



Corporate NO: R106

Report COUNCIL DATE: May 8, 2000_

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: April 20, 2000**

FROM: General Manager, Planning & Development **FILE: 0065-012**
General Manager, Engineering Department **2350-008**
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture **2012-002 (C.3)**

SUBJECT: Douglas Border Crossing Redevelopment Plans

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. receive this report as information;
2. direct the City Clerk to forward a copy of this Report to the Federal Government representatives, and to strongly request continued consultation and resolution of concerns with Surrey, the Friends of Peace Arch Park, and the Peace Portal Golf Course in the Douglas Border Crossing planning and redevelopment process before final decisions are made regarding changes to the Douglas Border crossing;
3. request the Federal Government to carefully explore expansion options by working with the Semiahmoo First Nation land owners to the west of the existing crossing; and
4. direct the City Clerk to forward a copy of this Report to the Friends of Peace Arch Park, the Peace Portal Golf Course, and the Semiahmoo First Nation.

INTENT

At the February 14, 2000 Council-in-Committee meeting, Council received a formal delegation from Derek Watson of Public Works & Services Canada regarding the Federal Government's preliminary redevelopment plans for the Douglas (Peace Arch) Border Crossing station. Following the presentation, Council requested staff to review the proposal and submit a joint report to Council on the information provided during the presentation (Appendix II). This Report is submitted to address Council's request.

BACKGROUND

The Douglas Border Crossing located on Highway No. 99 at the border with the United States is one of four border stations between Canada and the United States in the Vancouver area, and is the busiest of these ports in terms of overall volume of travellers between the two countries. Also known as the Peace Arch crossing, this Border station features Peace Arch Provincial Park and Monument, which was built in 1921 to commemorate the lasting peace between the two countries. This crossing is surrounded by 9 hectares (22 acres) of park, and is further surrounded by residential development on both sides of the border.

The Douglas Border Crossing holds strategic importance as one of the gateways for movement between the United States and Canada. In addition to the national and regional importance of the Border Crossing, there are also significant local economic advantages resulting from its function, both immediate and secondary. The exposure of Surrey to the travelling public is also noteworthy in terms of additional economic spin-offs. Surrey's border crossings also make Surrey a more attractive location for businesses. The efficient and successful functioning of the Border Crossing is therefore of key importance at all levels, and efforts to improve the operation of the Border Crossing are generally supported.

For some time, the Canadian and United States government agencies have been exploring options to upgrade, expand or replace their ageing facilities on both sides of the border at this port. Under the Shared Border Accord, both countries agreed to work closely to examine opportunities for joint facilities. However, due to existing site limitations and legislative issues that remained unresolved, each country has embarked on independent studies to develop stand-alone but co-ordinated border facilities.

Federal Border Feasibility Study

In late 1998, Canada Customs & Revenue Agency contracted Public Works Canada to undertake a feasibility study of the Douglas Border Crossing facilities to determine the operational state of the port, and the potential for future expansion to accommodate new technologies and ever increasing traffic volumes. The study was to assess the current functional requirements of the Douglas Border facilities, including safety, security, and technological needs, and the long-term needs for future expansion of the Border operations.

The study found that the ageing facilities, which were constructed in 1953, present a significant and ongoing premium cost for operations and maintenance, and do not afford the opportunity for easy upgrading to contemporary electronic technologies now required in Customs processes. The restricted linear layout of the site and location of existing buildings and temporary facilities, including the Secondary Inspection and Customs and Immigration facilities, are also impediments to renovation and expansion to meet current or future needs.

The feasibility study indicated that the Douglas Border facilities do not meet the current operational needs in many areas, and that health, safety, and security of employees and the public are below acceptable minimum standards. Subsequently, options were identified to replace or upgrade the existing border facilities at Douglas.

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Three (3) redevelopment options (A, B, and C) were identified for the Douglas Border Crossing, all of which propose expansion east of Highway No. 99 and incorporate multi-level facilities (i.e. underground parking) in order to accommodate the limited site area and minimize the need for land acquisition (Appendix III). No expansion opportunities have been identified on the Provincial Park and Indian Reserve lands west of Highway

99. All 3 options have been designed to accommodate the future redevelopment plans for the US border facilities immediately to the south, which are also currently under study.

The study recommends Option A as the most cost-effective option to accommodate the present and future needs of the Douglas Border Crossing with the least impact on surrounding lands. Option B is undesirable due to the significant impact on Peace Arch Provincial Park. Option C, while minimizing the required land acquisition and impact on surrounding lands, has severe operational and functional limitations related to the resulting facilities, and will create difficulties in the construction phase and inevitably will necessitate future expansion at an earlier date than the other options.

Representatives from Public Works Canada have indicated that the Feasibility stage of the project is now complete and the study, including the recommendation to accept Option A, has been submitted to Canada Customs. However, there is no indication at this time of the direction that Canada Customs will take or the project timing. The project may be substantially modified, reduced in scope, or developed in phases depending on available Federal funding. Once Canada Customs approves the project, a concept design will be prepared in consultation with stakeholder groups, including the City of Surrey, and presented at a public forum prior to proceeding with the design-build phase.

