

DATE OF MEETING NOVEMBER 18, 2024

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SUBJECT COMMERCIAL STREET CONSTRUCTION PROJECT – PARKING MANAGEMENT - PARKADES

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

This report responds to the motion from the 2024-OCT-21 Regular Council Meeting, “That Staff be directed to prepare a report on options to provide two-hour free parking within city-owned parkades during the Commercial Street redesign project.”

Recommendation

That Council indicate its preferred option for parking management within city-owned parkades during the Commercial Street redesign project.

BACKGROUND

Following the commencement of the Commercial Street Phase One Project concerns were raised by businesses regarding the perception that pay parking may be a barrier to customers considering coming downtown to conduct business. To help Council respond to these concerns, Staff provided information by way of a report to Council at the 2024-SEP-09 Regular Council Meeting (Attachment A). At that meeting Council suspended on-street pay parking downtown for the duration of construction. This change has been in effect for approximately one month. Impacts of the change have not been formally assessed. At the 2024-OCT-21 Regular Council Meeting, Council directed Staff to provide options to further expand the free parking into the off-street parkades.

DISCUSSION

On-street pay parking downtown was suspended and replaced with time limit parking (2hr, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday) starting 2024-OCT-01.

Staff considered the impact on off-street parkades in the 2024-SEP-09 report and provided a table (Attachment C, in the 2024-SEP-09 report) outlining current conditions in the various parkades. This table differentiates between spaces allocated through permits or contracts and spaces available to the public. What was not acknowledged in this report was that there are several informal agreements with various entities which effectively encumber the spaces defined as “public” in both the Harbour Front and Port of Nanaimo Centre (Vancouver Island Conference Centre) Parkades. These understandings, effectively leave these two parkades “full”. In the Bastion Street parkade, except for the top-level parking spaces (which are loosely reserved for oversized vehicles) the publicly available spaces are unencumbered.

The most viable option would allocate spaces within the Bastion Street Parkade. Of the 107 public stalls 30 are for oversized vehicles and should not be included in a free zone. For operational reasons it is preferable to define a free zone by level (which is roughly 30 stalls). Noting this, up to 60 stalls (of the 77 publicly available) could be assigned the same regulations as those being used on street; 2hr, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday. Removing the fee from these otherwise public pay parking stalls would likely result in a 77% loss in revenue or approximately \$5,000 per month. Staff also considered the impacts to enforcement with this option and believe that overall levels of service can still be maintained.

The Harbour Front and Port of Nanaimo Centre Parkades are the most appealing, but effectively fully subscribed. However, as can be observed, there are often available spaces, especially during the day. Council could elect to designate 30 spaces on the lower level of the Port of Nanaimo Parkade on the same basis: 2hr, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday. Outside of these hours, normal rates and enforcement would apply. Staff note that parking is a sensitive issue for many, and there is a potential for conflict, during conference centre or theatre events, overflow parking for the hotels, or on the part of pass holders who pay \$110/month. It should be noted that the merchants leasing space in VICC are allocated 20 2-hour free spaces and these are rarely used by shoppers.

Another option would establish a parking validation program. This would leave operational activity unaffected but would then create a process whereby parkers could have their payment for the first 2hrs reimbursed at the City's cost. This option generated questions about conflict with the Community Charter (financially assisting businesses), existing contracts, as well as excessively onerous administrative tasks which could become quite costly and time consuming. This option is not viewed as viable. However, a validation program could be carried out by the merchants on their own, or in concert with the DNBA.

OPTIONS

1. That Council direct Staff to allocate two levels (approximately 60 stalls) of the Bastion Street Parkade as time limit parking to match the surrounding on-street parking regulations for the duration of construction of the Commercial Street Phase One project
 - The advantage of this option is that it addresses the perception that pay parking may be a barrier to customers shopping downtown.
 - Financial Implications are that there will be a loss of monthly revenue of approximately \$5,000.

2. That Council direct Staff to allocate 30 spaces in the lower level of the Port of Nanaimo Centre Parkade as time limit parking to match the surrounding on-street parking regulations for the duration of construction of the Commercial Street Phase One project
 - The advantage of this option is that it addresses the perception that pay parking may be a barrier to customers shopping downtown.
 - The disadvantage of this option is the potential for conflict during events, or with monthly pass holders.
 - Financial Implications: The loss in revenue is harder to determine in this case, due to the variability of parking use within this Parkade.

3. That Council direct Staff to make no further changes and continue to monitor the situation.
 - The advantage of this option is that it maintains status quo and prevents the unintended consequences of under regulated parking.
 - The disadvantage of this option is that the perception of parking fees being a barrier may remain.
4. That Council provide alternate direction.]

SUMMARY POINTS

- Pay parking is a tool used to manage parking in the highest demand areas, without it, there is a risk that parking will be oversubscribed ultimately limiting access to others.
- Both formal and informal obligations exist within the Harbour Front and Port of Nanaimo Centre (Vancouver Island Conference Centre) Parkades making them unable to absorb additional demand.
- Moving forward with eliminating pay parking in a portion of the Bastion Street Parkade will affect revenue negatively.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Staff Report 2024-SEP-09 Commercial Street Construction Project – Parking Management]

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