

Getting to the Root of the Issues – Parked Vehicle Performance Improvements

Date: June 22, 2021

To: Audit Committee

From: General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: All

SUMMARY

On February 9, 2021, the Auditor General released a report entitled "Getting to the Root of the Issues: A Follow-Up to the 2019 Tree Maintenance Services Audit", which was tabled at the Audit Committee meeting on February 16, 2021. The report included 18 recommendations for consideration by City Council, that are aimed to strengthen Parks, Forestry and Recreation's (PFR) oversight, monitoring and contract management related to tree maintenance services to ensure value for money for the City.

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's direction that the General Manager, PFR, in consultation with the City Solicitor, the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, and the Toronto Police Service, report to the May 31, 2021 meeting of the Audit Committee on an improved system to deal with parked cars that impede tree maintenance crews which could include options to expedite the removal of legally-parked cars, including the feasibility of issuing legal notices to residents to authorize the expedited removal of parked vehicles. Due to the cancellation of the May 31, 2021 Audit Committee meeting, this report has been redirected to the July 7, 2021 Audit Committee meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. The Audit Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts as a result of the recommendation in this report.

Any costs associated with implementing the process improvements will be minimal and accommodated within the 2021 Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

Future incremental impacts, if identified, will be incorporated as part of future year budget processes. There are no major incremental costs anticipated at this time.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

At the May 5 and 6, 2021 City Council meeting, PFR presented its 60-day action update report, as directed by Audit Committee.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-166196.pdf>

At the May 5 and 6, 2021 City Council meeting, City Council adopted "Award of Negotiated Request for Proposal Ariba Document 2305234907 to Various Suppliers for the Provision of Arboricultural Services at various City of Toronto locations."

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.CC32.6>

At the April 7 and 8, 2021 City Council meeting, PFR presented its 30-day action update report, as directed by Audit Committee.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-165385.pdf>

At the February 16, 2021 Audit Committee meeting, the Auditor General tabled the report "Getting to the Root of the Issues: A Follow-Up to the 2019 Tree Maintenance Services Audit"

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.AU8.6>

On July 9 2020, the City Solicitor and General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation reported to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on PFR's review of work performed by tree maintenance Vendors and provided related legal advice. A supplementary report was presented when the matter was considered by City Council on July 29, 2020.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.IE14.8>

On October 25, 2019, the Audit Committee considered an information report from the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation outlining the division's progress in responding to the May 2019 Council direction.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.AU4.14>

On May 14 and 15, 2019 City Council considered the Auditor General's audit, "Review of Urban Forestry - Ensuring Value for Money for Tree Maintenance Services", focused on tree planting and maintenance services.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.AU2.4>

COMMENTS

Issue

Performing tree maintenance on the City's roughly 600,000 street trees requires access on roadways for large and sometimes multiple vehicles, equipment and machinery. Vehicles legally parked on the street in front of trees often cause service delays to the Urban Forestry branch of Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR). The Auditor General's Office noted that vehicle barriers resulted in delays that ranged from 15 minutes to 3.5 hours per day. The time delay is caused by the extensive effort associated with locating vehicle owners to move them or ultimately having the vehicle towed through Toronto Police Parking Enforcement Officers (PEO), in order to be able to perform the work safely while avoiding property damage.

Urban Forestry has identified the problem areas associated with parked vehicles using its parked car call log. The data shows this issue is most prevalent in the downtown Toronto wards (Beaches-East York, Toronto-Danforth, Spadina-Fort York, Toronto Centre, University-Rosedale, Davenport). These are densely populated areas with a high percentage of street parking including permitted street parking. The data also shows that crews working in these downtown areas will report higher instances of issues related to parked vehicles than crews that work in outlying areas. Attachment 1 provides a map of the City where parked vehicles have been an ongoing issue and the number of vehicles that have been relocated to facilitate tree maintenance work.

Tree maintenance crews utilize large/multiple vehicles and equipment and an associated set up to perform their work, typically resulting in a significant amount of required parking space. This requirement can result in the need to relocate on average 3 to 8 parked vehicles to gain proper access. On a daily basis, approximately 19 tree maintenance crews will encounter parked vehicles interfering with the completion of their work.

This report outlines the process improvements that have been implemented to date to expedite the relocation of legally parked vehicles that impede tree maintenance work. The report also presents productivity improvements and reduction in wait time realized as a result of the implementation of the process improvements to date. PFR will continue to monitor outcomes to ensure the process improvements are effective in minimizing unproductive time. Further, PFR will, as needed, explore new opportunities to improve productivity and reduce the time associated with relocating legally parked vehicles, including the feasibility of amending the City of Toronto Municipal Code, giving

PFR the authority to relocate vehicles interfering with tree maintenance work.