PROPOSED BORDER EXPANSION AND THE DOUGLAS NCP

Federal Government Consultation

The area immediately east of the Douglas Border Crossing is within the Douglas Neighbourhood Concept Plan (Appendix IV). Federal Government representatives were involved as stakeholders throughout the Douglas NCP planning process. During that time, the Federal government advised that there were no concrete plans to redevelop the Douglas Border station, and that future expansion and possible relocation of joint US/Canada border facilities may be considered as part of the US/Canada Border Accord.

Immediately prior to the adoption of the Douglas NCP in 1999, Federal government representatives advised that the Douglas Border Crossing feasibility study was finally underway. As the study was still on-going at that time, the potential impact of the Border redevelopment on the Douglas area was unknown. The Douglas NCP therefore did not include information on the future expansion of the Douglas Border facilities as this was not yet available. Nevertheless, Federal Government representatives indicated that the expansion of the Douglas Border facilities would be subject to a public process involving a number of Provincial and Federal agencies, US authorities, City of Surrey, and surrounding property owners. Council was advised of the ongoing feasibility study, and the NCP was subsequently adopted on this basis.

In July, 1999, representatives of Public Works Canada requested preliminary comments from Surrey on the preferred redevelopment option (Option A) prior to the beginning of the public consultation with the community, which was expected later in the year. At that time, the City identified concerns regarding the transportation impact of the proposed expansion on the Douglas community.

Impact of Border Redevelopment on the Douglas NCP

The proposed expansion of the Douglas Border Crossing facilities will impact the Douglas NCP, specifically the transportation component, proposed land uses adjacent to the Border Crossing, Peace Portal Golf Course, and Peace Arch Provincial Park.

Transportation Impact

Two critical issues have been identified in relation to the impact on the transportation system resulting from the proposed expansion of the Douglas Border Crossing:

1. the potential closure of Peace Park Drive to Highway No. 99 (Appendix III); and
2. the volume of traffic between the Douglas Border Station and Pacific Highway Border Station.

The closure of Peace Park Drive at Highway 99 would necessitate having to revise the traffic impact study for the Douglas Neighbourhood Concept Plan. The closure would result in increased traffic volumes on other road links within the NCP, particularly 172 Street north of 4 Avenue. It may be necessary to advance the timing of the installation of the signal at 8 Avenue at 172 Street as well as advancing the timing of the widening of 8 Avenue from Highway 99 to 176 Street, which is a Provincial Highway. Representatives from the Ministry of Transportation and Highways advise that they would not object to the closure of Peace Park Drive to Highway 99 as proposed, as access to Provincial Highways, particularly freeways, is generally discouraged.

The closure of the access to Highway 99 would also prompt minor modifications to the road network in southwest Douglas to maintain adequate access for emergency vehicles and ensure that over-length cul-de-sacs are not created.

The second key issue involves the volume of vehicular traffic travelling between the Douglas and Pacific Highway Border Stations. Currently, border station employees utilize the Douglas road network to travel between the two stations. The magnitude of this traffic volume is unknown, but is estimated to be between 20 and 40 vehicles per day. In addition, under the Federal Government proposal, access to the employee parking lot for the Douglas Border Station would be through the Douglas residential neighbourhood, which could generate impacts to the neighbourhood in terms of traffic volumes in the future.

Land Use Plan

The Douglas NCP designates 6 properties fronting on the north side of Peace Park Drive north of Peace Arch Park for future townhouse development. The proposed Douglas Border redevelopment plans (Option A) will necessitate the acquisition (or partial acquisition) of these properties by the Federal Government to accommodate the expansion of the crossing facilities and reconfiguration of Peace Arch Park.

Peace Portal Golf Course

Representatives of the Peace Portal Golf Course met separately with City staff and Federal officials to discuss their concerns regarding the feasibility study in terms of the impact to the operation of the golf course.

The key issue of concern is the required land acquisition from the southwest corner of the golf course, which was established in 1928 and is a historical landmark in the area. Golf Course representatives advised that none of the redevelopment options are acceptable to address their concerns, including the impact of the property loss on the length of the golf course playing area, and the impact of the closure of Peace Park Drive on the accessibility for golf course patrons and area residents. Under Option A, the proposed expansion will occur immediately adjacent to the second hole, resulting in possible encroachment into the playing area particularly in view of the need to create a sufficient landscaping buffer zone to reduce the visual impact caused by the new border station.

Peace Portal Golf Course representatives expressed their concerns to the Federal Government by letter, and encouraged federal officials to consider joint US/Canada border facilities or upgrading of the Pacific Highway Border Crossing as alternatives to the expansion of the Douglas Border Station, to minimize the impact on the golf course, Peace Arch Park, and the surrounding community.

Peace Arch Park

One of the primary impacts of the Border expansion plans involves proposed changes to Peace Arch Provincial Park. Peace Arch Park is a "Schedule A" Provincial Park with significant historical and regional importance and is frequently used by community groups throughout the Lower Mainland. The park is a visual landmark for travellers passing through the U.S./Canada border and a destination point for tourists and visitors. It is noted that the use and establishment of this park has considerable historical, cultural, aesthetic, and national importance. The proposal will impact the east portion of the provincial park on the east side of Highway 99. Major horticultural features and plantings, which are visible and familiar landmarks to those travelling north on Highway 99, will need to be removed. These changes will have a negative aesthetic impact on the park.

