

NO: R010

COUNCIL DATE: January 15, 2024

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **January 11, 2024**

FROM: **General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **5405-30**

SUBJECT: **Whistle Cessation in Crescent Beach**

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Direct staff to proceed with further consultation with the community and report back to Council.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to seek direction from Council to proceed with another round of public consultation for the construction of a fence in Crescent Beach, required for whistle cessation.

BACKGROUND

At the July 10, 2023, Regular Council meeting, Council considered the recommendations of Corporate Report No. R119; 2023, attached as Appendix "I", which proposed that staff not proceed with the fence construction and whistle cessation in Crescent Beach at this time. Council referred this report back to staff requesting that staff also review traffic and parking issues in Crescent Beach prior to Council's consideration of this matter.

At the December 18, 2023 Regular Council meeting, Council approved Corporate Report No. R223; 2023 attached as Appendix "II" which recommended actions to help alleviate parking issues in the Crescent Beach neighbourhood. With the measures in that report soon to be implemented, it is now appropriate for staff to revisit opportunities for whistle cessation in the neighbourhood.

DISCUSSION

Since approximately 2008, City staff have worked with Burlington Northern Sante Fe ("BNSF") on opportunities to achieve whistle cessation. To eliminate train whistling at the public grade railway crossings at McBride Avenue and Beecher Street, BNSF proposed the construction of a 1.8m high chain link fence to physically obstruct and deter pedestrians from trespassing onto the railway line.

Fencing was initially proposed to be located within BNSF property, close to the railway; however, after five years of negotiations, the City could not accept BNSF's requirements for annual lease payments, indemnity, and liability. A secondary alternative for the fence location was identified to be on Bayview Street, in City road allowance, wherein an agreement with BNSF would not be required; however, this location would result in a loss of on-street parking along Bayview Street.

Due to the impact on Bayview Street, the City consulted with the Crescent Beach community in Summer 2023. The City received 156 survey responses, representing a response rate of 31%. While 57% of the respondents supported whistle cessation, only 45% were in support of a fence being installed on Bayview Street. While some residents see the potential benefits in noise reduction, the majority of respondents opposed the fence along Bayview Street, primarily due to: the loss of on-street parking; the aesthetics of a chain link fence; and their opinion the fence may not improve safety and trespassing.

There are a few challenges to completing this project including divided community sentiment, archaeological uncertainties, and the Government of Canada Railway Safety Improvement Program cost-sharing deadline of March 31, 2024.

The estimated cost of the fencing project is \$405,000, for which the City received \$324,480 in funding from the Federal Rail Safety Improvement Program which expires on March 31, 2024. Crescent Beach is located on the traditional territory of the Semiahmoo First Nation ("SFN") and an archaeological permit and potential soil investigations would likely be required to construct the fence. Staff have inquired if the funding can be reallocated to other railway safety improvements in the City. Transport Canada has confirmed that the current cost-share amount cannot be reallocated but the deadline could be extended.

It is recommended that staff undertake a final round of public engagement with the community to better understand priorities and inform the community of the limited opportunities for whistle cessation, and report back to Council.

CONCLUSION

In alignment with Corporate Report No. R119; 2023, and recognizing the potential challenges associated with constructing the fence amidst a divided community, it is recommended that staff complete a final round of engagement and report back to Council.

Scott Neuman, P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering

RV/GDC/cc

Appendix "I" - Corporate Report No. R119; 2023
Appendix "II" - Corporate Report No. R223; 2023

CORPORATE REPORT

NO: R119

COUNCIL DATE: July 10, 2023

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council

DATE: July 6, 2023

FROM: General Manager, Engineering

FILE: 5405-30

SUBJECT: Whistle Cessation in Crescent Beach

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Direct staff not to proceed with the fence construction and whistle cessation at this time.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide Council with information on the status of train whistle cessation in Crescent Beach and the results of the public engagement survey regarding proposed fence construction in response to requests for whistle cessation.

BACKGROUND

There are two public crossings of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe ("BNSF") railway in Crescent Beach located at McBride Avenue and Beecher Street. The *Canadian Rail Operating Rules* require train operators to sound their whistle signal prior to public grade railway crossings.

DISCUSSION

Whistle Cessation

Since approximately 2008, City staff have worked with BNSF on opportunities to achieve whistle cessation. The procedure established by Transport Canada to *Eliminating Whistling At Public Grade Crossings* is provided in the attached Appendix "I".

