted in increased understanding. Staff had valuable, practical input on how to improve the customer service experience in parkades.

An open house was held on Friday, April 25 with 30 attendees, and the Manager of Parking attended and presented to the Downtown Residents' Association meeting on April 22.

Of the survey respondents, 59% were female and 41% male. There was broad representation from all age groups and Victoria neighbourhoods. 58% of respondents were from the City of Victoria and 40% were from neighbouring municipalities within the Region.

The majority of respondents, 57%, park downtown once or more per week, and 64% of respondents noted a preference for on-street parking.

Top considerations noted by respondents for determining parking behaviour downtown were convenience, cost and availability. Safety and ease of space were lowest considerations. 58% of respondents felt it was difficult to very difficult to find on-street parking both during the week Monday to Saturday, and during

evening hours on the same days. Perception of parking availability on Sunday was slightly less, at 48% feeling it was difficult or very difficult.

In terms of parking enforcement, there was a great deal of feedback about the approach applied to enforcement and a strong theme emerged about reasonableness and customer service interaction.

When asked how respondents would prefer to receive information about parking, there was a strong preference for receiving information on the City website and through newspaper coverage.

Somewhat expectedly and consistent with feedback the City generally receives related to costs, respondents were most supportive of recommendations to introduce first hour free parking and free evening parking in parkades and the least supported recommendation was related to variable rates on street. There was also a high "neutral" response rate for several recommendations that was noted.

For ease of review, a table below summarizes the input received in terms of support for recommendations and neutral responses. A complete summary is included as an appendix.

RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORT+ STRONGLY SUPPORT	NEUTRAL
Variable Hourly Rates downtown (from \$1.50 to \$3 an hour) for on-street parking with time limits ranging from 90 minutes to all day, depending on the area downtown. (Currently, on-street parking rates are fixed at \$2.50 an hour with a range of 20, 90 and 120-minute time limits.)	48.01%	21.34%
Greater Victoria elected officials who have been issued an on-street parking permit, to park in a City parkade when doing business in the Downtown Parkade Zone (e.g. within a three –minute walk of a City parkade)	61.69%	18.82%
Offer the first hour free in all parkades	89.76%	6.57%
Offer free parking in City parkades from 6 p.m. – 8 a.m. Monday to Saturday.	84.64%	9.57%

RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORT+ STRONGLY SUPPORT	NEUTRAL
Reduce and standardize parkade rates (reduce hourly rate of \$2.25 to \$2/hour and charge on 15-minute intervals)	72.72%	17.86%
Move monthly, long-term parkers to higher floors in City parkades to free up space on lower floors	79.94%	12.25%
Install parkade space counters at the entrance of each City parkade to show how many spaces are available	81.25%	13.27%
Offer more methods of payment in parkades. In addition to the current pay stations, introduce new "pay on foot" machines enabling you to pay for parking before returning to your vehicle to reduce wait times at exit	73.78%	20.35%
Provide additional downtown venues to reload the City's on-street parking card	54.90%	39.19%
Improve way-finding signage in all parkades	48.34%	45.05%
In partnership with the Downtown Victoria Business Association, develop a new training program for all parking staff and enforcement commissionaires to improve customer service	64.16%	30.24%
Improve information about parking downtown online, in print, on-street and in parkades	58.56%	35.41%

The public provided volumes of anecdotal input in terms of how customer service, enforcement and information can be improved. Upon Council approval, this input will be reviewed in detail to directly inform the implementation and communications plan in terms of improved signage and communications, customer service training, and further engagement with staff in parkades.

Recommendation:

- 1.) That Council direct staff to implement the following recommendations to increase turnover on street and improve downtown parking experience:
 - a. Introduce standard "First Hour Free" in all parkades
 - b. Reduce and standardize parkade rates
 - c. Introduce variable rate structure for metered on-street parking
 - d. Offer free parking in parkades after 6 p.m.
 - e. Designate longer term parking on upper floors in parkades
 - f. Eliminate use of on-street parking permits for staff and elected officials within the Downtown Parkade Zone
 - g. Develop communications and customer service program to effectively communicate changes to parking services and support on-going service delivery
- 2.) Council direct staff to report back in January 2015.



**PARKING SERVICES REVIEW
PUBLIC CONSULTATION ATTACHMENTS**

May 9, 2014

- A Survey Monkey Analytics Report
- B Facebook Posts and Comments
- C Tweets and Retweets
- D Letters/Correspondence:
 - Downtown Victoria Business Association
 - Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce
 - Member of the Public (Additional Survey Comments)
 - Tourism Victoria
 - Print Survey received
- E Stakeholder Communications:
 - City of Victoria's stakeholder email
 - Downtown Victoria Business Association e-newsletters (2)
 - Downtown Residents Association online post promoting survey
 - Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce e-newsletter
- F Emails:
 - John Dewar re: Parking Patrol Activity Report
 - Email accompanying Tourism letter
- G Meeting Minutes:
 - Downtown Residents Association, April 22, 2014 Minutes
- H City of Victoria Youth Council Meeting Notes, April 7, 2014
- I Parkade Employee Focus Group Notes, May 6 and 7, 2014
- J Parking Open House Post-it Notes, April 25, 2014

K Media Releases/Advisories (2)

L Media Articles (10)

M Parking Survey/Petition Signatures

N Collateral Materials:

- TC and Vic News ads
- Postcard Handout
- Pay Station Panel
- Display panels