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**WHITEHORSE DOWNTOWN PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN
SUMMARY + RECOMMENDATIONS**

City of Whitehorse, YT



Prepared by Boulevard Transportation Group Ltd.
in association with Inukshuk Planning & Development and
Victoria Transport Policy Institute

October 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Whitehorse retained Boulevard Transportation Group Ltd to prepare the 2010 Whitehorse Downtown Parking Management Plan. The plan is a coordinated effort between City staff, the community, and the project team. The plan builds upon the findings of 1997 Downtown Parking Strategy and other existing plans, accounting for changes in downtown parking characteristics, and on-going land development. It presents a new approach to parking management that reflects the City's changing attitude toward downtown land use, economic development, urban design, and environmental sustainability.

A comprehensive consultation process was undertaken, including an online community questionnaire that received 336 responses, a kick-off open house, and three (3) workshops with downtown property owners, employees, and general community members. The objective of this extensive consultation was to ensure that community concerns are reflected in the plan. The process was undertaken under the guidance of an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from downtown businesses, community interest groups, and the general public.

The vision statement for the plan is as follows:

The Downtown Whitehorse Parking Management Plan will result in more efficient use of parking resources and reduced parking demand while enhancing the livability and vitality of the downtown core at present and into the future.

Specific objectives include: to support downtown business, promote environmental sustainability, improve access to the downtown, facilitate active transportation, create a pedestrian-oriented downtown, and support the objectives of the Downtown Plan. All action items in the plan address the vision and objectives.

A downtown parking inventory was undertaken to establish existing performance characteristics. The inventory was conducted on Thursday, May 13, 2010, between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Six (6) surveyors observed spaces between Black Street and Hawkins Street and included 1,687 public on-street spaces, 126 public off-street spaces, and an estimated 2,600 private off-street spaces.



SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

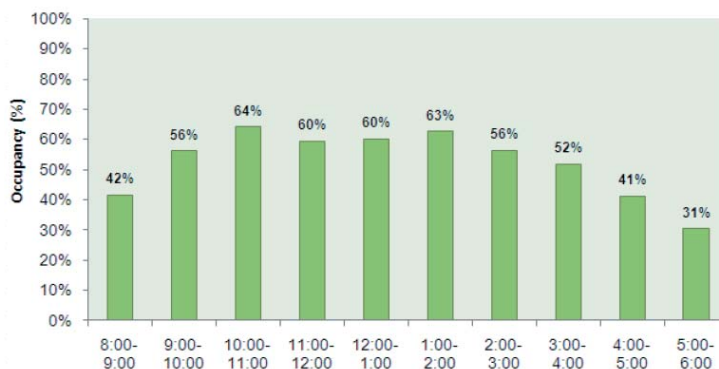
Transportation demand management (TDM) is the integrated approach to transportation planning that uses policies, programs and infrastructure to shift travel behaviour to make use of existing capacities, typically encouraging non-vehicular travel modes. The successful application of TDM results in delaying or eliminating the need for new, vehicle-oriented infrastructure, such as roadways and parking facilities.

Sustainable transportation and TDM are central to the findings and recommendations of this plan. A primary objective of the plan is to realize opportunities where TDM can be applied, satisfying downtown parking demand with the fewest feasible number of parking spaces. TDM programs and policies work to reduce single-occupant vehicles, playing a major role in parking management. As well, TDM aims to increase sustainable transportation in the downtown, directly correlating with two specific objectives within the plan, (1) to reduce the number of vehicle trips in turn reducing parking demand downtown, and (2) to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, aiding in the reduction of environmental degradation from motor-vehicle use. This last objective is also in-line with GHG reduction targets and sustainability goals of the City.

ON-STREET PARKING

The survey of on-street parking spaces revealed that the peak period experiences an overall occupancy rate of 64%, suggesting that the total supply is meeting parking demand. See *Figure 1*. Certain areas experience occupancy rates as high as 90%, such as Main Street between 1st Avenue and 4th Avenue. However, in each case there is an under-utilized parking supply within two blocks. Accordingly, it is suggested that the existing on-street parking supply is meeting the demand for short-term parking.

