



Corporate NO: C422

Report COUNCIL DATE: Apr. 12, 1999

COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: April 9, 1999**

FROM: Manager, Land Development & Transportation

Engineering Department **FILE: 4000-502**

XC: 2152-17550

SUBJECT: 175A Street and O Avenue, Truck Routing

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That Council receive this report for information.
- That the responsible Federal and Provincial Government agencies be requested to improve facilities at the Pacific Highway Border Crossing to alleviate impacts of commercial vehicle traffic.
- That U.S. Customs and Immigration be requested to increase commercial vehicle processing capacity at the Pacific Highway Border Crossing.
- That the City preserve the existing 175A Street right-of-way until the issues outlined in this report are addressed.

INTENT

To provide information to Council regarding issues surrounding planned commercial development on 175A Street between 2 and 4 Avenues, and the possibility of designating 175A Street between 0 and 4 Avenues as a primary route for heavy trucks to the Pacific Highway Border Crossing.

BACKGROUND

At the March 8, 1999, meeting, Council passed a resolution:

“That staff report to Council in three weeks, on designating 175A Street, between 0 Avenue and 4 Avenue, as a

primary route for heavy trucks to the Pacific Highway Border Crossing, and further, that staff meet with Provincial and Federal officials to review options for improving the design of truck holding and border crossing infrastructure at the Pacific Highway Border Crossing, including 175A Street.”

An information memo was prepared in response to the March 8, 1999 resolution, and was reviewed by Council at their meeting on March 29, 1999. Subsequently, Council resolved “*that the various Canada / United States border related issues be referred to Council-in-Committee for discussion*”.

This report is a follow-up to the previous information memo and provides Council with a description of existing conditions in the subject area, an outline of the access and traffic issues, and some of the history leading up to the current situation.

DISCUSSION

The 175A Street right-of-way exists between 2 Avenue and 4 Avenue, but the roadway has not been constructed (see attached map - Appendix I). The right-of-way between 2 Avenue and 0 Avenue does not presently exist, although it was to have been dedicated by West Coast Duty Free at the time of development of the property a few years ago. The City of Surrey is currently taking action to have this section of road dedicated. The future roadway is currently designated on Surrey's Arterial, Major Collector, and Grid Roads Plan (Drawing R91) as a major collector. Up to mid-1998, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways was advising Surrey to preserve the 175A Street right-of-way and alignment between 4 Avenue and 0 Avenue for a future route for trucks to cross the Border. Surrey staff were actively working toward this plan through negotiations with the property owners along the route and in the roadway requirements outlined to prospective developers of fronting properties. In mid-1998, in conjunction with their review of a proposed commercial and multiple family development on 175A Street between 4 Avenue and 2 Avenue, MoTH informed the City that they had no future intent to utilize 175A Street as a route for trucks to cross the Border; that all truck traffic would be maintained on 176 Street (Highway No. 15). It is our understanding that this decision came as a result of a number of studies of options for truck/car border crossing configurations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) applications conducted by U.S. and Canadian agencies. As a result, consideration has recently been given by the City to classify 175A Street as a through local road to serve only as access to development.

It is possible for Surrey to construct 175A Street to a major collector standard such that it could serve as a truck route, in conjunction with current development between 4 Avenue and 2 Avenue. Once the necessary right-of-way, between 2 Avenue and 0 Avenue, has been secured it could then be completed. Construction to major collector standard would have greater pavement width and right-of-way requirements. This roadway could then be designated as a truck route through an amendment to Highway and Traffic By-law No. 13007. Trucks could then be permitted to depart Highway 15 at 4 Avenue, travel via 175A Street, and access Highway 15 again at 0A Avenue (see Appendix I), prior to crossing the Border or, alternatively, cross the Border on the 175A Street alignment. Surrey, however, would have no authority to restrict trucks from using Highway 15 between 4 Avenue and 0A Avenue or the Border. Trucks might use the 175A Street route in order to short-cut queues on Highway 15. This would create operational conflicts at 0A Avenue and Highway 15, and could result in truck queues on 175A Street, as well as on Highway 15 as now occurs. Truck queues would negatively impact development adjacent to 175A Street. The proposed development on the east side of 175A Street between 2 and 4 Avenues is seniors multi-residential, which would likely be sensitive to truck traffic.

Staff met with representatives of MoTH and Revenue Canada, Customs & Excise on Tuesday, March 16, 1999, to review options for improving truck holding and border crossing infrastructure, and the function of 175A Street. At that time MoTH reiterated their position with respect to maintaining truck traffic on Highway 15, and stated that they would not be in favour of designating 175A Street as a truck route and would not permit erection of signing on Highway 15 indicating 175A Street to be a truck route. They indicated their view that

the queuing problems are solely a result of inadequate processing capacity at U.S. Customs and that additional truck parking would not address the root cause. They would, thus, be unwilling to utilize highway capital funds for development of a truck staging/parking lot. They further indicated that the one role for Surrey would be to join in lobbying U.S. officials to increase commercial vehicle processing capacity. They also advised that commencing Tuesday, March 16, 1999, processing hours at U.S. Customs for LTL traffic (less than full load trucks) have been extended to 24-hour per day operation compared to the previous 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. operation.

