

Background

A report on downtown parking was presented at the October 17th, 2017 Council meeting. It is attached as appendix "A". In response to this report, members of the committee requested additional information on several initiatives that could be undertaken to improve the availability of parking in the downtown core of the City. This report will provide additional information on those initiatives that were identified by members of Council.

Of the initiatives that were presented to Council at the October 17th meeting, three (3) were identified as being of interest. They were the Dufferin Street road allowance lot development, the pedestrian overpass linking Energy Court to Elgin Street and implementing pay by plate technology. Additionally, information was requested on the viability of a developing a parking lot on Louise Street.

Initiatives

Louise Street

Located on Louise Street/Vincent Street (unopened road allowance) at the bridge that traverses Junction Creek, this area is currently being illegally utilized as a parking area. This area is outside of the downtown core and is being utilized by longer stay parkers who prefer not to pay. This area is designated parkland and is part of the linear park known as the Junction Creek Waterway Park. It is recommended that the area remain parkland and enforcement be increased in this area.

Dufferin Street Road Allowance

The City owns a parcel of property described as the Dufferin Street road allowance, at the east end of Pine Street that could be opened up, and used to create an additional 40 spaces. It is currently a gravel lot and the intention would be to keep it in this condition. The location of the lot is slightly outside of the downtown core; however it is certainly within walking distance, would not present any traffic issues and would increase parking capacity for long term stays.

The cost to open this lot would be approximately \$40,000 which would be required to grade, provide drainage, fencing and for a pay and display machine.

Financing for this option could be provided from a reallocation of unspent capital funds (approximately \$200,000) from previous years.

Pedestrian Overpass – Energy Court Expansion

Parking supply will be negatively affected as a result of a number of large initiatives being considered and/or undertaken in the downtown core in the near future. The proposed Place des Arts and Phase 1 of the Elgin Greenway will cause reductions of 59 and 90 spaces respectively. Additionally, proposed large projects such as the Art Gallery/Library and/or the Synergy Centre could also reduce the supply of

parking. As a result, this alternative was put forth as it was an opportunity to add supply to the downtown parking utilizing existing City-owned lands. Figure 1 shows the existing energy court lot outlined in red and the potential expansion area outlined in blue. The existing Energy Court parking lot is comprised of 218 spaces that are approximately 70% utilized. Expansion into the adjacent City owned lands could add approximately 180 spaces. As indicated in Appendix “A”, utilization of this lot is particularly hampered by the perception of the distance needed to walk to the Elm Street railway crossing in order to traverse the railway tracks. Additionally, the current parking lot has an easement agreement with the abutting land owner that would not extend to additional parking lot development.

Figure 1



There has been private sector interest in partnering with the City in order to build a pedestrian bridge that would link the Energy Court parking lot directly to Elgin Street. This would provide a more direct route to the downtown core, thus increasing the marketability of the lot. In exploring the option of a pedestrian bridge, the downtown B.I.A. had a local engineering firm develop a draft concept of a pedestrian bridge in order to provide Council with a point of reference in terms of scope and cost. Appendix “B” attached has renderings of four (4) options for a pedestrian bridge. Options 1 and 1A are differentiated only by their mode of meeting Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (A.O.D.A). Option 1 incorporates a ramp, while option 1A uses an elevator. Options 2 and 3 are included to provide

Council with an understanding of the additional finishes that could be included such as a covering across the full length of the bridge and some architectural features and green spaces.

The construction and engineering costs of a bridge such as that in 1A (elevator and uncovered) could be expected to be approximately \$5 million. Moderate cost impacts could be expected based on whether a steel (\$4.8M) or aluminum bridge (\$5.0M) is constructed. Though slightly more costly, an aluminum bridge offers improved durability, reduced maintenance costs, reduced foundation requirements and improved aesthetics. This opinion of probable costs considers the use of passenger elevators as the preliminary review indicates that it would be marginally more cost effective than the construction of concrete ramps due to the overall length of the ramp required. This costing does not include any architectural features including a covering. A more detailed design with defined attributes would be required to ascertain a reliable cost estimate and an understanding of the effects on the Elgin Greenway design as well as attrition of existing parking along the west side of Elgin Street.

The overall cost of a pedestrian bridge and expansion of Energy Court would entail a number of costs. The project would include land acquisition, expansion costs, engineering costs, and construction costs.

