

## Corporate Report

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**Report from** Recreation & Community Services, Parks and Facilities

**Date of Report:** January 18, 2012

**Date of Meeting:** February 11, 2012

**Report Number:** RCS-030-2013

**File:** 68.32.99

**Subject:** Safe Locations for Longboarding

### Recommendation

That Council receive the report for information purposes. FORTHWITH

### Summary

Longboarding has become increasingly popular and has entered into the recreation mainstream. Council has requested that staff report on safe locations for longboarding within the City. Longboarding is not permitted on City roads, and at this time, there are no areas within the parks system which can be safely used by longboarders. Although it may be possible to develop a facility which would accommodate longboarders, this has not been identified as a priority at this time and therefore has not been included in the Capital Budget forecast.

### Background

At its meeting on November 12, 2012, Council directed staff to report on possible safe locations within the City for longboarding. The popularity of longboarding has increased over the past decade and, like a bicycle, can be used for either recreation or transportation. The City's Traffic and Parking By-law (By-law No. 89-2000) prohibits the use of skateboards and similar devices on any road under city jurisdiction. As such this report is focused on longboarding as a recreational activity in off-road locations. Following Council's report request, staff met with a member of the longboarding community to gain a better understanding of the sport and to learn about where longboarders are currently practicing their sport within the City and what conditions are required or desirable for safe longboarding.

Unlike skateboards, which are often used for tricks, longboards are generally designed to stay in contact with the ground. As a recreational activity, longboarders tend to focus on the ride itself with gravity playing an important role. Most recreational longboarding occurs near features with a natural slope, making areas such as the valleys of Twelve Mile Creek and the Escarpment attractive.

## Report

### **Recreation Master Plan: longboarding has entered into recreation mainstream**

The Recreation Facility Master Plan identifies longboarding and other such sports (i.e. skateboarding, trick biking, etc.) as having entered into the recreation mainstream and notes that these activities are not considered to be fads that will diminish in the near future, rather they are continuing to grow in popularity amongst older children and teenagers. While the Plan mentions longboarding, it does not make any recommendations about the development of a facility dedicated to longboarding as the priority was for the development of skateboard and BMX parks. No additional skateboard parks are identified in the capital forecast at this time.

### **Off-road locations currently being used**

Although on-street longboarding is often the most visible, longboarders currently use at least two off-road areas within the City's park system. One area is a paved portion of the Merritt Trail south-west of the intersection of Glenridge and Westchester; and the other is the internal roadway at Burgoyne Woods. Neither of these areas was designed with longboarders in mind. Each has features that can be difficult or dangerous for longboarders, especially beginners; and they are often less attractive to longboarders than the roads which are also currently used.

The Merritt Trail area, like most of the City's trails, was designed for walkers and cyclists and is very narrow for longboarders. Although there may be some opportunity to widen sections of the trail, any increases would be marginal and the trail would still not be the ideal width for longboarders. There is also the potential for conflicts with other trail users; however this should be no different than the conflicts which occur between cyclists, pedestrians and rollerbladers along any of the City's trails. The general rule is "wheels yield to heels" and it is expected that longboarders respect this rule.

Although the internal roadway at Burgoyne Woods is not dedicated as a public highway it is used by vehicles to access the rear parking area and the rules of the road apply. While the area is wide enough for longboarding and is an appropriate length for beginner and intermediate riders there is concern about the potential conflict between longboarders and vehicles. Further, there are other features such as armourstone or larger rocks between the edge of the roadway and the creek which could pose a safety hazard.

### **Other off-road locations explored for potential use are not acceptable**

Other locations were explored for their potential to safely accommodate longboarders. When looking at a site in regards to longboarding it is important to understand that longboarding is a sport of progression. As riders become more experienced they desire different features in a hill, so a hill that works well for beginners will not necessarily meet the needs of intermediate or advanced riders. For example, different riders desire different slopes and while some prefer wide, long straightaways, other riders prefer slopes with corners and turns.

Portions of the Merritt Trail were explored for the potential to accommodate longboarding. Many sections of the trail are unpaved and it is likely that if they were to be paved these areas would have the same issues as the section of the Merritt Trail discussed above. The abandoned portion of Downing St. was discussed, however the remaining asphalt is in poor condition and the slope of the road is very gradual and if repaved would only be attractive to beginners who would quickly outgrow the area. The Glenridge Quarry Naturalization Site, which is owned and operated by the Region, was also proposed as a potential location. The intent of the site is to promote naturalization and education. Permitted uses tend to be passive and the by-law that regulates the use of the naturalization site prohibits activities such as longboarding. No locations were found to be able to safely accommodate longboarding in their current condition.

### **Financial Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Conclusion**

Longboarding is not permitted on City roads and no off-road locations were found to be able to safely accommodate longboarding in their current condition. The development of a facility dedicated to longboarding has not been identified as a priority at this time and as such is not included in the Capital Budget forecast. An update of the Recreation Facility Master Plan is anticipated over the next few years. If this update identifies longboarding as a priority, the development of a facility dedicated to longboarding could be considered at that time.

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