



CITY OF
ST. CATHARINES

Corporate Report

Report from Transportation & Environmental Services, Operations

Date of Report: May 14, 2013

Date of Meeting: June 24, 2013

Report Number: TES-166-2013

File: 77.34.99

Subject: Request to Amend By-law 89-2000 to Permit Alternate Side Parking

Recommendation

That Council deny the request to include alternate side parking restrictions in the Traffic and Parking By-law (By-law 89-2000); and

That the City Clerk be directed to make the necessary notifications. FORTHWITH.

Summary

At the March 18, 2013 meeting of Council, a presentation was made by a resident requesting that Council amend the Traffic and Parking By-law (By-law 89-2000) to allow alternate side parking. Subsequent to receiving the presentation, Council directed staff to prepare a report on the matter.

While alternate side restrictions are popular in other communities, this regulation has not been used in St. Catharines before and is generally uncommon throughout the Region. Alternate side restrictions can aid road maintenance activities by creating opportunities for improved service and also help to share the parking burden on either side of the road. Conversely, alternate side restrictions are more costly to implement, can be difficult to understand and may require increased levels of service; especially with snow clearing.

As the City's current practice of implementing fixed parking restrictions on one side of the road has worked well and typically addresses most public concerns, staff see little value in offering alternate side restrictions as a parking option at this time.

Background

At the March 18, 2013 meeting of Council, a presentation was made by a resident requesting that Council amend the Traffic and Parking By-law (By-law 89-2000) to allow alternate side parking. The resident noted that where parking restrictions are implemented, the City's current practice of limiting parking to one-side of the road at all times minimizes the effectiveness of snow clearing and street sweeping operations. Subsequent to receiving the presentation, Councillor Siscoe requested the following:

That staff be directed to prepare a report regarding the request to amend By-law 89-2000 as it relates to parking prohibitions that limit residential street parking to one side.

Report

When staff identify the need for parking restrictions on at least one side of a road, a number of factors are reviewed prior to selecting one side over the other. For instance, the presence of fire hydrants and utility poles, close driveway spacing, connecting streets and the orientation of curves are factors that are typically considered when selecting an appropriate side for parking restrictions. When both sides of the road are considered equal from a technical perspective, the side of the road with utility poles or streetlight poles is typically selected as the poles can be used to mount the “no parking” signs. This minimizes the cost and time required to install the restriction and limits the visual clutter created by the signs.

The City’s current practice of implementing fixed parking restrictions (i.e. same side, always) promotes consistency and compliance as the restrictions are easy to understand and never vary. The downside to this type of restriction is that parked vehicles continually occupy one-side of the street and can hinder maintenance activities such as snow clearing and street sweeping.

In order to balance and share the parking demand on either side of the road, some municipalities use a restriction called “alternate side parking”. As its name implies, this type of restriction flips the parking from one side of the road to the other side of the road based on a time constraint. The most common time constraint is mid-month (e.g. 1st to the 15th, one side; 16th to the end, other side). As the parking is shared on either side of the road, alternate side restrictions do create a more equitable distribution of the parking demand within a neighbourhood which may please some residents and may allow for better road maintenance activities where service levels permit. With this said, alternate side restrictions do present a few challenges and expectations should be tempered if a decision is made to implement such controls.

Consistency, familiarity and ease of understanding are the cornerstones of most successful regulations. With respect to alternate side restrictions, this regulation has not been used in St. Catharines before and is generally uncommon throughout the Region. The lack of familiarity or experience with these types of restrictions will present a challenge, at least in the short term, while residents adapt to the new regulation. It is for this reason that most alternate side restrictions are implemented on an area wide basis (entire neighbourhood) rather than a street by street basis. Adjustments to parking enforcement may be required during the changeover periods to help reinforce the restriction.

Another drawback associated with alternate side restrictions, is the number of signs required for implementation. Unlike conventional/fixed parking controls, alternate side restrictions require larger signs to convey the necessary information as well as signs to be placed on both sides of the road. This increases the cost of

implementation as well as the visual clutter on the road. In staff's experience, residents tend to be somewhat sensitive to the placement of additional signs and posts within their neighbourhood; particularly when these assemblies are installed in front of their home.

From a road maintenance perspective, alternate side restrictions do provide an opportunity to provide a higher level of service for such activities as snow clearing and street sweeping provided the City is willing to offer this higher level of service in these areas. For example, under our current level of service associated with street sweeping, all roads in the City are swept once during the spring and fall (two sweeps) while each curbed street is swept once a month during the summer. Given this current level of service, sweepers would not be redirected back to those streets that have alternate side restrictions in order to clean the other side of the street after the parking flips. Adjusting schedules may allow this to occur on curbed streets that are swept monthly (i.e. every other month) however those streets without curbs would generally not benefit from alternate side restrictions.

Similar to street sweeping, snow clearing can benefit from alternate side restrictions provided a higher level of service is provided. However, unlike street sweeping, this higher level of service must be provided in areas with alternate side restrictions. This "must" condition results from the fact that when the parking flips from one side of the road to the other, the former parking lane becomes the travel lane and therefore must be made passable. Depending upon the level of parking that takes place on a particular piece of road, the amount of residual snow and ice that remains in a parking lane can be significant. This snow and ice must be cleared prior to the parking changeover to ensure that the road is passable.

Financial Implications

There are a number of costs that need to be considered when looking at the implementation of alternate side restrictions. The most direct cost is the implementation of additional signs and posts. As the signs for alternate side restrictions are generally larger than standard no parking signs and signs are required on each side of the road, the cost to implement these restrictions is approximately 2.5 times greater than conventional fixed restrictions. The typical cost to install a standard no parking sign is \$75 while an alternate side parking sign would be \$90. As you require twice as many signs for an alternate side restriction, the cost to install an alternate side restriction will be approximately \$180 per instance versus \$75 for a single sided fixed restriction.

Other costs, such as those associated with level of service improvements, are difficult to estimate without a direction from Council and an understanding of how many roads could be affected. If supported by Council, these costs would be included in subsequent reports dealing with specific requests for alternate side restrictions.

Conclusion

This report attempts to address a number of the concerns staff have with respect to the implementation of alternate side restrictions. While none of these concerns are insurmountable, they do highlight factors that need to be considered when contemplating the implementation of such controls. It's important to note that implementing an alternate side restriction will not, in and of itself, improve road maintenance activities. Such restrictions may provide greater opportunity for higher service levels however without direction from Council to increase these service levels, managing the public's expectations related to alternate side restrictions may be difficult.

Given the maturity and stability of most neighbourhoods within the City, staff see little value in offering alternate side restrictions as a parking option at this time. The practice of implementing fixed restrictions on one side of the road has worked well and addresses most of the operational concerns expressed by the public. Once implemented, staff receive few complaints with the fixed restriction approach.

Notification

It is in order that the original presenter, Mr. John Bullivant, be so notified.

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