



SUBJECT: Lowville Park parking operations update

TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.

FROM: Transportation Services Department

Report Number: TS-09-23

Wards Affected: 3

File Numbers: 745-03

Date to Committee: May 2, 2023

Date to Council: May 16, 2023

Recommendation:

Receive and file transportation services department report TS-09-23, Lowville Park Parking Operations update; and

Retain the automated gates at Lowville Park and position them in the “up” position during off-peak periods; and

Erect enhanced signage at the entry way, consisting of a QR code to direct visitors to the online reservation system, and clear communication that advanced reservations are only required on weekends.

PURPOSE:

This report has been prepared in response to SD-01-23:

Direct the Director of Transportation Services to discontinue the Parking Ambassador program at Lowville Park, effective 2023, and report back in Q1 2023 on the operational model of the uses of the gate system; and

Direct the Director of Transportation and Director of Recreation, Community and Culture to provide an update report at the May 2, 2023 CPRM meeting to provide recommendations on timelines to undertake a comprehensive study of park operations for Lowville Park, inclusive of parking operations.

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
 - Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
 - Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation
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Background and Discussion:

Parking management at Lowville Park has been a long-standing issue that dates back to 2013 when the Lowville Park Master Plan was completed. At that time, it was recognized that permitted picnic capacity did not align with the available parking (240 stalls). As an interim measure, the total number of picnic areas was reduced to better align with parking capacity and available washroom facilities.

The Master Plan recommended a number of design improvements including better delineation of the entryway, reconfiguration of the parking layout to improve circulation, and construction of curbing to mitigate parking overflow onto the adjacent street. Parking recommendations made through the Master Plan were subsequently constructed in 2020/2021, resulting in a reduction of parking supply from 240 stalls to 195 stalls.

Through report RS-09-20, the continuation of temporary COVID parking capacity measures at Lowville Park were recommended for the 2021 summer season, consisting of extending the ParkPass reservation system and maintaining the presence of Parking Ambassadors on-site to manage parking demands and validate on-line reservations. Report TS-04-21 further recommended the installation of automated gates at Lowville Park to accompany the ParkPass reservation system, in conjunction with the Parking Ambassador program. The report noted that while the one-time cost associated with the purchase of the gates would be accommodated through COVID funding, additional funding to support the Parking Ambassador program would be required to effectively manage parking. The automated gates were installed in June, 2021.

Parking operations were monitored throughout the 2021 season and an update was presented to Council through report TS-12-21. It was noted that the issuance of parking tickets through the 2021 season was low, demonstrating a high degree of compliance by visitors. The report noted that Parking Ambassadors were being utilized to perform both customer service and enforcement duties, with an emphasis on educating visitors on the use of the ParkPass reservation system. Continuation of the temporary COVID parking capacity measures were carried through the 2022 season and reported upon through report TS-02-23. Staff reported that the ParkPass reservation system is now

well adopted by most park visitors, however some continue to rely on the Parking Ambassadors to book a reservation on the guests' behalf at the time of arrival as opposed to booking an advanced reservation. The current time-limited reservation poses a barrier to park users who want to stay longer than 3-hours and should be reviewed as part of a greater park strategy. Through report TS-02-23, Council approved the recommendation to discontinue the Parking Ambassador program for the 2023 season and report back on the operational model of the automated gate system.

Strategy/process/risk

While the parking mitigation strategies employed to-date have proven somewhat effective in the context of pandemic conditions, these strategies were rapidly implemented in response to ever-evolving Provincial and Public Health restrictions and have been subject to numerous changes. In order to fully address the parking issues at Lowville Park, a long-term mobility management and parking strategy needs to be considered within the context of the Park Provisioning Master Plan and Park Recreation Culture Asset Master Plan (PRCAMP) which will recommend the number and type of recreational facilities and assign service levels, recognizing that Lowville Park is a piece of the larger city-wide park system.

As recommended through report ES-02-23, the Park Provisioning Master Plan recommends an updated park classification system which, if approved, would see Lowville Park classified as a *Destination Park*, a classification of park that serves the leisure needs of all residents of the city and also draw users from outside of the city and should be accessible through multiple modes of transportation. In some instances, Destination Parks have already instituted pay parking as a means to encourage parking turnover and manage demand (Spencer Smith Park and Beachway Regional Waterfront Park, for example). The PRCAMP will assess and make recommendations on the number and types of recreational facilities at Lowville Park which will have a direct impact on parking demands.

Upon completion of the Park Provisioning Master Plan and the PRCAMP, an update to the Lowville Park Master Plan (2013) should be undertaken in order to develop a long-term strategy that builds upon the forthcoming assessment of Park Classification Types and recommendations made through the PRCAMP. The update should include an assessment of projected parking demands and examine pay parking models that will aim to manage parking supply and encourage visitor turnover. An update to the Master Plan will also provide opportunity to inform recommendations through community and stakeholder consultation.

The departments of Engineering Services, Recreation, Community and Culture, and Transportation Services will collaborate in 2024 to prepare an update to the Lowville Park Master Plan once the PRCAMP is complete. Through this update, due

consideration will be given to addressing the strategic goal of providing equitable recreational access.

Options Considered

Staff have considered the risk of not undertaking a comprehensive review of the ultimate programming and park operation of Lowville Park. Spending time, resources and budget on ad hoc parking solutions that do not fully address the root cause of high levels of parking demand is not sustainable. Continued application of short-term solutions in absence of horizontal alignment between stakeholders, partners and other services will jeopardize the City's ability to deliver on the strategic objectives contained within a Healthy and Greener City.

Financial Matters:

Not Applicable

Total Financial Impact

Not Applicable

Source of Funding

Not Applicable

Other Resource Impacts

Not Applicable

Climate Implications

Implementation of a pay parking strategy will encourage use of active and sustainable modes and/or carpooling which will contribute to the city's climate mitigation goals and reduce vehicle trips.

Engagement Matters:

No engagement was undertaken as part of this update report. It is expected that stakeholder engagement will be undertaken as part of the update to the Lowville Park Master Plan and the findings of engagement used to inform decision making.

Conclusion:

Continued mitigation is required throughout the 2023 season to manage parking demand and alleviate operational issues until such time the comprehensive strategy is developed. It is recommended that the automated gates rest in the “up” position during off-peak periods to permit entry when advanced reservation is not required, and that enhanced signage be erected at the entry way that includes a QR code to direct visitors to the online reservation system (in absence of in-person support via Parking Ambassadors) and that signage include clear communication that advanced reservations are only required on weekends.

While unfortunate that Lowville Park has limited parking capacity, continued practice of rapidly deploying responsive mitigation strategies is ineffective in addressing the root cause of excessive parking demands and does not position the park for future success. Development of an updated Lowville Park Master Plan and subsequent mobility management and parking strategy will better address the long-term parking demands at Lowville Park and at Destination Parks throughout the city.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.