



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Canada Post Community Mailbox Program in Toronto

Date:	June 3, 2015
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Deputy City Manager, Cluster B
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report provides information on the Canada Post transition from door-to-door mail delivery to a community mailbox (CMB) system in Toronto. City staff have been meeting with Canada Post to gather information about the transition, including scope, design and other details to better assess potential accessibility, financial and public realm implications for the City of Toronto. To prepare for the anticipated 2017-2019 implementation of the CMB program in parts of Toronto, City staff are seeking additional details from Canada Post and a city-wide implementation plan. The City Manager will report back once comprehensive details have been provided by Canada Post and potential impacts have been assessed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Deputy City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council request that Canada Post provide the City Manager with detailed, city-wide implementation information on the community mailbox program in Toronto, including:
 - a. The number and location of current residential and business mailboxes that will be affected and the number and location of community mailboxes that will be installed, including the criteria for determining areas which may be defined as “business corridors,” “Urban”, “Dense Urban” and “Downtown Core”;
 - b. The specific timelines for implementation;
 - c. The design options for community mailboxes being considered by Canada Post, including any modifications to the standard mailbox format;

- d. Canada Post’s siting guidelines and performance standards for assessing site feasibility;
 - e. A detailed communications plan to inform Toronto residents about the conversion to community mailboxes; and
 - f. A plan for addressing barriers to accessing postal services, including social isolation, literacy, linguistic, cognitive and mobility barriers and ensuring equitable outcomes for all Torontonians.
2. City Council request that Canada Post work with the General Manager, Transportation Services and the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to develop location, siting and design guidelines for community mailboxes, including delivery options for areas where community mailboxes are not feasible; and request that the City Manager report back to City Council once a specific, city-wide implementation plan has been provided by Canada Post and potential impacts to the City have been assessed.
 3. City Council request that Canada Post confirm that the City of Toronto will recover incremental costs for any staff services required to support the implementation and operation of community mailboxes in Toronto, which may include:
 - a. Community mailbox siting and installation;
 - b. Traffic management;
 - c. Snow clearing; and
 - d. Litter collection.
 4. City Council direct the Director, 311 Toronto to establish a call management strategy to redirect any community mailbox calls to Canada Post; and City Council request that Canada Post work with the Director, 311 Toronto to establish roles and responsibilities for responding to community mailbox-related calls.

Financial Impact

The City may incur the following types of incremental costs to support the implementation and operation of CMBs.

Potential Costs Related to the Conversion to Community Mailboxes	
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff support (i.e. to conduct site inspections; re-direct 311 calls; change parking and loading signage regulations; manufacture and install new signs; develop location, siting and design guidelines, etc.) • Infrastructure and equipment (i.e. paving, lighting, signage, any costs related to utility locations, etc.)
Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic (i.e. parking enforcement) • Snow clearing • Litter collection

Canada Post has proposed providing municipalities with a one-time allocation of \$50 per CMB location to offset the cost of staff involvement in the conversion process. Canada Post has also stated that it will cover all costs associated with the operation of the CMBs. More information is needed regarding the number of CMBs and other cost drivers before staff can determine the extent of cost recovery.

There is no Operating Budget allocation provided for City costs related to the conversion to CMBs. The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on May 14, 2015, the Planning and Growth Management Committee requested that the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with all appropriate City divisions provide information on the impact of Canada Post's CMB program on Toronto's urban environment, future development, public realm and urban design at its June 18, 2015 meeting.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PG4.10>

At its meeting on April 14, 2015, the Toronto and East York Community Council requested that the Director of the Public Realm Unit and the Director of the Community Planning, Toronto and East York District report back to the Toronto and East York Community Council on June 16, 2015 with information on the implementation of Canada Post's CMB program, including the City of Toronto and Canada Post's authority and responsibilities regarding the conversion. The Community Council also requested information on potential placement locations, the relationship between the CMB program and City right-of-way guidelines and obligations, discussions with the federal government and Canada Post and other pertinent information.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.TE5.75>

At its meeting on February 19, 2014, City Council requested that Canada Post maintain residential door-to-door delivery and that the City Manager, in consultation with the appropriate City staff, report back to Council, through the Executive Committee, on the cost of converting to CMBs, the neighbourhoods and demographics affected by the conversion, service changes, locations of new mailboxes, impact on the public realm, traffic, residents, including seniors and persons with disabilities, and crime and safety issues.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.MM48.8>

This report responds to these motions to the extent that information is available.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Community Mailbox Program in Toronto

On December 11, 2013, Canada Post released a “Five-point Action Plan” announcing its intention to replace front-door household mail delivery with CMBs from 2014-2019 in order to reduce its operating costs. When placing CMBs within the public right-of-way, Canada Post relies upon section 3 of the Mail Receptacles Regulation SOR/83-743 under the *Canada Post Corporation Act*.