In an effort to facilitate access to West Coast Duty Free, MoTH did agree to paint stripe a 'No Stopping' zone in the Highway 15 truck lane opposite the 0A Avenue exit from the store, similar to that done at the store entrance. This should help to reduce queue interference with store operations. They also indicated that they wished to monitor the effect of the extended LTL processing hours on queuing, prior to committing to any additional physical modifications.

The option of opening the 0A Avenue/Highway 15 intersection to full-movement access and moving the gate on 0A Avenue further to the west was discussed. MoTH indicated that satisfactory resolution of traffic safety concerns at the intersection would be their main concern. Revenue Canada was not in favour, due to difficulties this would present in ensuring that traffic departing from the Duty Free Store has no option but to cross the Border. In a subsequent telephone conversation on April 7, 1999, they clarified this position stating they would be willing to investigate the option and work with the Duty Free store to attempt to devise satisfactory security means.

Additional discussions with Revenue Canada indicated that there are no plans for improvements to the border crossing facilities on the Canadian side of the border. However, current construction of new facilities on the U.S. side has restricted the secondary inspection truck parking area which, in turn, has had some impact on south-bound queuing. Expanded secondary inspection parking, as part of the new development, will expedite customs processing to a certain degree. Revenue Canada agrees that an expanded truck staging lot on the Canadian side of the border would help to alleviate the queuing problem, but do not think that it is their responsibility to provide the facility. They, similar to MoTH, believe that additional staffing/processing capacity at U.S. customs is the solution.

The position of MoTH regarding truck routing on 175A Street has apparently changed again effective a letter received via facsimile on April 6, 1999. In this letter they state that the Ministry does not require the construction of 175A Street as a future alternative truck route to the Border crossing and they are not prepared to designate 175A Street as an Arterial Highway under provincial jurisdiction; however, should the City of Surrey decide to provide 175A Street as an alternative truck route to the border, the Ministry would be prepared to allow erection of signing indicating the alternative route.

Owners of the West Coast Duty Free store were not available to meet during the month of March. A meeting has been scheduled with them on April 9, 1999, to apprise them of, and discuss, the issues outlined above, seek their suggestions, and see to what degree their needs can be facilitated.

In view of the position held by MoTH prior to April 6, 1999, and the position of Revenue Canada, Customs & Excise, Surrey staff have recently tentatively agreed with the developer of the property located on 175 A Street, between 2 Avenue and 4 Avenue, to declassify 175A Street from a major collector to a through local, and have advised the developer that no objections would be raised should he request a variance for a narrowed right-of-way and pavement width between 2 Avenue and 4 Avenue. However, in view of the position taken by MoTH on April 6, 1999, the existing 175A Street right-of-way should be preserved.

Impacts of the truck queuing at the border crossing are also felt in the Douglas area. Commercial traffic attempting to short-cut the queue diverts from 8 Avenue at 172 Street and attempts to access Highway 15 via 4

or 2 Avenues. This impact has been addressed within the draft Douglas NCP by virtue of traffic calming measures incorporated in the street network plan. These will be realized, however, only as development occurs within the Douglas area.

The two main interests for the City of Surrey in regards to this issue are:

1. Firstly, the desire to maintain the viability of local businesses both in the City in general and in the vicinity of the border crossing; and
2. Secondly, the desire to attract new businesses that find convenient border access advantageous.

However, the major interest in resolving these issues is one of fostering regional economic development and competitiveness, which is beyond the mandate of the City. For this reason, and given the potentially significant cost of improving the crossing, adding truck staging area, etc., prime responsibility should rest with senior levels of government.

CONCLUSIONS

Surrey could designate 175A Street, between 0 Avenue and 4 Avenue, as a truck route to the Pacific Highway Border Crossing. However, MoTH would not assume any responsibility or share in costs. Considerable effort would be required to co-ordinate the multiple and international jurisdictions involved in order to finalize this option. This option may help to alleviate the situation, but would not necessarily solve the problem of truck queuing interfering with property access from Highway 15 unless truck traffic were diverted exclusively to 175A Street. This, in turn, would create similar queuing impacts along 175A Street.

There may be some short-term improvements that can be made which will result in minor improvement to the truck traffic queuing situation and the impacts that this causes; however, short of property purchase and construction of a large truck staging area, which in itself would not be an ultimate solution, these options are unlikely to be satisfactory to those impacted.

Finding solutions to the access and traffic issues at the border crossing area is made extremely complex and difficult due to the multi-level and international jurisdictions and competing interests involved. It would not be in the City's best interest to designate 175A Street as a truck route without a careful evaluation of all potential impacts and the development of a comprehensive plan for accommodating commercial traffic. The prime responsibility to carry this out lies with the Federal and/or Provincial Governments. Staff will continue to work with affected property owners and the various agencies to resolve these issues; however, an immediate solution satisfactory to all parties will be difficult to achieve.

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Manager, Land Development & Transportation

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Attachment

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