



SUBJECT: Parking Program update – Beachway and Lowville Park

TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.

FROM: Transportation Services Department

Report Number: TS-12-21

Wards Affected: 1 & 3

File Numbers: 745-03

Date to Committee: December 7, 2021

Date to Council: December 14, 2021

Recommendation:

Direct the Director of Transportation Services to continue utilizing the parking management reservation system at Lowville Park and extend the operating period until Thanksgiving weekend, inclusive; and

Direct the Director of Transportation Services to implement the paid Beachway parking program during summer months as a measure to regulate parking availability.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present Council with a summary of the Lowville Park and Beachway parking programs implemented through the recommendations approved in transportation services department report TS-04-21 and to recommend improvements, where necessary, to ensure continued success of the program in 2022, and beyond.

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation
 - Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
 - Build more citizen engagement, community health and culture
-

Background and Discussion:

Lowville Park:

Lowville park is a popular site for visitors during the summer months. Guests come from throughout Halton Region, some from as far as Peel, to make use of the park facilities. The high volume of visitors can often result in restricted traffic flows and limited parking supply which results in potential safety and operational issues that require prompt attention and action by Parking Services.

The newly installed entry and exit gates, accompanied by the Park Pass reservation system, have successfully aided with regulating access to the park during peak periods between June and October. Renovation work on the parking lot was substantially completed in June and incorporated the gate installation with it. The system also has the capability to confirm guests upon arrival and where they are arriving from.

When visitors make a reservation, they must provide a postal code. This information is recorded as part of the reservation and allows the system to generate a map of where visitors come from. As illustrated in Appendix A, the heat map obtained from the Park Pass system indicates that a large proportion of visitors are coming from the Milton area. This provides useful information for targeting communication efforts regarding the reservation system beyond 2021. With many visitors originating outside of Burlington, the City can deliver focused communications to specific geographical areas leading up to the summer reservation period.

The park itself appears as a “hot spot” on the map because of visitors being unaware of the system and completing reservations on-site. On-site reservations were facilitated by Parking Ambassadors and emphasizes the need for a more focused communication plan going forward to ensure reservations are made prior to arriving at the park.

The success of the reservation program can be largely attributed to daily and weekend utilization. Table 1 below summarizes the number of reservations made and fulfilled between June and October 2021.

Table 1: Lowville Park Reservation Statistics (June – October, 2021)

	MONTHLY STATISTICS (2021)					TOTAL
	June	July	August	September	October 1 st to 11 th	
Reservations Made	3,763	4,411	3,953	2,703	1,199	16,029
Reservations Validated	1,931	2,503	2,778	1,795	607*	9,614
Rate	.513	.567	.576	.664	-	.599*

*Maintenance to the gate system impacted data collection for a short period of time.

Data prior to June 2021 is not available as the lot was under construction. Given that the parking lot and gate system are new, there has been on-going construction activities and completion of outstanding elements of the overall project that, unfortunately, contributed to inaccurate data collection during the timeframe of October 1st to 11th 2021.

The 3-hour time limit at Lowville strikes a balance between providing ample time for visitors to enjoy the park while generating turnover so others can access reservation times. Parking Ambassadors were utilized to perform both customer service and enforcement duties, with an emphasis on education over enforcement. Between the months of May and September, a total of 80 tickets were issued at Lowville Park. Relative to the number of reservations made in the same defined period, the low issuance of tickets demonstrates a high degree of compliance by visitors.

Beachway:

Burlington Beachway is a recreational attraction for residents of Burlington, Halton Region as a whole, and other municipalities alike. Beachway is a well-known destination and as a result, the increased demand for vehicular access to the park has resulted in traffic flow challenges, particularly when coupled with limited parking supply. The combination of high levels of demand and limited available parking often presents operational and safety concerns along the adjacent roadway and within the parking lot.

Recommendations proposed through report RS-09-20 and implemented through report TS-04-21 attempted to better manage parking demand through the introduction of:

- paid parking;
- provision of Parking Ambassadors and paid duty Police Officers on weekends;
- installation of one-way directional signage to improve traffic flow;

- creation of accessible drop-off zones to facilitate short-term pick-up and drop-off activities; and
- zero-tolerance approach to parking along the Trans Northern Pipeline.

When implemented, the combination of these measures was found to significantly improve the management of parking demand and operation of parking supply.