Since 2014, City staff have been meeting and corresponding with Canada Post staff to gather information on the CMB program in Toronto. To facilitate discussions with City staff on the conversion, Canada Post recently provided a map of Toronto that divides the city into three geographic areas: Urban, Dense Urban and Downtown Core, (see Attachment 1 for a draft map of the areas prepared by Canada Post). Canada Post staff have indicated that they will tailor the approach to converting each area and seek input from City staff on refining the geographic areas. Geographic areas will be converted according to the timelines in the table below. Specific information on proposed CMB sites is not available. Information on the number of Canada Post points of call, or points of delivery, that will be converted in each geographic area is available in Attachment 2.

Toronto Conversion Timelines Provided by Canada Post

Geographic Area	Conversion Timeframe
Urban	2017
Dense Urban	2018-2019
Downtown Core	Likely not converted to CMBs

Canada Post has indicated that the conversion process, which takes approximately ten months, involves consulting with the Mayor of the municipality; sending residents from affected communities an information package that explains how they can express their preferences and priorities; meeting with municipal staff to determine suitable locations for mailboxes based on safety, accessibility, proximity to the addresses they serve and consumer preferences, as well as taking land use planning, service delivery and right-of-way management into account; providing municipal staff with preliminary siting maps; sharing resident feedback with City Council and staff to determine siting solutions; and providing City Council and staff with status updates as requested. Canada Post has noted that it will also meet with residents whose homes are adjacent to CMB sites to respond to questions.

CMBs are equipped with individually locked mail compartments, locked compartments for parcels and outgoing mail slots. There are 16 individual compartments within each CMB unit and usually three mailbox units in one CMB location. According to Canada Post, CMBs will be installed at a safe distance from the street, nearby intersections and, if possible, near existing street lighting (see Attachment 3 for Canada Post’s location and

site selection criteria for Urban areas). Some of Canada Post's existing equipment, (letterboxes and relay boxes) will be removed as part of the conversion process.

Canada Post has stated that it will be responsible for costs related to site selection, preparation, (i.e. curb cuts to ensure access to CMBs) installation and ongoing maintenance, as well as snow clearing and graffiti removal.

Certain Toronto customers will continue to receive door-to-door delivery, including:

- Businesses that are located in established "business corridors"; and
- Businesses that receive a relatively large volume of mail or parcels, (Canada Post staff have clarified that this includes businesses that receive minimum 30 pieces of mail per day or receive parcels minimum three times per five-day work week).

No delivery changes are planned for residents of high-rise buildings, (apartment, condo or seniors' residences) where mailboxes are consolidated and located in the lobby.

Canada Post has not announced changes to its delivery service beyond grouping individual mailboxes into CMB structures and siting CMBs in the public right-of-way, however Canada Post continues to review its delivery service standards. Reducing the frequency of personal mail delivery was one cost reduction option that was not pursued in the "Five-point Action Plan" but that Canada Post may reconsider in subsequent service reviews.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities Principles

In 2014, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities released principles to guide Canada Post's consultations on the conversion to CMBs. The principles, which were supported by Canada Post, included meaningful consultation with each affected municipality; Canada Post partnering with municipalities to maintain mailbox infrastructure or compensating municipalities for maintenance work; and Canada Post aligning siting and delivery options with local age and disability friendly community strategies.

City of Toronto-Canada Post Communications

In 2014, Canada Post officials met with the City staff to explain the conversion process. Since then, City staff have been meeting with Canada Post staff to request information regarding the city-wide CMB plan for Toronto, the number and location of CMBs, mailbox design, conversion timelines, service options for residents with mobility restrictions, implementation costs, implications for Toronto's built environment, traffic congestion, community safety and maintenance of mailboxes. Senior staff from Transport Canada are copied on all City correspondence to Canada Post.

COMMENTS

Number and Location of Community Mailboxes and Mailbox Design

City staff estimate that Canada Post's CMB program will result in the installation of a significant number of new CMB locations in Toronto and are seeking clarification from Canada Post regarding the exact number and location of CMBs. A detailed, city-wide implementation plan has not been made available.

Canada Post staff have indicated that they will invest time to work with City staff prior to CMB installations, are open to mailbox design modifications and will not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to the design and placement of CMBs. While City staff are encouraged that Canada Post staff will approach mailbox design and siting collaboratively, without detailed site and design information, City staff are concerned about the visual and streetscape impact of installing high volumes of new equipment on city streets and the feasibility of installing CMBs in densely populated areas.

Canada Post has indicated that it is exploring locating CMBs in publicly-accessible businesses. City staff are encouraged by this approach and would like to work with Canada Post to explore this and other options that may reduce the total number of CMBs placed in City streetscapes and improve safe access to mailboxes in certain areas.