To eliminate train whistling at the public grade railway crossings at McBride Avenue and Beecher Street, BNSF proposed the construction of a 1.8 m high chain link fence to physically obstruct and deter pedestrians from trespassing onto the railway line.

Fencing was initially proposed to be located within BNSF's property, close to the railway; however, after five years of negotiations, the City could not accept BNSF's requirements for annual lease payments, indemnity, and liability. A secondary alternative for the fence location was identified to be on City road allowance wherein an agreement with BNSF would not be required. The proposed fence location on Bayview Street is shown in the attached Appendix "II".

Consultation

Bayview Street is a narrow road with limited on-street parking. The road allowance property line with BNSF is 1-2m from the edge of the asphalt, and residents who stop or park along the north side of the road are likely encroaching on BNSF's land. While BNSF is aware of these encroachments, they have not acted to date nor installed a fence or barriers to prevent this use.

If a fence is installed along the road allowance, whether to support whistle cessation or if BNSF seeks to prevent encroachments, there would be a reduction in approximately 50 on-street illegitimate parking spaces. The fence could also result in unintended safety consequences as the road would appear narrower and likely result in pedestrians sharing the road space with vehicles.

Considering the Crescent Beach community's longstanding desire for whistle cessation, BNSF's requirement for a 1.8m high fence and the corresponding impacts of the fence to Bayview Street residents, staff initiated a public engagement survey to seek feedback from Crescent Beach residents. Postcards were mailed to each home on Bayview Street and Crescent Beach, with a survey link and individualized code, limited to one per address.

The City received 156 survey responses, representing a response rate of 31%, a summary of the results is attached in Appendix "III". While 57% of the respondents supported whistle cessation, only 45% were in support of a fence being installed on Bayview Street. While some residents see the potential benefits in noise reduction, the majority of respondents opposed the fence along Bayview Street, primarily due to: the perceived loss of on-street parking; the aesthetics of a chain-link fence; and their opinion the fence may not improve safety and trespassing.


Implications

The estimated cost of the project is \$405,000, for which the City received \$324,480 in funding from the Federal Rail Safety Improvement Program which expires March 31, 2024. Crescent Beach is located on the traditional territory of the Semiahmoo First Nation and an archaeological permit and potential soil investigations would likely be required to construct the fence, which was not anticipated in the original cost estimate.

If the City does not proceed with the Crescent Beach whistle cessation fencing, staff will request approval from the Federal Government to reallocate the funding to other railway safety improvements in the City.

CONCLUSION

The community is divided on whether the benefits of whistle cessation outweigh the implications of fence construction. Given these, it is recommended that Council directs staff not to proceed with the fence construction.



Scott Neuman, P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering

RV/GDC/cc

Appendix "I" – Procedure for Eliminating Whistling At Public Grade Crossings

Appendix "II" – Crescent Beach Proposed Pedestrian Safety Fencing on City of Surrey Road Allowance

Appendix "III" – Proposed Fence Project for Whistle Cessation in Crescent Beach Survey Results

Note: Appendices available upon request

CORPORATE REPORT

NO: *R223*

COUNCIL DATE: *December 18, 2023*

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council

DATE: December 13, 2023

FROM: General Manager, Engineering
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture
Acting General Manager, Corporate Services

FILE: 5460-90 (Gen)

SUBJECT: Crescent Beach Parking Update

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering and Parks, Recreation & Culture Departments recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report for information;
2. Authorize staff to increase on-street parking spaces by educating Crescent Beach residents on applicable City Bylaws and to subsequently remove unauthorized obstructions and signs in public road allowance, as generally described in this report; and
3. Direct staff to develop a concept plan for parking and walking enhancements in Crescent Beach, as generally described in this report.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide Mayor and Council with updates on parking utilization in Crescent Beach and to seek direction to proceed with initiatives that will provide more equitable access to parking supply.

BACKGROUND

On June 5, 2023, Council received Corporate Report No. Ro87; 2023, attached as Appendix "I", which sought to have Council direct staff to:

1. Evaluate traffic calming;
2. Address illegal encroachment through bylaw enforcement; and
3. Not to implement "resident-only" parking.

The first two aspects were supported; however, the third was referred back to staff with a request for confirmation of parking occupancy through additional Summer 2023 occupancy surveys, review parking management for destination parks in other cities and assess potential for a shuttle from South Surrey Park and Ride.