- Land Acquisition: As can be seen in Figure 1 above, land would be required along the west side of the railway tracks in order to construct a pedestrian overpass.
- Lot Expansion Costs: As indicated in Appendix "A", costs to expand Energy Court would range from \$350,000 - \$750,000 depending on the type of treatment (gravel or asphalt) used for the lot.
- Engineering and Construction Costs: Engineering and construction costs for a base level bridge such as that in 1A would be approximately \$5 million. Additional features such as a covering and or any architectural designs would be in addition to this. Operational impacts of maintaining a safe pedestrian bridge in the winter and shoulder seasons would likely lead to a requirement for a covered walkway.

In considering the above estimates, the total cost for such a project would likely be in the \$6 - \$8 million dollar range depending on land costs, lot expansion costs and bridge attributes. This scale of project would represent a cost of approximately \$30,000-\$40,000 per space based on a 200 space lot expansion. On a per space basis this is comparable to the cost of a parking structure.

Financing for the Energy Court expansion and pedestrian overpass would need to be explored further. There has been support from Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.) as an overpass would improve the safety of their rail yard. C.P. has indicated that they would be interested in contributing financially towards the pedestrian overpass.

As the City continues to discuss and undertake some large projects in the downtown core such as the site selection that is underway for the Art Gallery/Library or Synergy Centre, it is recommended that staff continue to explore private and public sector financing partnerships for a pedestrian overpass linking Energy Court to Elgin Street.

Pay by Plate Technology

The highest demand area for parking is in the downtown core and the most desirable parking spaces are on street. Pay by plate would replace the individual street parking meters that are used for on street parking throughout the downtown core with strategically located multi space meters similar to a pay and display machine. Pay by plate offers some distinct advantages over single meters or pay by space that include affecting demand for long term stays, flexibility of payment, efficiency of enforcement and efficiency of operation.

On-street parking is intended for short term stays. A pay by plate system offers the ability to affect demand for these spaces by limiting parking to a maximum time frame based on a license plate. Once a license plate exceeds the allotted time frame, there is no further ability to extend the parking privilege in that particular area. Downtown business owners have expressed concerns regarding the practice of patrons feeding the meters and staying in excess of the 2 hour parking maximum, particularly along Cedar, Larch, Durham and Lisgar streets. However, enforcement of this 2 hour parking maximum is quite onerous and difficult to apply consistently. A pay by plate system will have the affect of transferring demand from on-street parking to off-street lots, thereby providing more supply for short term stays in the downtown core.

One of the most obvious advantages of pay by plate is the flexibility of payment methods that is offered. Through online payment capability and fixed machines throughout downtown, pay by plate would provide a user with more flexibility when parking downtown including payment by coin, credit card or online using a smart phone. The current meters only accept coin and in an increasingly electronic age, this method of payment is diminishing rapidly. Additionally, if more time is required patrons are able to buy additional time online via a smart phone or at the nearest pay station. This level of convenience eliminates the need to walk back to the vehicle to buy additional time providing customers with increased level of satisfaction.

Pay by plate also offers efficiencies to enforcement of parking regulations. Pay-by-plate systems manage enforcement by comparing which license plates are parked with the ones that have activated parking sessions. As there is no requirement for enforcement officer on foot to check each meter, pay-by-plate systems can achieve higher compliance rates with less enforcement personnel.

Lastly, operational efficiencies can also be achieved using pay by plate technology. Pay stations do not need to be placed in such close proximity to parking spaces to accommodate customers walking back to their vehicles. As a result, fewer pay stations than meters need to be deployed, as they can be conveniently spaced along key pedestrian routes. For parking operations, this results in reduced coin collection and maintenance costs. Additionally, the availability of real time data regarding parking trends such as utilization can be used to more specifically tailor parking services to meet the needs of the public.

The estimated cost to replace all 438 meters with multi space meters that would incorporate pay by plate technology would be approximately \$250,000. Other costs would include signage and costs for the removal of the current meters. In addition to the equipment costs, operational costs for the system would be approximately \$25,000 annually for real time wireless connectivity, data hosting and battery replacement. As well, licensing for pay by phone applications would cost approximately \$9,000 annually, which could be recouped via a small convenience charge per use as in many other municipalities.

Financing for this could be provided by reallocating previously approved capital budgets (approximately \$200,000) in addition to the 2018 capital budget of \$100,000.

Conclusion

Increasing demand for parking in the downtown core, along with future supply reductions will create a strain on downtown parking availability. Regarding the initiatives raised in this report, it is recommended that Louise Street remain parkland and enforcement of this area be increased; the Dufferin Street road allowance expansion be maintained as a viable option that could be developed in a short time frame; funding opportunities for the pedestrian overpass- Energy Court expansion be further investigated in order to determine its viability; and that staff further the Pay by Plate project.