

Coordinated Street Furniture Program Agreement Update

Date: March 19, 2019
To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee
From: General Manager, Transportation Services
Wards: All

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to receive Council authority to enter into and execute an additional amending agreement to the Street Furniture Agreement to make changes to the specific allocations of street furniture elements, maintenance and inspection of elements, timeframe for non-powered elements to be re-installed and to implement an improved customer service procedure.

The Coordinated Street Furniture Program is a public-private partnership with Astral Media to install, operate, and maintain approximately 24,500 pieces of street furniture over a 20-year period (currently in Year 12). The Agreement with Astral began in 2007, and follows a fiscal year of September 1 to August 31. As of September 1, 2018, the Program has resulted in the installation of more than 20,800 elements with a current asset value of approximately \$197 million, or 79.9% of the total required investment, and has provided the City with \$194.7 million in advertising revenue.

The ten-year mark of the Agreement provided an opportunity to modernize, retrofit, or upgrade the street furniture designs delivered through the program, as well as an informal opportunity to identify systemic challenges and gaps. Following the mid-term review, this report recommends upgrading select transit shelters with user-activated heaters during the winter months, as well as upgrading postering boards affixed to transit shelters by integrating the TO360 Wayfinding program.

Modifications to the Agreement are also recommended to allow for the removal and disposal of obsolete furniture, an extended postering period, increased cleaning of litter receptacles, a specific timeframe for returning non-powered elements (e.g., benches, litter bins, postering columns, etc.) removed for construction, a mechanism in which the public can follow-up with Astral Media on their requests, and administrative updates to reflect design modifications to litter receptacles, transit shelters, information pillars and smaller format benches. These changes are proposed without impacting Astral Media's total capital expenditure for the Coordinated Street Furniture Program, nor the advertising revenue to be received by the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Transportation Services to enter into and execute an additional amending agreement to the Street Furniture Agreement dated July 20, 2007 with Astral Media Outdoor (Toronto) G. P. to implement the following objectives with no financial impact to the City or to Astral Media's capital program expenditure for the Coordinated Street Furniture Program, and in a form acceptable to the City Solicitor:

a. Allow for the implementation of a transit shelter heating kit to be installed at select transit shelters from within the existing envelope for Astral Media's capital program expenditure.

b. Allow for the implementation of a new combination postering and wayfinding board to be installed at select transit shelters from within the existing envelope for Astral Media's capital program expenditure.

c. Allow for the retirement and disposal of obsolete street furniture elements at the discretion of the General Manager, Transportation Services.

d. Extend the amount of time for posters placed by the public to remain on postering boards and postering columns by reducing the inspection and cleaning frequency from once per week to once every two weeks; additionally, decrease the frequency of inspections and cleaning for publication box structures and benches from once per week to once every two weeks, and commensurately increase the frequency of litter receptacle inspections and cleaning in high-demand areas from once per week to twice per week.

e. Set a specific timeframe of within seven calendar days for the reinstallation of non-powered elements that have been removed due to construction coordination.

f. Increase the accountability of Astral Media to the public who contact their Commitment to Quality contact centre by requiring Astral Media to provide the public with a means of tracking their reported issues.

g. Allow for Schedule A (Street Furniture Elements & Specifications) of the Street Furniture Agreement to be updated as necessary and under the authority of the General Manager, Transportation Services to reflect design modifications and improvements to elements such as those referenced in the report and shown in Attachment 1.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts arising from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

All costs associated with the proposed amendments in this report to "modernize, retrofit or upgrade" the street furniture elements are the responsibility of Astral Media. Further, there is no change to the advertising revenue to be received by the City from the Coordinated Street Furniture Program.

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

DECISION HISTORY

City Council, at its meeting of May 23, 24 and 25, 2007, adopted a motion to accept the proposal by Astral Media Outdoor LP to provide a coordinated street furniture program for the City of Toronto as described in the City's RFP 9103-06-7316.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/minutes/2007-05-23-cc08-mn.pdf>

City Council, at its meeting of July 12, 2011, approved the modified design for the "InfoToGO Pillar" from its original format.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.PW5.5>

City Council, at its meeting on October 2, 2012, City Council adopted the vision and principles of the Toronto 360° Wayfinding Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.PW17.12>

City Council, at its meetings of May 6-8, 2014 and June 10-13, 2014, approved amendments to the Street Furniture Agreement to allow for the placement of creative advertising and the installation of digital advertising faces at transit shelters.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CC51.8>

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CC52.4>

City Council, at its meeting of May 3-5, 2016, directed the General Manager, Transportation Services to migrate all publication boxes into multipublication kiosks or box corrals by December 31, 2020.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PW12.10>

COMMENTS

The Coordinated Street Furniture Program will deliver approximately 24,500 pieces of street furniture (transit shelters, litter receptacles, benches, etc.) across Toronto over a 20-year period. These elements are financed, purchased, owned, and maintained by Astral Media for the duration of the term, and will be transferred over to the City in 2027. The Program is a model partnership between the City and the private sector, is being implemented citywide, and has been unprecedented in its scale and scope. Now in its twelfth year, the Program has delivered marked improvements to Toronto's streets while reducing the amount of advertising and clutter in the public realm.