In order to facilitate cashless parking transactions at the park, the decision was made to employ Honk Mobile, the online payment platform that is already utilized within the downtown. Honk Mobile offers two methods of payment – cashless payment by use of the mobile phone app (registered users) or by way of on-site QR code scanning (non-registered users). Usage statistics for the period between May 2021 to September 2021 is summarized in Table 2 below and further provided in Appendix B:

Table 2: Honk Mobile Transaction Statistics (May – September, 2021)

	MONTHLY TRANSACTIONS (2021)					TOTAL
	May	June	July	August	September	
Mobile App	271	655	534	658	360	2,478
Tap (QR code)	1,255	2,834	2,457	3,024	1,564	11,134
Total Users	1,526	3,489	2,991	3,682	1,924	13,612

Total +/- 25 transactions to account for test transactions and discounts

At the April 8, 2021 EICS Committee, a motion to provide ten days of exemptions for the residents of Halton was approved. Utilizing the Parking Services web-based electronic form, a total of 2,945 exemptions were granted between May to September 2021. Staff note that the web-based form is based on the honour system where the user self-reports their permanent address. As a result, there is potential for the program to be abused by non-residents.

Throughout the duration of the program, Parking Ambassadors and Enforcement Officers proactively monitored the parking lots and adjacent streets for compliance with signage and parking rules. A total of 1,010 tickets were issued at the Beachway between May and September and an additional 63 and 54 tickets were issued on Willow Avenue and Omaha Street, respectively.

Strategy/process

Lowville:

Visitors to the park were asked to make a reservation prior to their visit. Reservations were permitted up to one week in advance and were valid for a three-hour visit to the park. The requirement for advanced reservation was signed on both Old Lowville Road

and Guelph Line. Vehicles that were parked after the three-hour period were subject to ticketing. The three-hour limit was intended to allow users enough time to enjoy the space, while regulating the duration of the stay and encouraging turn over to accommodate other park visitors. If visitors did not have a reservation upon arrival, they could seek assistance from a Parking Ambassador who was stationed at the front gate and had access to the reservation system to help complete a reservation, if necessary.

Beachway:

In 2020, visits to the waterfront were one of the few recreational activities families could engage in due to stringent Provincial restrictions. While 2021 saw a gradual relaxation of restrictions, the need for improved parking management and traffic circulation at Beachway has remained.

Looking ahead, continued management of parking supply at the Beachway will be required in order to ensure safe operations and availability of parking. Visitors have the option of paying for parking using either the Honk Mobile app or the Honk QR codes (available on signage). Parking Ambassadors are located on-site to monitor operations, ensure safe and efficient flow of traffic, and help facilitate pick-up and drop-off activities within the designated zones. Parking Ambassadors and Enforcement Officers would ticket when required. To maintain security and safety along the pipeline, a zero-tolerance approach was employed, and vehicles found to be parked on the pipeline were promptly towed. To encourage visitors to park in nearby downtown parking lots, an accessible pick-up/drop-off area was established which could be used to drop off visitors and beach equipment while accommodating free parking in periphery lots.

Options Considered

The continuation of both programs into the 2022 season is recommended. Options for future-year operations are as follows:

Lowville:

Continuation of the parking management reservation system, inclusive of Parking Ambassadors during summer periods. It is recommended that the program be extended to include Thanksgiving weekend in future years.

Beachway:

Continuation of the paid Beachway parking program on weekends during peak Summer months (May 1 to September 25), with exemption from payment for all Halton residents; or;

Continuation of the paid Beachway parking program on weekends during peak Summer months (May 1 to September 25), without exemption from payment for Halton residents.

Financial Matters:

Beachway Parking Fees:

Parking charges associated with paid parking at Beachway were \$101,569. User-paid transaction fees and credit card processing fees totaled \$4,751 and \$4,011 respectively. The net parking revenue at Beachway was \$97,558 for the period. To note, user-paid transaction fees are processed with parking charges, while credit card processing fees are remitted to the respective card companies.

Fine Revenue:

Fine revenue is difficult to estimate given the varying costs of each offence. Additional administrative fees are applied when tickets lapse and it often takes months to recover costs as a result of the ticket screening, hearing or plate denial processes. For the purpose of this report, in consideration of the goal for Parking Services to achieve cost-recovery and compliance, potential to generate fine revenue has not been a contributing factor to determining the staff recommendation.

Financial Impact of Parking Exemptions:

There were 2,945 Beachway exemptions granted between May and September 2021. Assuming a maximum daily parking rate of \$20, this amounts to a projected revenue loss of approximately \$58,900. Referring back to report TS-04-21, staff projected Beachway revenue of approximately \$170,000 which could have been achieved if paid parking was required for all users.

Paid Duty Police Officers:

Throughout the duration of the program, and as recommended in report CM-16-21, paid duty Police Officers were hired as needed to assist with traffic management and public safety on the beach during the summer evenings. A total of 262 paid duty hours were used between May and September. The approximate cost of this service was \$21,000. Paid duty officers are recommended to be used on an as-needed basis to ensure public safety in the area during peak summer periods.

Parking Ambassadors:

Parking Ambassadors were partially funded through both the Canada Student Grants program and through COVID funding. Parking Ambassador wages that were covered by the grant totaled \$6,928.00 with the balance being paid through the Parking Services Operating Budget – Part Time Wages/Salaries of \$48,900.