PFR has implemented an integrative approach to provide improvements related to the issues of parked vehicles, including the provision of evidence, the efficiency in moving parked vehicles and to address crew productivity related to downtime.

Phase 1: Actions Implemented to Expedite the Removal of Legally-Parked Vehicles

PFR has implemented the following measures to provide improvements related to the issues of parked vehicles with the goal of reducing the amount of time related to moving parked vehicles and increasing the productive time spent working on trees. These measures include:

- More effective communication through the installation of large and detailed onsite signage, as part of a localized pilot program, the day before scheduled tree maintenance work is taking place in a preventative effort to have vehicles not parked in the work zone when crews arrive clearly communicating when tree maintenance is scheduled and the no parking requirements associated with the scheduled work in areas that are expected to have parked vehicle issues. Attachment 2 shows a photograph of the signage being used.
- To compliment the onsite signage and the preventative approach, Urban Forestry social media is being utilized to broadcast a proactive announcement concerning area street tree maintenance scheduling, and the request for residents to not park vehicles in the marked tree maintenance work zones. Attachment 3 shows an example of a social media post.
- The Towing Procedure Guidelines have been updated providing tree maintenance crews with direction to inform decision making related to improved productivity. When necessary, crews are directed to undertake alternate work while they wait for the relocation of parked vehicles and, as needed, to move on to other work locations and return to the original location once vehicles have been moved.
- An enhanced process with Toronto Police Service PEO's has been implemented. Officers are being pre-booked to attend locations where parked vehicles may be an issue as a preventative measure. The enhanced process has enabled PFR to expedite the movement of parked vehicles, which has led to tree maintenance crews starting tree maintenance work more quickly.
- Establishing a memorandum of understanding with Toronto Police Service which will ensure a long term commitment of the terms and practice of which are in place, to have dedicated Parking Enforcement Officers assigned to PFR to expedite the relocation of parked vehicles that impede tree maintenance work.

- When crews encounter parked vehicles on site, a centralized call log is being utilized to document all instances where work cannot be completed due to the presence of legally parked vehicles. Tree maintenance crews are also required to submit photographic evidence of the vehicles in question.
- Increased access licences (from 1 to 3) to Ministry of Transportation - Authorized Requester Information Services (MTO-ARIS), which has expedited the process of locating vehicle owners by license plate, and if in vicinity, crews can attempt to contact owners to move vehicles before a relocation is executed.

Phase 2: Localized Pilot Program

On May 17, 2021, PFR executed a 12-week pilot process in the Forestry South East region of the City, one area where the majority of residents rely on permitted street parking. The program pre-plans and identifies issues that may prevent tree maintenance crews from commencing work when they arrive at a work site. The program also involves the installation of large and detailed onsite signage the day before scheduled tree maintenance work is taking place clearly communicating when tree maintenance is scheduled and the no parking requirements associated with the scheduled work. Providing advanced notification to crews on where to expect parked vehicle issues facilitates more efficient work planning and determines when the pre-booking of parking enforcement officers is required. The information obtained from the pilot program is being analyzed and measures proven to be effective in increasing productivity and operational efficiency will be rolled out across all Urban Forestry Regions, as appropriate.

Outcomes of Phase 2

Measured outcomes through a review of available daily logs during the first two weeks of the pilot have been analyzed. PFR reviewed 30 daily logs for crews participating in the pilot, which includes two crews doing proactive work and two crews doing reactive work, to measure productivity associated with parked vehicles. The data is in early stages only and will continue to be analyzed. Results to date:

- An average of 15 minutes was spent working to have parked vehicles moved. A histogram is presented in the Attachment 4 to provide a further breakdown.
- In 66 percent of instances parked vehicles were already removed from the work location by owners, thanks to preplanning and the installation of detailed onsite signage that clearly communicates when tree maintenance is scheduled and the no parking requirements associated with the work.
- Crews worked concurrently on moving parked vehicles, obtaining hydro hold-offs and working on trees, where possible.

- Further analysis is underway to understand the full picture. For example, on one day, a crew recorded it took two hours to relocate parked vehicles. There were 14 vehicles impeding work. Seven were moved by knocking on doors and seven were relocated. Tree maintenance crews were able to work concurrently on trees while the parked vehicles were being dealt with. The progress to date, observed through analysis of the pilot data, has been significant and staff continue to see success with the reduction of time spent relocating parked vehicles.

Initial results of Phase 2 are included as Attachment 4.