A 2017 survey of 1,002 residents of Toronto found that three quarters of surveyed residents who lived in the city for more than ten years felt that street furniture was better

now than ten years ago; and one third of these residents believed it to be significantly better.

The Agreement with Astral Media requires the company to provide a minimum of \$445,339,245 over the 20 years in non-adjusted advertising revenue and to provide a capital expenditure of \$202,400,000 (2007 dollars or approximately \$247 million in 2019) in assets over two decades. Astral Media's capital program consists of the annual rollout of a number of different types of street furniture elements at varying quantities each year, with flexibility to adjust quantities between elements and between years to meet shifting needs.

The final asset rollout schedule must be balanced to meet Astral Media's required total capital program expenditure over the Agreement term. This is achieved through the assignment of a cash value to each element type. The element types, rollout schedule, and cash values are identified in Schedules A, H, and K, respectively, of the Agreement. As of the end of Year 11, \$161,624,651 (2007 dollars or approximately \$197 million in 2019) or 79.9% of Astral Media's capital program expenditure by value had been delivered, matching the rollout schedule. Any elements not delivered by the final year of the Agreement will be exchanged for their cash value.

Due to the long-term nature of the Street Furniture Agreement, it provides the City with the right to require Astral Media to submit a proposal to, "modernize, retrofit or upgrade" the street furniture elements during the program's tenth year (a list of current street furniture elements is included in Attachment 1). The halfway mark also served as an opportunity to identify systemic challenges and opportunities in the delivery of the program. The proposed changes in this report are the result of that proposal and subsequent discussions between staff and Astral Media.

The 2017 survey of Toronto residents found that at least six in ten had used a transit shelter, litter receptacle, or bench in the preceding twelve months. The top two concerns raised were the design of furniture and how it met user needs, and the level of cleaning and maintenance. Amongst all elements, the public was most dissatisfied with the cleanliness and repair of litter receptacles. The amendments proposed are in a response to the findings of the 2017 survey and the result of the mid-term review.

Upgraded Element: Transit Shelter Heaters

Of the respondents to the 2017 survey, 69% indicated that they were satisfied with the level of comfort provided by the shelters. A common suggestion to improve comfort was to provide a heat source during the colder months of the year. Astral Media currently provides a user-activated heat source for transit shelters in Quebec City, and would be able to install a similar device on identified transit shelters in Toronto.

This additional amenity is to be activated by users, providing radiant heating generated by electricity when the ambient temperature is less than five degrees Celsius. Heat would be provided for a five-minute period, and then could be restarted immediately. This service would be feasible from November 1 to April 30 each year. Installation of a heater requires existing access to electrical power from a distribution line (not all shelters are connected to the electrical grid), and would be prioritized for locations with

higher ridership served by routes with lower service frequency, such as those not on the Ten Minute or Better Service Network. Heating kits are also limited for installation on certain shelter formats.

The cash value of each heating kit is proposed at \$19,262 for Year 12 of the Agreement, including the cost of connecting to a Toronto Hydro meter. This reflects the price for the heating kit and hydro connection as provided by third-party vendors, as well as the cost for the required electrical upgrade from Toronto Hydro. The energy cost for the units would be deducted from the value of the annual rollout in Schedule H of the Agreement, following the end of winter each year. An estimated maximum of 100 heating kits would be rolled out in Years 13-20 in exchange for 600 publication box corrals currently planned (see Attachment 2). Due to substantially reduced numbers of publication boxes, these corrals are not required to meet the Council-directed goal of placing each publication box at a corral by the end of 2020.

Upgraded Element: Combination Postering and Wayfinding Board

The Toronto 360° Wayfinding Strategy ("TO360") is currently being integrated and coordinated with the 145 information pillars provided through the Street Furniture Agreement. Extending the TO360 mapping to transit shelters would allow for a citywide expansion and help to orient customers of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) with the immediate surroundings of a transit stop.