As far as City-owned parkland provisions for the Douglas community are concerned, Douglas residents will be well served with 13.4 hectares (33.18 acres) of parkland proposed for the Douglas NCP area. The Douglas NCP land use plan designates a major east/west greenbelt from 176 Street to Peace Portal Park. A centrally located 5.3 hectare (13.19 acre) school/park site is proposed east of 172 Street. The open space proposed in the Douglas NCP area is well distributed and will adequately serve the neighbourhood whose total future population is projected to be approximately 2,800 residents.

It is important to note that Peace Arch Park was not calculated in the open space provisions in the Douglas NCP planning process. However, the east/west greenbelt was designed to link to the Provincial Park from the future school/park site east of 172 Street. Although the parkland requirements for the Douglas community will be met by the open space proposed in the Douglas NCP, the importance of Peace Arch Park from a historical, aesthetic, provincial, national and international perspective, should not be minimized; and the local Douglas community residents feel strong ownership of the park.

FRIENDS OF PEACE ARCH PARK

A group of concerned Douglas residents have raised objection to the Federal Government public consultation process and are opposed to the recommended expansion option (Option A). The local residents, calling themselves the Friends of Peace Arch Park, have approached the Federal Government to express their concerns about the loss of access to Highway 99, traffic impact on other roads in the NCP resulting from this closure, and the physical encroachment and effect of the expansion on Peace Arch Park.

City staff met with representative of the Friends of Peace Arch Park on March 9, 2000 to discuss the residents concerns. The residents were advised that City staff share their concerns, and have previously brought these to the attention of Public Works Canada. While the final decisions relating to the Border Crossing proposal are beyond Surrey's jurisdiction and rest with the Federal Government, the residents were advised that City would continue to pursue a satisfactory resolution of these issues. To this end, it is recommended that a copy of the report be forwarded to Public Works Canada and Canada Customs reiterating the concerns of the City of Surrey and the Friends of Peace Arch Park.

SEMIAHMOO FIRST NATION PROPOSAL

Lands located west of Highway 99 north of Peace Arch Park, which includes the existing Duty Free Store, are owned by the Semiahmoo First Nation (Appendix I). None of the Federal Government options propose

development on the Semiahmoo First Nation lands. On January 17, 2000, representatives of the Semiahmoo First Nation approached Canada Customs and submitted a proposal to facilitate the expansion of the Douglas Border Crossing on the native lands to the west of Highway 99. At this time, no action has been taken by Canada Customs on this initiative. The City of Surrey was not consulted on the development of this proposal to the west of Highway 99.

The First Nation proposal appears to eliminate the impacts on Peace Arch Park. As such, it appears to be worthy of more detailed review by the Federal Government in relation to addressing the future of the Border Crossing.

CONCLUSION

The Douglas Border Crossing is one of the key gateways between the United States and Canada, and holds strategic importance from a national, regional, and local economic point of view. The expansion of the Douglas Border facilities is necessary to ensure the efficient and successful operation of the Border functions.

The Douglas Border feasibility study prepared by Public Works Canada for Canada Customs has identified three redevelopment options, and recommends that Option A be adopted. While Option A is identified as the preferred option, concerns have been identified in terms of the impact to the Douglas area. These relate to the transportation impact on the Douglas community resulting from the proposed closure of Peace Park Drive, impact on the Peace Portal Golf Course, and the encroachment of the expansion on Peace Arch Provincial Park, which has substantial historical, aesthetic, community, regional and national value. These concerns have also been raised by the Friends of Peace Arch Park and representatives of the Peace Portal Golf Course.

The final plans for the Douglas Border Crossing expansion have not been adopted, and a time frame for adoption has not yet been set. However, the Federal Government advises that the final plan will be prepared in consultation with stakeholder groups, including the City of Surrey, Peace Portal Golf Course, and the Friends of Peace Arch Park. It is recommended that a copy of this report be provided to the Federal Government representatives advising of the City's concerns as noted above and requesting the continued involvement of the City, Douglas residents, and Peace Portal Golf Course in resolving the identified concerns prior to the Federal Government adopting a specific plan for the Crossing. It is also recommended that the Federal Government give further consideration to the First Nation proposal relative to expanding the Border Crossing to the west of its current location.

Murray D. Dinwoodie Jorgen Johansen, P. Eng.

General Manager General Manager

Planning & Development Department Engineering Department

W. Hunter

General Manager

Parks, Recreation & Culture Department

RCA/bea

Appendices:

Appendix I: Douglas Border Crossing- Context Plan

Appendix II: February 14, 2000 Council-in-Committee Minutes

Appendix II: Federal Government Douglas Border Redevelopment Options

Appendix III: Douglas Neighbourhood Concept Plan

v:\wp-docs\planning\00data\apr-jun\04171141.rca

KMS 05/08/00 09:24 AM