DISCUSSION

Parking Supply

In 2022, staff conducted an extensive analysis of parking availability in Crescent Beach. The Blackie Spit parking lot has approximately 300 parking spaces while the on-street parking spaces has the potential for approximately 1,200 spaces for a combined total of approximately 1,500 parking spaces. The analysis also revealed that all but nine of the 374 houses have sufficient ability to park on their lots/driveways.

Through on-site observations, it was determined that 300 to 400 on-street parking spaces have obstructions, such as illegal “no parking” signs, boulders or unauthorized landscaping. These unauthorized obstructions discourage or physically restrict access to on-street parking, reducing the available on-street spaces from approximately 1,200 to 800, equating to over a one-third reduction in accessible parking.

A parking demand assessment was conducted in May and August 2022, as provided in Appendix “II”. Neighbourhood wide on-street parking occupancy was 32% on visits in May 2022 and 44% in August 2022; however, some individual streets experienced over 80% occupancy during an August weekend. These percentages are based on the reduced on-street parking supply (800 on-street), and a lower occupancy rate would have been realized if these unauthorized obstructions were rectified. The Blackie Spit parking lot was observed to have average occupancies of 37% and 61% during these months.

As requested by Council, a parking demand assessment was re-conducted in July and August 2023, as provided in Appendix “III”. The findings were generally consistent with those from 2022, with on-street parking occupancy observed at 39% in July 2023 and 36% in August 2023, with the same few individual streets near the beach having higher occupancy rates. Blackie Spit parking lot was to have average occupancies of 54% and 48% during these months.

Overall, the comprehensive parking surveys concluded that there is sufficient parking supply across the Crescent Beach community for both residents, commercial business patrons, and seasonal visitors from across the City. While individual streets close to the beach may experience higher parking occupancy during isolated, weekend evenings in August, the situation is not common across the broader community. In fact, there are 300 to 400 spaces occupied by unauthorized “private parking” signs, boulders, and landscaping which should be alleviated to increase overall parking supply. Based on these findings, the establishment of a “residential only” permit parking system for Crescent Beach is not warranted.

Public Transit Options

Crescent Beach is serviced by Transit, Bus #350 every 20-30 minutes from Semiahmoo and White Rock Centre. A 2022 shuttle service pilot in a similar area highlighted the cost inefficiency of the Boundary Bay Park route, suggesting that a park and ride service may not be a financially viable option for Crescent Beach.

Parking Management Strategies in Other Municipalities

Appendix “IV” outlines Parking Management Strategies at Destination Parks in other municipalities, encompassing residential permit parking, pay parking, and transit. Considering the highly seasonal and infrequent parking demand, both pay parking and residential-permit systems are deemed unwarranted for Crescent Beach.

Crescent Beach Parking and Walkway Enhancement Concept

The Crescent Beach road network is unique in that the majority of roadways do not incorporate sidewalks, curbs, and crosswalks. Resident and visitor parking extends into the public right-of-way. Pedestrian movement therefore occurs within the roadway (sometimes in conflict with traffic) and public parking space is less defined than in other Surrey neighbourhoods. Observations highlight heightened pedestrian and parking conflicts on streets like Beecher, Alexandra, and McBride during the summer, emphasizing the need for delineation and identification of trade-offs. A Parking and walkway enhancement concept will be developed following four key stages: Planning, Design, Consultation, and Construction, aimed at addressing these challenges and improving the overall accessibility and safety of Crescent Beach streets.

Next Steps

1. Q1 2024 / Educational Communication: This initial step involves an open house and information mail-out to residents regarding: bylaw requirements associated with obstructions and encroachments and seeking residents remove unauthorized signage/obstructions.
2. Q2 2024 / Parking and Walking Enhancements & Obstruction Removal: This phase will involve development of parking and walkway improvements on targeted streets, followed by public consultation. Bylaws and Engineering may also begin targeted removal of unauthorized obstructions and signs in the public road allowance.

CONCLUSION

Comprehensive parking surveys indicate that parking supply meets current demand for residents and visitors in Crescent Beach. Supply can be increased through the enforcement of City Bylaws to remove illegal obstructions and encroachments in public road allowance. A phased approach to Bylaw Enforcement is recommended, including public information and education followed by targeted actions to remove obstructions. Additional strategies to manage demand for parking at Crescent Beach include developing a Parking and Walkway Enhancement Concept for certain streets.



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Appendix "I" – Corporate Report No. R087; 2023
Appendix "II" – Summer 2022 Parking Survey Results
Appendix "III" - Summer 2023 Parking Survey Results
Appendix "IV" - Parking Management Strategies in Other Municipalities

Note: Appendices available upon request