Public Realm

Improving the quality, amenity and function of streetscapes is a high priority for City Council, staff and the public. Recent City initiatives include: reducing the clutter of elements in street right-of-ways and on sidewalks; maximizing pedestrian clearways to respond to increasing volumes of pedestrian traffic; and coordinating the design and placement of street furniture, publication boxes and City utilities so that streetscapes appear orderly. There are currently approximately 14,000 elements of street furniture in Toronto. City staff believe that it will be challenging to physically and visually integrate a significant number of new CMBs and that the installation of new Canada Post street equipment will detract from recent right-of-way improvements and the kind of streetscapes that meet City Council objectives.

Transportation Services and City Planning will need to develop new placement and design guidelines in consultation with Canada Post to accommodate new CMB equipment. Guidelines should respect existing City policies, including the Vibrant Streets guidelines, area-specific plans, such as Heritage Conservation Districts, and local concerns, including using lighting to ensure safe access to mailboxes. City staff do not believe that guidelines alone will be sufficient to manage the physical and visual impact on city streets and are requesting that other options, including placing mailboxes in local stores, be considered to the extent possible.

Equity and Accessibility Concerns

City staff have raised concerns with how the conversion may result in potential inequitable service access for vulnerable populations. Canada Post has developed service options to help residents with physical mobility challenges access their personal mail, such as providing a mail compartment at the appropriate height, directing mail to a trusted individual, and Canada Post collecting mail from a CMB compartment and delivering it to a customer's home once per week. The process for acquiring these supports appears to be complex and relies on residents' self-identification and self-efficacy to request accommodation. Information about supports that will be available to vulnerable residents who face other or additional barriers, such as social isolation, literacy, linguistic and cognitive barriers, will be an important part of the Canada Post implementation plan. City staff would like to work with Canada Post and service provider agencies to explore options for how to best support vulnerable Torontonians in accessing their personal mail.

Safety

City Council has expressed concern about residents' ability to safely access their mail and the risk of increased mail and identity theft as a result of the CMB program. While the Toronto Police Service's Divisional Policing Support Unit notes that crimes related to mail and community mailboxes have been decreasing since 2005 based on reported statistics, the Toronto Police Service will mediate any issues through Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles, (i.e. siting mailboxes in high visibility, well-lit and high pedestrian traffic areas) and crime management strategies undertaken in collaboration with Canada Post.

Traffic Impacts

Beginning in January 2015, Canada Post changed its delivery and pick-up schedule to off-peak hours to support City Council's objective of managing downtown congestion, which is most prevalent at rush hours. While City staff appreciate Canada Post's cooperation to help manage congestion, staff have raised concerns that siting CMBs in the public right-of-way will have negative traffic impacts, including higher traffic volumes in the vicinity of CMBs and increased congestion due to vehicles stopping at mailboxes during rush hours (residents may collect their mail as part of their commute to or from work). Once CMB locations are determined, siting should be coordinated with by-law amendments, which could prohibit vehicles from stopping, standing or parking near the CMB during certain hours, and new street signage.

Snow Removal and Litter

Canada Post advises that it is responsible for removing snow in the vicinity of CMBs. City and Canada Post staff will discuss how to ensure consistent snow clearing service standards leading to and around CMBs, as well as year-round mailbox accessibility.

City staff have observed that existing CMBs in Toronto are not always litter-free. While Canada Post staff have indicated that Canada Post is responsible for litter collection around CMBs, recycling receptacles will be not provided at new CMB locations. As a result, City staff are working with Canada Post staff to understand Canada Post's litter collection procedures and service levels. City of Toronto staff from Solid Waste Management Services have noted that most litter is unaddressed mail.

Calls to 311 Toronto

City staff anticipate that members of Council, City staff and 311 Toronto will receive calls from residents related to CMBs. It is recommended that all matters respecting postal services be channeled to Canada Post through 311 Toronto's call management strategy and that 311 Toronto and Canada Post delineate roles and responsibilities for managing calls related to CMBs.

NEXT STEPS

City staff will continue to meet with Canada Post staff to gather comprehensive information, explore modifications to the Urban, Dense Urban and Downtown Core areas, CMB design and siting of CMBs in the right-of-way, create location, siting and design guidelines and mitigate any issues related to the implementation of CMBs in Toronto, including but not limited to physical and financial impacts.

City staff will conduct inter-municipal research to gather best practices and learn from other big Canadian cities in various stages of the conversion process. The City Manager will report back to City Council when more specific information is available.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: City of Toronto Points of Call Overview - Draft Map
Attachment 2: City of Toronto Points of Call Overview - Conversion Data
Attachment 3: Canada Post Site Selection Criteria for Urban Areas