Phase 3: Looking Forward at New Opportunities for Continuous Improvement

PFR feels confident that the early results of Phase 1 and Phase 2 cumulative actions are delivering the improvements required to minimize time taken to relocate legally parked vehicles and increase productive time spent on tree maintenance. PFR will continue to monitor and evaluate these process improvements, and is committed to leveraging new opportunities such as:

- Deploying a two-pronged communication and education campaign consisting of 1) A city-wide education campaign in partnership with other City Divisions providing information to residents surrounding tree maintenance work and the importance of complying with no-parking signs; and 2) Engaging with local community and organizations such as BIAs, residents associations and local leaders to promote and support the existing signage and social media program, and/or, seek input from the local community on better ways to educate and communicate.
- Amending the Municipal Code giving PFR the authority to relocate vehicles, taking into consideration the staffing and budget implications and the impact to customer service and will report back to the Audit Committee on its findings.

Conclusion

As highlighted in the Auditor General's report "Getting to the Root of the Issues: A Follow-Up to the 2019 Tree Maintenance Services Audit", parked vehicles along streets has been a historical challenge to efficient and productive tree maintenance work. PFR has implemented an integrative approach to provide improvements related to the issues of parked vehicles, including the provision of evidence, the efficiency in moving parked vehicles and to address crew productivity related to downtime. PFR commits to continual monitoring and evaluation of the process improvements to date and consideration of additional opportunities as required. Future improvements will be reported back to Audit Committee, as directed by City Council.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

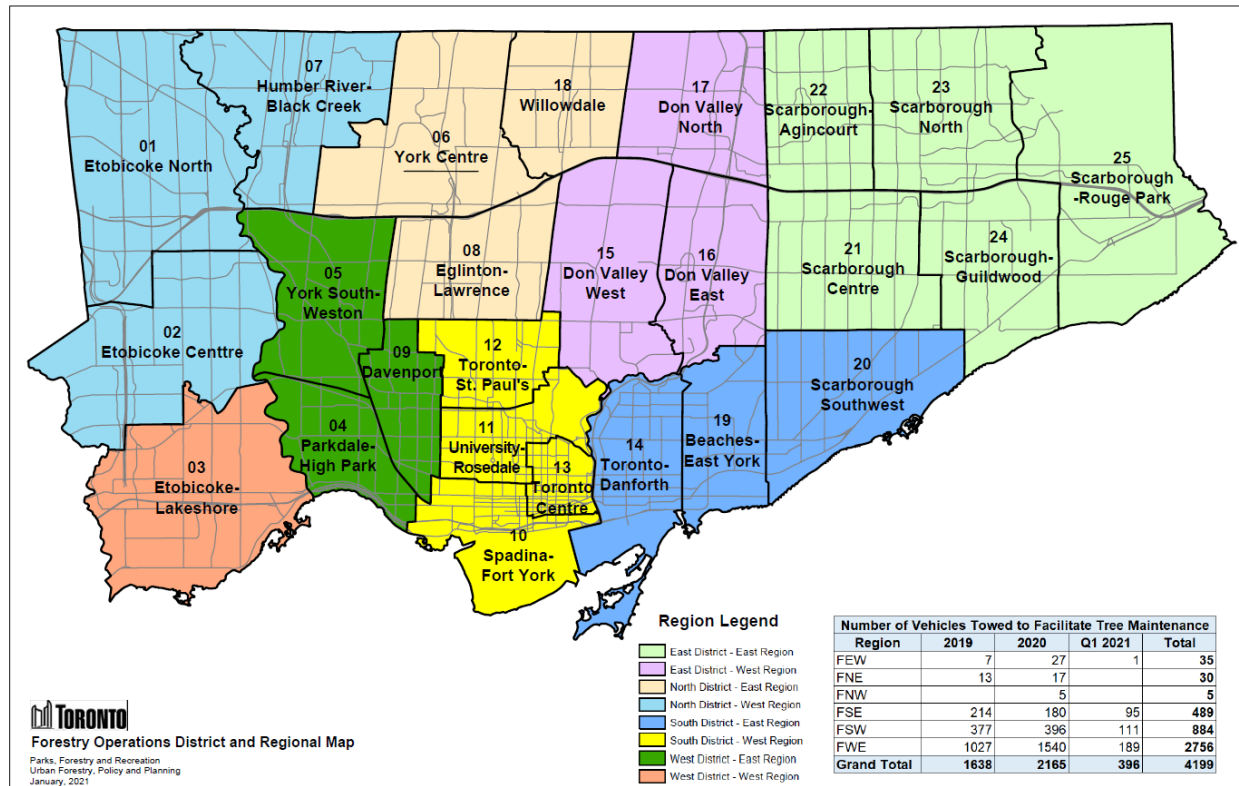
Attachment 1: Map Identifying Regions in the City where Parked Vehicles Impact Tree Maintenance Work

Attachment 2: Photo of Signage Being Used in Localized Pilot Project

Attachment 3: Social Media Post Advising of Scheduled Tree Maintenance Work

Attachment 4: Results of Localized Pilot Program

Attachment 1: Map Identifying Regions in the City where Parked Vehicles Impact Tree Maintenance Work



Attachment 2: Photos of Signage Being Used in Localized Pilot Project



Small Sign: 24x18 inches; Large Sign: 24x36 inches.