Figure 1 - Parking Occupancy Rate by Time-of-day



The survey of on-street parking spaces also revealed that a considerable number of all-day parkers occupy on-street spaces. These spaces are intended for short-term parking for the adjacent businesses and residents that front these streets and the presence of all-day parkers is impeding their ability to park in these areas, particularly where occupancy rates are high. New parking restrictions are recommended which will extend the range of two-hour meters and two-hour unmetered areas to preclude long-term parking in on-street spaces. A residential parking program will address spillover into adjacent residential areas, while retaining the ability of area residents and residential visitors to park in these areas. See *Figure 2*.

Figure 2 - Recommended Parking Restrictions



Research and consultation tasks determined that conventional on-street meter technologies are inconvenient for downtown customers and do not allow the City to adopt more innovative and flexible parking programs. New kiosk-style on-street meters are suggested which will replace up to ten (10) conventional meters per kiosk, accept a variety of payment methods, and permit flexible payment and incentive programs. New meter technologies are also suggested that improve data collection capabilities and prevent all-day parkers from 'shuffling' between two-hour restricted spaces.

Special programs related to on-street parking will continue to encourage downtown retail activity and improve the visitor experience. The City's tourist pass program is to be retained, but cyclist, pedestrian, and parking-related signage and information is to be improved. A 'first hour free' program is to be developed to address concerns about pay parking downtown and competition with outlying retailers. This program would provide anyone making a purchase downtown with a voucher entitling them to their first hour of on-street parking free.



OFF-STREET PARKING

Both community consultation and the parking survey confirmed that a lack of long-term parking is the biggest parking issue in downtown Whitehorse. Two (2) City-owned lots on Steele Street have a total of 91 spaces and are only available to parkers with a monthly permit. Monthly permits are over \$160 per month and slated to increase in 2011. Both lots were observed at approximately 75% occupancy.

Existing public off-street parking is available only on a monthly basis, which causes parkers to have access to a space every day in a given month and provide little incentive to consider alternative travel modes. Under 2011 rates, it will cost approximately \$9-10 per day to park in downtown public lots. It is suggested that the City move toward a system where downtown parking is paid on a daily basis. This will cause all-day parkers to consider the actual cost of parking on a particular day and encourage a shift toward cheaper, more sustainable modes, such as transit or cycling. Daily rates should be set at \$7.50 per day to offer savings over the monthly option and encourage daily payment.

Approximately 340 vehicles were observed parked in on-street spaces in the inventoried area for four (4) hours or longer. A combination of the new on-street parking restrictions and improved enforcement technologies will result in these vehicles needing new off-

street parking or having their demand met through alternative travel modes. Downtown Whitehorse contains a number of vacant properties currently being used for off-street parking. 34 private and public lots were surveyed and assessed for the likelihood that they will be developed in the next ten (10) years. It is estimated that 396 vehicles are currently parking all-day in off-street lots that have the potential to be developed in the next ten (10) years. If only 75% of them are developed, demand for off-street parking will increase by 297 vehicles in the next ten (10) years. A summary is presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1 - Summary of Future (10 Year) Off-Street Parking Demand

	Number of Vehicles
Demand currently met on-street which will no longer be available for all-day parking in the future (5 year timeline)	340
Demand currently being met in off-street lots expected to be developed in the future and unavailable for all-day parking (10 year timeline)	297
Total	637

Future off-street parking demand will also be generated through new development in the downtown. It is assumed that demand due to new development will be accommodated on-site, except in cases where cash in-lieu is provided or a variance is granted in exchange for community amenities. In these cases the City must plan to increase the supply of public parking to accommodate this additional demand, however the number of spaces provided depends on the approach taken.

There are two approaches the City may take to meeting this additional off-street demand that is currently not met. First, the City may take the conventional approach and create 637 new off-street parking spaces to accommodate this demand. The second approach is through a host of transportation demand management (TDM) strategies that shift travel demand to alternative modes, such as walking, cycling, and transit, and decrease the need to increase parking supply. This plan places considerable emphasis on sustainable transportation and seeks to meet as much demand as possible through TDM. However, it is also necessary that some additional downtown off-street parking supply is provided.