Approximately one-in-three transit shelters includes a postering board installed on the reverse side of the transit shelter glass wall from the TTC system map; these shelters are installed between the pedestrian clearway and the road, where the back of the map faces the sidewalk. The postering board covers this map back, allowing for additional amenity and community-based communications and flyers. A rendering of the board on a transit shelter is below.

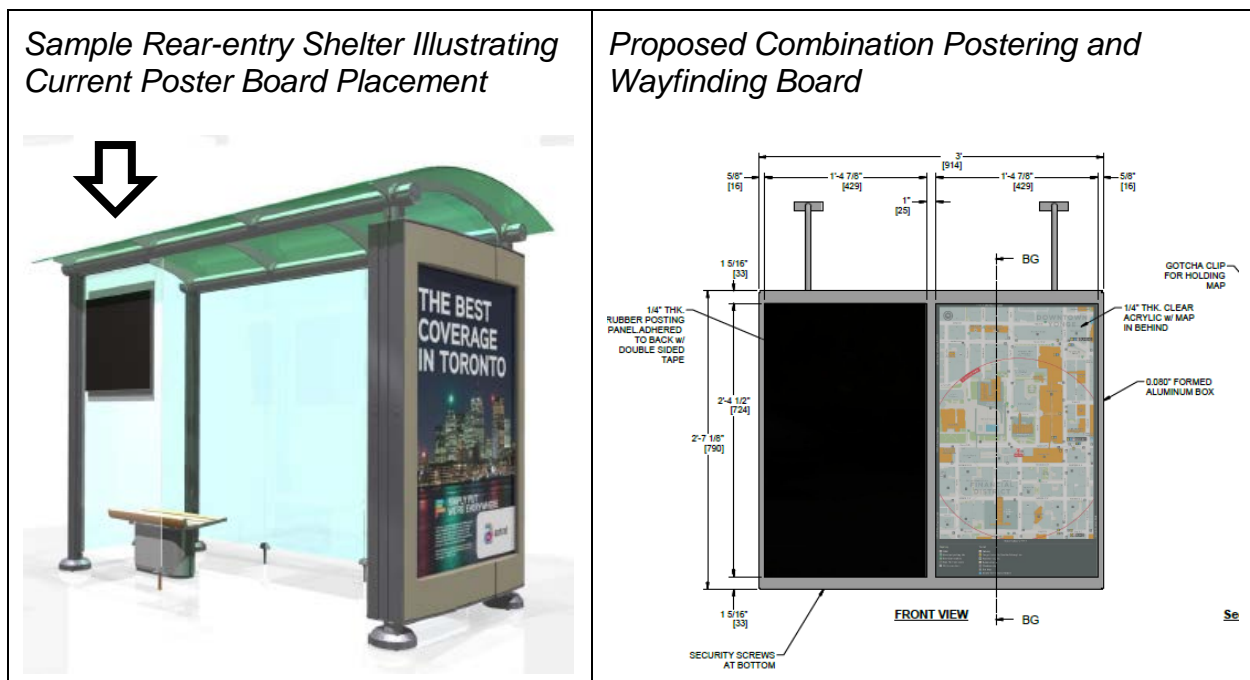


Figure 1. Sample rear-entry shelter illustrating current and proposed poster board placement

Local TO360 mapping could be included by splitting this postering surface in half, providing a surface area of three-and-one-third square feet for each of postering and wayfinding. By limiting the combined postering and wayfinding board to the same footprint as the original board, the same amount of visibility inside and outside of the shelter will be maintained.

The cash value of each combination board is \$1,704 for Year 12 of the Agreement, including the cost of the printed TO360 map, compared with the current cash value of \$1,047 per postering board. The pricing is a blended rate for retrofit and new installations based on third-party pricing, and includes an approximate value for printing maps. An estimated number of 1,500 retrofits to existing shelters and 200 installations on new transit shelters would be rolled out in exchange for the value of 400 planned postering boards on the transit shelters and 140 multipublication kiosks no longer required due to the discontinuance of kiosk rollout (see Attachment 2 and below).

Agreement Modification: Retirement and Disposal of Obsolete Elements

Since 2007, the number of publication boxes on City streets has declined by 80%, leaving the nearly 100 installed multipublication kiosks more than half empty.

The empty slots in the kiosks attracted litter and vandalism, resulting in an overall decline in the attractiveness of the units. In response and in consultation with the publication distribution industry, staff worked with Astral Media to voluntarily remove the kiosks and replace them with corrals where needed; however, there is no mechanism in the Agreement to deem the kiosks as obsolete and permit the recycling of their materials.