Toronto Forestry 
@TOTrees



Help us take care of our [#StreetTrees](#).
If you see signs posted on the street regarding tree maintenance, work has been scheduled for the area. Do not park in the work zone between 7 AM and 3 PM on the date noted. Vehicles may be towed to the closest legal parking location.

Street Tree Maintenance

- Large vehicles are required to undertake tree maintenance.
- Do not park in the work zone to allow crews access to the trees.



toronto.ca/trees

 City of Toronto and 9 others

11:40 AM · 2021-05-18 · [Twitter Web App](#)

Attachment 4: Results of Localized Pilot Project

Histogram: Time to relocate parked vehicles

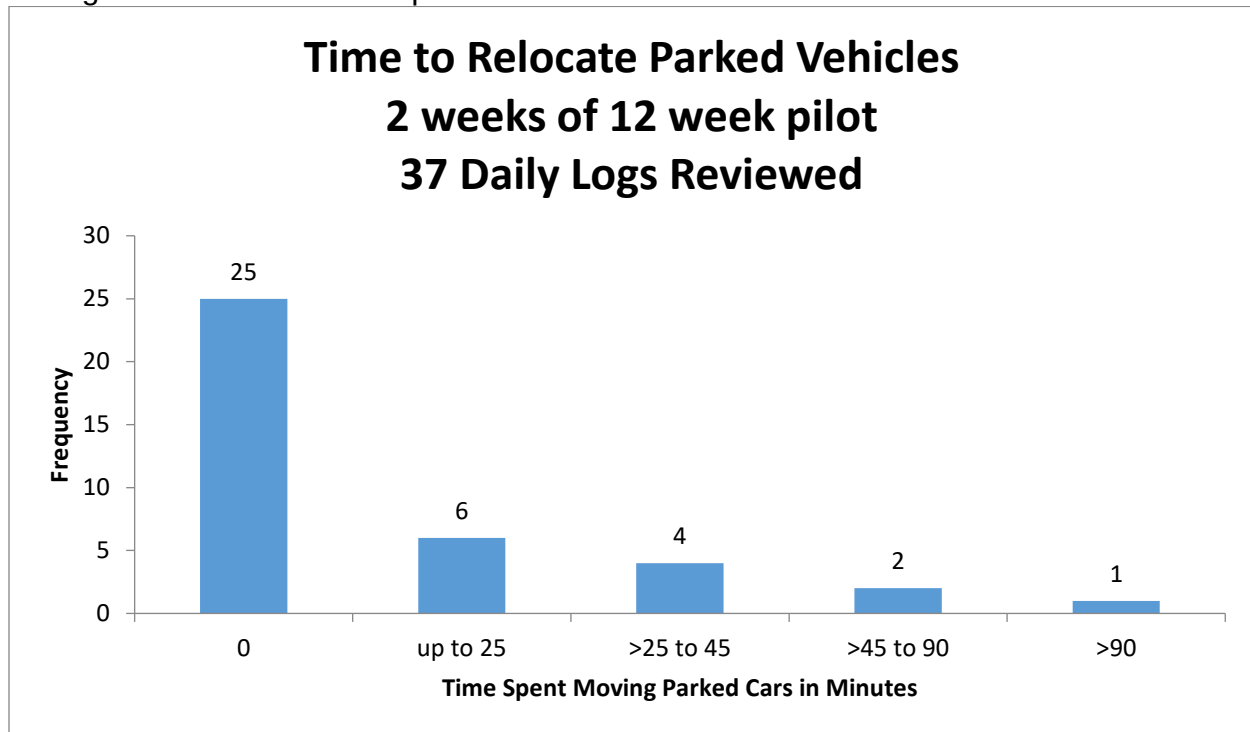


Table: Time to relocate parked vehicles

Time to relocate parked vehicles (minutes)	Instances (#)	Percent (%)
0	25	66%
up to 25	6	16%
>25 to 45	4	11%
>45 to 90	2	5%
>90	1	3%

- 25 instances where no relocation was required
- 6 instances where the relocation of parked vehicles took up to 25 minutes
- 4 instances where the removal of parked vehicles took more than 25 minutes up to 45 minutes
- 2 instances where the removal of parked vehicles took more than 45 minutes up to 90 minutes
- 1 instance where the removal of parked vehicles took more than 90 minutes
- The early findings resulted in the average time to relocate parked vehicles being 15 minutes.