



Report to: General Committee

Date Report Authored: March 15, 2013

SUBJECT: Lunch Period School Crossing Guard Service Review

PREPARED BY: David Porretta, Traffic Operations Supervisor, ext. 2040
Bob Nicholson, Manager, Business & Technical Services, ext. 4893

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report entitled "Lunch Period School Crossing Guard Service Review", be received;
- 2) And that the presentation entitled "Lunch Period School Crossing Guard Service Review Update", be received;
- 3) And that lunch period school crossing guard services be discontinued at 21 locations, as identified in Attachment "B", as of June 30, 2013;
- 4) And that the 2014 Operating Budget for school crossing guard services be adjusted accordingly;
- 5) And that staff notify all affected schools of the discontinued school crossing guard services during the lunch period;
- 6) And that the schools being provided with lunch period crossing guard services with minimal pedestrian activity consider the School Safety Patroller Program as an alternative;
- 7) And that all future requests for crossing guard services be assessed using the "Ontario Traffic Council (OTC) School Crossing Guard Guide";
- 8) And that staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report recommends that lunch period school crossing guard services be discontinued at 21 locations across the City of Markham, as they are under-utilized and do not meet technical warrant guidelines. The morning and afternoon crossing guard services at these locations would not be affected.

BACKGROUND:

For over 20 years, school crossing guard services have been provided throughout the City of Markham. While not a mandatory requirement, the purpose of providing school crossing guard services is to assist students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 in crossing streets where there are limited opportunities for them to safely do so by themselves.

Administration of the school crossing guard program is currently outsourced under contract 094-S-09 to "Staffing Services Incorporated". As administrators, Staffing Services is responsible for the recruitment, training, supervision, equipment supply and payroll of all school crossing guards. Currently, Markham provides services at 82 locations throughout the City during the morning and afternoon peak school periods. Of these locations, 37 have additional services provided during the lunch period.

In 2010, Traffic Operations staff and Staffing Services had observed that lunch period crossing guard services during the traditional "lunch period" were becoming increasingly under-utilized and therefore may no longer be warranted. Retaining and recruiting crossing guards for these services also posed an ongoing challenge. Technical justification warrants were conducted in 2010 for all 37 locations. Results confirmed that lunch period crossing guard services for almost all locations were not warranted. Changing demographics and lifestyles were identified as the likely cause for under-utilization.

Over the past decade, new crossing guard services (approx. 40 locations) were justified using current technical warrant criteria, however lunch period services are not warranted for any of these locations

DISCUSSION:

In September 2012, Operations staff made a presentation to General Committee recommending that additional assessments of lunch period crossing guard services were needed to determine if unwarranted locations should be discontinued. Committee requested that staff proceed with additional technical assessments of all 37 locations and report back to Committee at a later date with the results and recommendations.

35 of 37 locations do not meet technical warrant guidelines.

When considering new school crossing guard services, the City adheres to the warrant guidelines specified in the "Ontario Traffic Council School Crossing Guard Guide" (2006). The guidelines are also used to justify continuing existing services. The technical warrant guidelines encompass the following principles:

- Number of students crossing - a minimum of five (5) students is recommended;
- Opportunities for school-age children to safely cross the street;
- Frequency of pedestrian/vehicle conflicts observed.

From September to December 2012, Operations staff conducted technical assessments for all 37 locations where lunch period school crossing guard services are provided. When applying technical warrant guidelines, 35 of 37 locations were not justified (see Attachment "A"). These results are similar to previous assessments conducted in 2010. The primary factor for these locations not warranting is the light traffic volumes during the midday period, thereby giving students ample opportunity to safely cross the street.

Lunch period crossing guard services should be discontinued at 21 of 37 locations.

Although the majority of locations do not meet technical warrant criteria, several locations have students that regularly cross at these locations. If lunch period crossing guard services are discontinued, the affected students may be discouraged from walking home and possibly driven instead. In an effort to promote Active Transportation practices and minimize the impact to student safety, it would be reasonable to maintain crossing guard services at locations during the lunch period where services are being consistently utilized.