While the original intent of the Parking Ambassador program was to assist park visitors during the pandemic, their presence was a key contributing factor to the overall success of the program and the customer's experience. Staff have brought forward a funding request as part of the 2022 operating budget to maintain these staffing levels during the peak summer period. It is the opinion of staff that dedicated staff on-site to educate and assist with each program is critical from a customer experience perspective at both Lowville Park and the Beachway in the near term.

Digital Message Boards:

Through the approval of TS-04-21 staff were directed to review the feasibility of digital signage with the capability to update messaging in real-time. Trailer-mounted digital message board signs were purchased and proved to be an asset in communicating to the public. The capital cost associated with the signs was \$36,528 and was recovered through the one-time COVID funding. Staff note that this expenditure was approximately \$2,472 under budget from what was originally forecast in report TS-04-21.

Towing:

Provision of a tow truck on-site for immediate removal from the pipeline was in effect from May 22 to June 20, 2021 at a cost of \$12,543. Costs were recovered through one-time COVID funding. From June 21, 2021 onward, towing services were called on an as-needed basis. A total of 27 tows were completed between May to September 2021 for the purpose of removing vehicles from along the pipeline.

Lowville Park Gate System:

Provision of entry and exit gates proposed through report TS-04-21 were included as part of the Lowville Parking Lot Renovation project. Parking services can manage the annual maintenance costs of the gate system which is roughly \$4,500 annually.

Total Financial Impact

The recommended option for Lowville Park and both options for Beachway will require approval of the previously submitted funding request for Parking Ambassadors to maintain the program throughout the 2022 season at a cost of \$75,000.

Allocating paid duty police on every weekend at the Beachway has an approximate cost of \$25,400. This figure is factoring in a 1.55% increase in HRPS rates beginning January 2022 and could be less based on actual usage.

Source of Funding

While the Canada Student Grant program provided partial recovery of wages associated with Parking Ambassadors, it is unknown if this grant funding will be available in future years. As such, a request for funding has been brought forward to extend the program into 2022. The recommendation to permanently extend the Parking Ambassador component of the program will be examined in 2023, or when a full return to “business as usual” has been achieved post-pandemic. Impacts to operating budget and requests for on-going increases to part-time salaries and wages to support the Parking Ambassador program will be further examined in 2023.

Other Resource Impacts

Parking ambassadors are an on-going staffing resource that will have to be considered moving forward. While the initial intent was to deploy Parking Ambassadors temporarily to assist and educate while transitioning to paid parking at Beachway and the online reservation system at Lowville Park, the continued presence of the Parking Ambassadors was found to be a contributing factor to the success of each program. Staff recommend monitoring each program throughout the 2022 season to determine if long-term support through the Ambassadors is required, or if modifications to the program (i.e. reduced hours, long weekends only, etc.) would be sufficient once more awareness around each parking program is achieved.

Climate Implications

Lowville: Changing weather patterns and ambient temperatures in the Spring and Fall months may affect the time at which the reservation program can start and finish. Above average temperatures in Fall may extend the timeframe needed to provide reservations and may have budget impacts associated with extending the Parking Ambassador program.

Beachway: Introduction of paid parking provides an incentive for visitors to consider the use of alternate modes when planning their visit to the park.

Engagement Matters:

The Lowville Advocacy Council has been engaged numerous times on matters relating to the park reservation system, construction within the parking lot, inclusion of the gate system, signage and pavement marking changes and the introduction of Parking Ambassadors. Continued engagement and collaboration with the Lowville Advocacy Council will be sought to ensure favourable results in the surrounding area of the park.

Looking toward the 2022 season, a broader communication plan will be developed to include targeted messaging to neighboring municipalities. Data extracted from the Park Pass reservation system has confirmed that a high percentage of visitors to Lowville Park originate in Milton. Communications will be expanded to target these visitors and educate as to the requirement for an advanced reservation to ensure safe and efficient operations during peak periods.

Parking Services Staff will continue to work with Corporate Communications to ensure a robust communication campaign is initiated prior to commencement of both the Lowville Park and Beachway programs in 2022.

Conclusion:

Based on the experience of the 2021 season, staff recommend the continuation of the reservation and parking management program at Lowville Park through the 2022 season (minimum) to continue contributing to the safe and efficient operation of parking assets.

Furthermore, staff recommend the continuation of the paid parking program at Beachway to proactively manage parking demands and ensure safe and efficient flow of traffic at the park, and with additional outreach to neighbouring communities to educate visitors on advanced reservation options.

Finally, the elimination of the exemption program for Halton Residents would increase revenue potential and provide additional funding opportunities for enhancements to the parking assets (paving of the parking lots, beautification, inclusion of street furniture, etc.).

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Camm

Supervisor of Parking Services

Appendices:

- A. Heat Map – Lowville Park
- B. Honk Mobile Transaction Statistics

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.