

Implementation Plan for Dynamic Symbol of Access

Date: March 5, 2018
To: Executive Committee
From: General Manager, Facilities Management
Wards: All

SUMMARY

Facilities Management (FM) was directed to report back to Executive Committee in the first quarter of 2018 regarding a plan to implement the Dynamic Symbol of Access (DSA) for City-owned properties. This report has been prepared in consultation with Toronto Building, Transportation Services, and the Toronto Parking Authority.

The Ontario Building Code (OBC) contains the standards for new construction, renovation and change of use. Where accessible signage is required, the Code prescribes that the International Symbol of Access (ISA) be used. It does not reference the DSA. At its meeting on January 31 and February 1, 2018, City Council requested the Province of Ontario to amend the Ontario Building Code and Highway Traffic Act to allow the use of the modernized accessibility symbol (DSA).

Transportation Services must operate under the legislation of the Highway Traffic Act (HTA) in Ontario. Like the OBC, the HTA recognizes the ISA as the accepted access symbol standard. As such, Transportation Services cannot issue street signs with the new symbol without contravening the Act.

While City Council directed Facilities Management to report back in consultation with Toronto Building, Transportation Services, and the Toronto Parking Authority on implementing the new symbol on City-owned properties, there are many other stakeholders that need to be involved in the development of a comprehensive City of Toronto plan. For example, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Long Term Care, and Toronto Water all operate significant portfolios that would be affected by a change to the accessibility symbol.

Given the legislative barriers to implement the DSA on all City-owned properties and the need for additional stakeholder engagement, FM will report back in the first quarter of 2019 with an implementation plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Facilities Management recommends that:

1. The Executive Committee direct the General Manager, Facilities Management to report back in the first quarter of 2019 with a plan to implement the Dynamic Symbol of Access for City-owned properties.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to the City of Toronto resulting from this report.

Facilities Management will submit a subsequent report in Q1 2019 detailing the implementation plan, including the financial implications of implementing the Dynamic Symbol of Access on City-owned properties.

The Acting Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of December 4, 2017 the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee considered a presentation from the Forward Movement Campaign on the campaign to change from a stationary to a dynamic wheelchair symbol of access.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.DI18.3>

At its meeting on January 31, and February 1, 2018, City Council adopted the following:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Facilities Management, in consultation with the Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building, the General Manager, Transportation Services, and the President, Toronto Parking Authority, to report to the Executive Committee in the first quarter of 2018 with a plan to implement the Dynamic Symbol of Access for City-owned properties.

2. City Council endorse the Dynamic Symbol of Access and request the Province of Ontario to include the Dynamic Symbol of Access in the Ontario Building Code and Highway Traffic Act to enable the use of the modernized accessibility symbol.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EX30.27>

COMMENTS

Facilities Management was directed to report back to Executive Committee in the first quarter of 2018 regarding a plan to implement the Dynamic Symbol of Access on City-owned properties. This report has been prepared in consultation with Toronto Building, Transportation Services, and the Toronto Parking Authority.

The Dynamic Symbol of Access (DSA) has been developed by advocacy groups to reframe the way society views and interacts with persons with a disability. This new symbol depicts an individual operating a wheelchair in motion, which emphasizes different abilities. Proponents of this new symbol believe that this symbol will initiate a paradigm shift in how society views people with disabilities.

The International Symbol of Access (ISA) is a symbol that was introduced in 1968 and is the standard in the Ontario Building Code (OBC). This standard is set out in the international standard: ISO 7001 which is consistent with Canada's Model National Building Code.

Challenges to Implementation

The OBC sets out technical and administrative requirements related to the construction, renovation, change of use and demolition of buildings and is authorized by the Building Code Act, 1992 (BCA). The BCA supersedes all municipal by-laws respecting the construction or demolition of buildings. Municipalities cannot set requirements that exceed those contained in the OBC. Therefore, the City of Toronto cannot require as a condition of permit issuance that the DSA be used instead of the ISA. However, at its meeting of January 31, 2018 Toronto City Council requested that province amend the OBC to include the use of the DSA in the OBC.

Transportation Services must operate under the legislation of the Highway Traffic Act (HTA) in Ontario. Like the OBC, the HTA recognizes the ISA as the accepted access symbol standard. As such, Transportation Services could not issue street signs with the new symbol without contravening the HTA.

Engaging Additional Stakeholders

While City Council directed Facilities Management to report back in consultation with Toronto Building, Transportation Services, and the Toronto Parking Authority on implementing the new symbol on City-owned properties, there are many other stakeholders that need to be involved in the development of a comprehensive plan. For example, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Long Term Care, and Toronto Water all operate significant portfolios that would be affected by a change to the accessibility symbol. To allow for proper consultation, Facilities Management is requesting to report back with a full implementation plan in the first quarter of 2019.

Conclusion

Given the legislative barriers to implement the DSA on all City-owned properties and the need for additional stakeholder engagement, FM will report back in the first quarter of 2019 with an implementation plan.

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SIGNATURE

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