All new off-street parking facilities should be located outside the core commercial area, but within acceptable walking distance. Peripheral locations will occupy less expensive properties, contribute less traffic to the core, and permit easy access from major routes. Spaces in peripheral parking areas should be offered at rates 25 to 50% discounted from core area facilities to reflect their lower demand, lower land value, and to encourage their use.

POLICIES / REGULATIONS

The Parking Development Reserve Fund is the City fund that provides capital for parking-related infrastructure improvements. Currently the Fund may only be used to fund parking-related infrastructure and is capped at \$1,000,000, at which point additional funds are committed to general revenues. It is suggested that permitting use of parking reserve funds for sustainable transportation infrastructure will still allow parking demand to be met, but will do so through increased use of alternative modes, such as walking, cycling, and transit. This will entail an amendment to the Reserve Fund Bylaw.

The City should actively pursue cash in-lieu contributions as a way to fund public parking facilities, rather than provide less efficient private supply. The public voiced concern that the \$1,000,000 cap was causing cash in-lieu contributions to be spent on general City operations, not to solve the parking issues for which it is collected. Removing the reserve fund cap by amending the Reserve Funds Level Policy will address this concern and increase developer contributions. Pro-active promotion of the cash in-lieu option will also help.

Existing Zoning Bylaw rates in the downtown are deemed appropriate, however a proposed parking maximum would prevent excessive supply and an option for reduced parking supply in shared use scenarios will encourage mixed use development in the downtown. Better definition of long-term bicycle storage (Class I) and short-term bike racks (Class II) will ensure appropriate parking is provided in all future development, particularly with long-term parking in multi-family residential, commercial, and community/institutional land uses.

General City policies are recommended that will ensure key parking management and TDM directions are pursued in future City actions. Proposed policies include: permitting parking supply relaxations to encourage residential development in the downtown, encouraging parking spaces that are 'unbundled' from the purchase of a multi-family residential unit, and encouraging shared parking arrangement wherever possible.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of recommendations for the Whitehorse Downtown Parking Management Plan.

Sustainable Transportation

- > Use TDM to help meet all-day parking demand;
- > Improve public transit service;
- > Establish a downtown shuttle service connected to parking areas;
- > Improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure;
- > Establish and promote a City-wide carshare service;
- > Identify priority spaces for carpool, micro-vehicle, and carshare vehicles;
- > Promote and improve ridesharing opportunities;
- > Encourage telework and alternative work arrangements;
- > Establish a guaranteed ride home service;
- > Encourage parking 'cash out' and 'unbundled' parking from residential units;
- > Establish a transportation organizing body in the downtown and establish TDM marketing programs; and
- > Continue with Smart Growth policies that support multi-modal transportation.

On-Street Parking

- > Retain existing on-street parking rates;
- > Alter on-street parking restrictions to limit all-day parking (see Figure 2);
- > Establish a residential pass program to limit downtown spillover;
- > Identify 'priority' spaces for carpools, micro vehicles, and carshare vehicles;
- > Offer a 'first hour free' for downtown customers;
- > Replace conventional parking meters with newer kiosks;
- > Adopt new parking enforcement technologies;
- > Retain existing parking violation rates; and
- > Improve parking signage and information.

Off-Street Parking

- > All-day parking demand is to be addressed through both new off-street parking supply and TDM programs;
- > New off-street parking facilities should be located at the core area periphery;
- > Off-street parking rates should not increase beyond proposed 2011 rates;
- > Rates for peripheral spaces should be 25-50% less than core area spaces;
- > Monthly parking should be replaced in favour of daily parking;
- > Daily rates should be less than the daily cost of a monthly permit; and
- > Handi bus loading areas should be included in off-street lots.

Policies / Regulations

- > Pursue cash in-lieu contributions to fund public parking facilities;
- > Alter Reserve Fund to permit use for sustainable transportation infrastructure;
- > Remove all 'caps' on the Parking Development Reserve Fund;
- > Establish a maximum parking supply rate 25% greater than existing minimums;
- > Offer 25% parking reduction for developments less than 50% commercial area;
- > Clearly define Class I and Class II bicycle parking, and add a requirement for Class I spaces; and
- > Adopt policies in support of TDM, unbundled parking, shared parking, and reduced parking supply for downtown residential.