In addition to the kiosks, a few other elements have obsolete formats no longer being installed, such as an early version of the "canopy" transit shelters and the original plastic litter receptacles. While still functional, there are some areas that would be enhanced by replacing the original format of the element with the current standard. The above-mentioned combination postering and wayfinding boards would similarly replace the existing postering boards. There is no requirement for Astral Media to undertake this replacement; the only obligation under the agreement is to maintain the existing installed elements. Allowing staff to have the discretion to deem early formats of elements obsolete or no longer required, and then replacing them through the scheduled rollout, would keep the program fresh and current.

Agreement Modification: Extended Postering Period

Street Furniture staff routinely receive complaints regarding the removal of posters placed by the public on postering boards and columns. These postering areas receive weekly cleaning, which often results in the removal of all posters. A reduction in cleaning from weekly to once every two weeks for the boards and columns would allow for an extended postering period. The resources assigned could be redirected for additional litter receptacle cleaning as recommended below.

Agreement Modification: Increased Litter Receptacle Cleaning and Decreased Bench and Publication Box Structure (Corral) Cleaning

The standard for inspection and cleaning of all elements in the Street Furniture Agreement is once per week, regardless of the element type or amount of use. While this set standard provides a uniformity in level of service, it is not responsive to different levels of need in the community. A 2017 survey of Toronto residents found that the public was most dissatisfied with the cleanliness and repair of litter receptacles, particularly the original plastic format (40% dissatisfied) versus the newer metal format (25% dissatisfied). The number of cleaning and maintenance requests per element received by Astral Media over the last two years is included in Attachment 3.

To address the dissatisfaction, a retrofit program was undertaken by Astral Media in 2018 to address common issues and prolong the lifespan of the plastic-format receptacles. The retrofit involved permanently sealing the rear doors, securing the plastic panels, repairing worn door hinges, as well as disconnecting and removing the foot pedals. The program focused on litter receptacles in Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) in 2018, and will continue with all remaining plastic format litter receptacles in 2019 and 2020. Early results between Years 10 and 11 of the Street Furniture Program show a decline in service requests per litter bin from 1.1 requests per year to 0.8 requests.

To further reduce service requests, this report recommends shifting inspection and cleaning resources from lesser-used street furniture to increase the level of service for the heaviest-used litter receptacles. Specifically, it is proposed that the inspection and cleaning of all currently installed and planned postering or combination boards (3,445), postering columns (879), newspaper box corrals (1,897), and benches (2,602) be reduced to once every two weeks. This reduction, in addition to eliminated maintenance requirements for retired elements (1,599), be redirected to increase the inspection and cleaning of all current and future litter receptacles located in BIAs and on the Pedestrian Priority Network (up to 3,900, or more than one-third of all receptacles) to twice per week. A map of the Network is included in Attachment 4. Any changes to inspection and cleaning frequency will not impact the required response time for public service requests received by Astral Media, such as reports of damage.

Agreement Modification: Reinstallation of Non-powered Elements

With over 20,000 pieces of street furniture on City streets, there is a frequent need to temporarily remove elements to accommodate construction in the immediate area. The Street Furniture Agreement anticipates requires that Astral Media remove furniture within seven days of receipt of a request from the City. A seven-day reinstallation on restored sites is proposed for non-powered elements only (e.g., benches, litter bins, postering columns, etc.). Where an electrical connection is required, such as for transit shelters and information pillars, an increased level of coordination is needed. This timeframe for powered elements varies considerably and is often impacted by issues outside of the City's and Astral Media's control, including schedule delays due to third-party contractors and weather. Every effort is made to reinstate these elements as quickly as possible.

Agreement Modification: Astral Media Contact Centre

Astral Media is required to provide a contact number (1-866-8-ASTRAL or 1-866-827-8725) and email address (quality@astral.com) for the public to report damaged furniture and request cleaning. After reporting an issue, the caller is not currently provided with a tracking number for their case. The proposed modification to the Agreement is to require that all members of the public who report or make a request to Astral's Commitment to Quality hotline be provided with a means of tracking their issue.

Agreement Modification: Schedule A Update

A number of original street furniture designs have been adjusted under the implementation of the program, reflecting increased field experience and to address less common public realm environments. City Council also approved a revised design for information pillars in 2012. A formal update to Schedule A of the Agreement, which details furniture design specifications, would reflect current litter receptacle, transit shelter, publication box corral, bench, and information pillar formats currently in use and being installed.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Glossary of Existing Street Furniture Elements
Attachment 2: Proposed Street Furniture Rollout Schedule for Years 13-20
Attachment 3: Street Furniture Service Requests for Years 10-11
Attachment 4: Map of the Pedestrian Priority Network