Of the 37 locations where lunch period crossing guard services are provided, 27 have existing traffic control devices. Regulatory traffic control measures such as all-way stops and traffic signals provide students safe opportunities to cross the street by requiring vehicles to stop, even in absence of a crossing guard. Therefore, to justify continuing lunch period crossing guard services without compromising the needs of student pedestrians, staff developed modified criteria that consider the presence of regulatory traffic controls at the school crossings (see Table 1):

Table 1. Modified Criteria to Maintain Existing Lunch Period Crossing Guard Services

CRITERION 1	<p>The school crossing is not controlled with at least one (1) student crossing.</p> <p><i>Crossing a street that has an uninterrupted flow of traffic can be intimidating for school-aged children, as they are required to use their own judgement to determine when it is safe to cross. Guidance from a crossing guard can be beneficial in such situations. Maintaining crossing guard lunch services is recommended at locations where this criterion is met.</i></p>
CRITERION 2	<p>The school crossing is controlled with at least five (5) student crossings.</p> <p><i>Locations with <u>all-way stops</u> or <u>traffic signals</u> are intended to provide pedestrians safe opportunities to cross. At locations where student crossings is relatively high, conflicts with turning vehicles may increase, as impatient drivers may not give right-of-way. Crossing guards are beneficial in reinforcing existing traffic controls to drivers and reduce the risk of such conflicts. Maintaining crossing guard lunch services is recommended at locations where this criterion is met.</i></p>

To maintain existing lunch period crossing guard services, either criterion 1 or 2 must be met. Results of the assessment (see Attachment "B") confirmed that 21 of 37 locations do not meet either criterion. Therefore, discontinuing lunch period crossing guard services at those locations are recommended.

Discontinuing lunch period services will have minimal impact for students.

Recommended locations to maintain and discontinue lunch period crossing guard services are illustrated in Attachment "C". Of the 21 locations where discontinuing services are recommended, 17 were consistently measured as having no children crossing. As such, discontinuing lunch period crossing guard services at these locations would not impact any students or their respective schools.

The remaining four (4) unwarranted locations, listed below, were consistently measured as having between one and three (1 - 3) student crossings on a regular basis:

- 1) Henderson Avenue & Grandview Avenue (Ward 1)
- 2) Kreighoff Avenue & Fred Varley Drive (Ward 3)
- 3) Cairns Drive & Higginson Street (Ward 4)
- 4) Highway 7 & Robinson Street (Ward 4)

Affected schools may want to consider the School Safety Patroller Program

The School Safety Patroller Program involves senior student volunteers trained by York Region Police to provide positive guidance to younger children that require assistance in walking to-and-from the school each day.

If lunch services are to be discontinued at the four aforementioned locations, City staff will consult with the affected schools in advance of any removal of services, recommending that they consider utilizing the School Safety Patroller Program.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Discontinuing lunch period crossing guard services at the 21 identified locations would reduce the operating expenditures for the school crossing guard program by approximately \$117,500 for the 2013/2014 school year and subsequent school years. The impact to the 2013 budget will be a favourable year-end variance of \$46,380. The 2014 budget will be reduced by \$117,500 through the 2014 budget process (see Table 2).

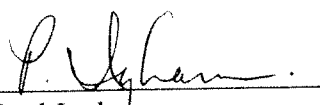
Table 2. Financial Impact of Reducing Lunch Period Crossing Guard Services

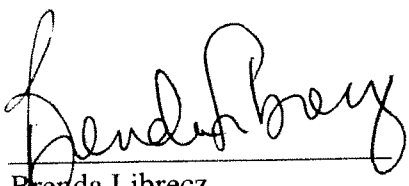
	Sep. – Dec. 2013	Full Year 2014
Budget	\$ 277,814	\$ 704,050
Projected Expenditures (based on proposed reductions to lunch services)	\$ 231,434	\$ 586,550
Favourable Variance	\$ 46,380	\$ 117,500

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This report aligns with the Municipal Services Initiative identified under Building Markham's Future Together.

RECOMMENDED BY:


Paul Ingham,
Director, Operations


Brenda Librecz,
Commissioner, Community & Fire Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment "A" – Crossing Guard Warrant Results (OTC Criteria)

Attachment "B" – Crossing Guard Warrant Results (Modified Criteria)

Attachment "C" – Map: Recommended Lunch Service Removal Locations