

**REPORT FOR ACTION****Feasibility of Implementing Local Traffic Vehicle Decals**

**Date:** December 20, 2019

**To:** Infrastructure & Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Transportation Services

**Wards:** All

**SUMMARY**

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This report is in response to a letter submitted to the Public Works & Infrastructure Committee, Item PW29.10, requesting the General Manager Transportation Services to consider the implementation of a local traffic vehicle identification program to alert traffic enforcement to allow local residents to access their communities, using otherwise prohibited routes.

Transportations Services has consulted with Toronto Police Services and, after taking into consideration the ability to enforce such exemptions, the potential impacts on equal access to transportation infrastructure and the administration of such a program, does not recommend implementing a pilot local traffic vehicle identification program.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. The Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial impacts associated with the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

However, if such a program were to be implemented an ongoing application, approval, and renewal process would be required. Assuming the same administration costs as the permit parking program, a city wide local vehicle identification program would cost between \$6M and \$18M annually to administer, with the former assuming participation by 25 percent of registered vehicles within the City and the latter assuming a 75 percent

participation rate. This estimate does not include the initial start-up costs for the development of local criteria, drafting bylaws, development of an approval system and amendments to traffic signs.

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

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

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The actual impact of this proposal on equity-seeking and vulnerable communities is not known. However, equal access to transportation infrastructure considerations regarding this proposal have been included within the comments section of this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting held on May 08, 2018 the Public Works & Infrastructure Committee received a letter from Councillor Paul Ainslie, which requested staff to report on the implementation of some type of local vehicle identification program, possibly a window decal and give consideration of a pilot project in the Seven Oaks community. Item PW 29.10 was referred to the General Manager Transportation Services for consideration.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PW29.10>

## **COMMENTS**

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Transportation Services frequently receives requests to investigate local neighbourhood concerns including aggressive driving, speeding, non-compliance of traffic controls, and 'cut-through' traffic during peak periods. Of particular concern to many communities are the impacts of 'cut-through' traffic and its relationship to other local neighbourhood concerns. 'Cut-through' traffic refers to those vehicles which utilize neighbourhood roads to bypass traffic and congestion on major roads. Typically, traffic on neighbourhood roads have a local destination or origin, however some neighbourhood roads may offer a convenient "cut through" route for traffic travelling further afield.

One effective measure to address this concern is the implementation of turn prohibitions which restrict turn movements from one street to another during peak time periods. Similar to other traffic bylaws, turn prohibitions apply equally to all road users. In some instances, where compliance would not be practical, there are limited exceptions made for emergency vehicles, vehicles engaged in work on behalf of the City and Toronto Transit Commission Vehicles.

To assess the feasibility of implementing a local vehicle identification program, Transportation Services has been in contact with the Toronto Police Service and has

considered the impacts and challenges around equal access to transportation infrastructure, administration, and enforcement.

## **Equal Access to Transportation Infrastructure Considerations**

Currently, public roads within the City of Toronto are accessible to the general public and traffic bylaws, such as turn prohibitions and parking regulations, apply equally to all persons, although can be specific to vehicle types.

The proposal to exempt local residents from certain traffic bylaws through a vehicle identification program would create an unequal level of access to public infrastructure, in that a local resident would be allowed to make a certain turn movement at an intersection during a particular time period while other members of the public would be prohibited from making the same movement. This approach conflicts with the City's Corporate Strategic Plan Quality of Life results which envisages inclusive access to the city-wide transportation network. This also conflicts with the Official Plan which recognizes that the principles for a successful Toronto include a quality of life which is diverse, equitable and inclusive.

## **Administration**

Developing and implementing a local vehicle identification program, either on a wide scale basis or for just one community, is not straightforward and would require new staff resources to oversee initial program formulation, start up and ongoing sustainment.

The first challenge for administering such a program would be developing a set of criteria to define and establish what constitutes local traffic. Each neighborhood within the city is unique and not all people will define a neighbourhood or 'local' traffic as being the same thing. By defining what is considered to be local there will be other residents who may live just outside the local area who do not receive any benefits from this program although they would benefit from receiving the same exemptions. Criteria would also need to be developed to determine under what conditions it is appropriate to allow local residents an exemption from the bylaw and to ensure consistency of application of any and all criteria.

Extensive changes would be required to the existing bylaws. Chapter 950 Traffic and Parking Bylaws would require numerous changes including the development of entirely new schedules. These would require thorough analysis, comprehensive legal review and City Council approval.

Lastly, if such a program were to be implemented an ongoing application, approval, and renewal process would be required. Assuming the same administration costs as the permit parking program, a city wide local vehicle identification program would cost between \$6M and \$18M annually to administer, with the former assuming participation by 25 percent of registered vehicles within the City and the latter assuming a 75 percent participation rate. This estimate does not include the initial start-up costs for the development of local criteria, drafting bylaws, development of an approval system and amendments to traffic signs.

## **Enforcement**

Transportation Services has consulted with the Toronto Police Service who have advised that existing traffic enforcement measures focus primarily on addressing four behaviours related to traffic safety which include speeding, aggressive driving, distracted driving, and driving while impaired. Other enforcement issues, such as turn prohibition violations, are considered a lower priority and only enforced when resources are available. During such times, providing bylaw exemptions for certain vehicles would create an additional step for enforcement officers to determine whether a vehicle is non-compliant or has a valid exemption issued by the City. Providing local exemptions may also increase overall non-compliance of bylaw prohibitions as vehicles who are not aware that other vehicles are exempt from bylaws are more likely to witness and follow permitted vehicles through the prohibited turns. Finally, allowing certain vehicle occupants to make currently prohibited movements at peak times may contribute to increased congestion and safety concerns on the adjacent main road.

## **Summary**

Transportation Services and the Toronto Police Service do not support the implementation of a local vehicle decal program as it would not allow equal access to transportation infrastructure, and would result in significant administrative and enforcement burdens with limited benefits to selected residents.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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