



**STAFF REPORT  
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Street Furniture Program – InfoToGo Pillar Design Modification**

<b>Date:</b>	June 13, 2011
<b>To:</b>	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
<b>From:</b>	Acting General Manager, Transportation Services
<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2011\Cluster B\TRA\PR\pw11001pr.doc

**SUMMARY**

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The City Of Toronto entered into an Agreement in 2007 with Astral Media Outdoor LP for the manufacture, supply, installation and repair of over 25,000 elements under a Coordinated Street Furniture Program, including the provision of 120 information and directional way-finding structures (InfoToGo pillars). A number of issues have emerged with the design and placement of the pillars, leading Astral Media, in consultation with staff, to propose a modified structure to replace the existing design.

The proposed new design, with a more compact footprint and smaller dimensional profile, remains compatible with the design theme of the overall street furniture program, and also provides the foundation of a more comprehensive tourist way-finding system.

The proposal also provides an opportunity for enhanced revenue generation to be shared by the City pursuant to the terms of the Agreement, with this opportunity further supported by roll-out of the info pillars this Fall. The proposal does not alter the restrictions on advertising contained in the agreement.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The Acting General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:**

1. City Council approve the modified design of the InfoToGo Pillar under the Coordinated Street Furniture Program, as set out in this report, and illustrated in Attachment "1", and authorize the exchange of design rights for the new design with Astral Media Outdoor LP.

## **Financial Impact**

It is projected that the design modification and rapid implementation of the new InfoToGo Pillar design could generate an incremental additional revenue amount under the Coordinated Street Furniture Agreement in the order of \$1.2 million annually (\$3.2 million annual total compared with the \$2.0 million currently forecasted with this element) to be divided amongst the City and Astral in accordance with the revenue share provisions of the Agreement. Failing to approve the new design in a timely manner to ensure installation of the new pillars this year may jeopardize this revenue stream.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

The City of Toronto entered into an Agreement with Astral Media Outdoor LP effective September, 2007 following an exhaustive RFP process, for the design, manufacturing, installation, maintenance and repair of 25,640 street furniture elements over the 20 year term of the Agreement. Among the requirements is the provision of 120 Information/Way-finding Structures (InfoToGo Pillars), which were to be deployed by the end of this year.

City staff has been working with Astral on the design and implementation of the InfoToGo Pillars, in light of a number of issues that have arisen with the original design and performance of the pillar. To date, only five have been deployed.

## **COMMENTS**

### **Concerns with Current Design**

The five info pillars placed on the street in spring 2010 have been monitored over the past year. Staff of the Economic Development and Culture Division has been key to this process. We have determined collectively that while the map function for quick directional reference remains important and appealing to visitors, the interactive LCD touch screen technology of the unit has not been well utilized, has been problematic to operate, and the electronics have proven to be less reliable, requiring high levels of maintenance. As well, the content supporting the use of the touch-screens is the responsibility of the City (Economic Development) and is onerous to update and replace on a continual basis. Further, the emergence of next-generation personal handheld devices and cellular smart phones renders the current technology with its interactive screen nearly obsolete. The existing design has also proven difficult to site on city streets, given the size of the existing footprint and bulk of the units, and the positioning requirements to avoid direct sunlight on the display screen.

### **Proposed Modified Design**

In view of these evolving concerns, staff and Astral have reviewed modifications to the InfoToGo Pillar design based in part on best practices in other cities. Astral has provided a proposed redesign which, among other things, will be adaptable to a more comprehensive way-finding initiative, provide customized area maps, come in versions

with and without advertising panels, and remains compatible with the overall design theme of the Coordinated Street Furniture Program.

The proposed new Info Pillar has a more compact overall footprint, and the unit is smaller in length, height and width. The ad caisson would be a standard 4 by 6 foot size, replacing the current 3 by 5 foot size, the same as the transit shelters. Authority for the placement of all street furniture elements rests with the City, and staff will continue to vigilantly enforce the placement guidelines outlined in the Council endorsed Vibrant Streets Guidelines document to ensure pedestrian passage remains unobstructed. Attachment 1 contains renderings of the redesigned pillar and comparison with the existing version.

The new design also provides the City of Toronto with the opportunity to use the proposed Info Pillars without the ad caisson and thereby form the basis of a new Way-finding pillar prototype. A long-anticipated City Way-finding strategy to respond to the needs of the tourism and cultural communities is currently being explored by staff and we expect being in a position to report to Committee and Council on this matter later this year. The moderate cost of an ad-free info pillar would provide opportunities to increase quantities based on public, business and tourism needs and in anticipation of special events such as the Pan Am Games.

### **No Change to Advertising Restrictions**

With respect to impact on the overall Agreement provisions related to advertising, the proposed change in design of the InfoToGo Pillar will not alter the parameters of the Agreement. The contract provisions limit the maximum total amount of advertising to 198,200 square feet across the entire City. At this time the current level of about 104,000 square feet is well under this limit. The number of InfoTo Go elements specified in the Agreement of 120 also is not proposed to change at this time. The Agreement restricts advertising to the info pillar and transit shelter elements only, unlike the pre-Agreement conditions where ad hoc and poorly designed advertising was also permitted on garbage receptacles and benches. The City receives a substantial Minimum Annual Guarantee (MAG) revenue stream each year from Astral Media; along with the opportunity for a share of any increase achieved over and above the minimum, should total revenues exceed the specified yearly target.

### **Revenue Opportunity**

In exchange for the City transferring the design rights of the current Info Pillars to Astral Media, the company will be responsible for all costs of decommissioning the 5 existing pillars now on city streets, disposition of the 115 pillars and hardware currently in storage, and the prototype/fabrication of the 120 newly designed units.

The proposed design provides the City of Toronto with an improved revenue generating opportunity. As noted above, the City currently receives a Minimum Annual Guaranteed (MAG) revenue stream each year; along with the opportunity for additional revenues, in the event the minimum annual specified target is exceeded. The forecast total annual revenue value of the proposed Info Pillars is approximately \$3.2 million, compared to

about \$2 million currently forecast, but not being achieved due to the issues described above. The City would share in the proportion of this revenue, in an amount over and above the minimum guaranteed specified amounts, as set in the Agreement. In order to achieve the revenue, Council approval of the new design is required at the earliest opportunity to enable roll-out of the pillars this Fall.

**CONTACT**

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**SIGNATURE**

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Andrew Koropeski, P.Eng  
Acting General Manager, Transportation Services

**ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1: Proposed InfoToGo Design Modification Illustrations

Attachment 1:  
Proposed InfoToGo Design Modification Illustrations



Proposed InfoToGo Design



Existing InfoToGo Design

