
Commercial Billboards on Public Right-of-Way

Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:
That additional billboards on public right-of-way not be installed due to public safety reasons.

Topic and Purpose

This report provides comments on the impacts of installing commercial billboards on public right-of-way (ROW), a concept proposed during the 30-Day Challenge.

Report Highlights

1. Commercial billboards have the potential to generate revenue throughout the city.
2. Distracted driving is considered a significant public safety issue. By their inherent nature, commercial billboards are intended to distract.
3. Commercial billboards on ROW does not align with Saskatoon's Traffic Safety Action Plan (STSAP) nor Vision Zero.
4. Bylaw No. 8770, The Zoning Bylaw outlines regulations for commercial billboards related to size, location and type of signs.

Strategic Goal

This report supports the Strategic Goal of Moving Around by providing safe infrastructure for all road users including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

Background

City Council, at its meeting held on August 28, 2017, considered a report on the 30-Day Challenge and resolved, in part:

- “8. That the Administration report to the Standing Policy Committee on Finance regarding additional billboards on City rights-of-way;”

This initiative was suggested as a means to generate (or provide) additional revenue for the City of Saskatoon. The report was re-directed to the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation as the content best fits this committee's mandate.

Report

30-Day Challenge Idea

The idea to consider the placement of billboards on public ROW was identified in the 30-Day Challenge to generate additional revenue for the city.

The Administration engaged various local billboard advertising companies to determine estimates of potential revenue opportunities that could be realized by placing billboards in some ROW locations. Representatives of the companies indicated there are some roadway locations within the city that are currently underserved, with noted examples

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being Circle Drive, College Drive and newly constructed portions of McOrmond Drive (North Commuter Parkway).

The Administration estimates that depending on the specific location, there may be approximately 10 to 15 potential billboard locations throughout the City that could generate up to \$35,000 per year, per digital sign, resulting in total annual revenue of \$350,000 to \$525,000 if and when all signs were installed. Static signs in these same locations would realize smaller revenues of approximately \$5,000 per poster face.

The City has previously permitted five static billboards within the public ROW, with five year leases renewed in approximately 2013, ranging in value from \$3,230.67 to \$9,692.02 per year (based on 2017 lease value) depending on the size and number of faces of the commercial billboard. These billboards have been in place for several years and their placement has been grandfathered to date. Details, including financial information is as follows:

Location	Lease End Date (5-yr lease)	2017 Lease Value
Circle Drive N & Airport Road	Dec. 31, 2019	\$6,622.90
19 th Street E & 4 th Avenue S	Aug. 31, 2018	\$3,230.67
19 th Street E & 4 th Avenue S	Aug. 31, 2018	\$4,846.01
19 th Street E & Avenue A	Aug. 31, 2018	\$9,692.02
Warman Road & Assiniboine Drive	Aug. 31, 2018	\$3,230.67

These leases will not be renewed when the leases expire in 2018, and the one location in 2019, due to public safety reasons discussed further in this document.

Distracted Driving and Billboards

While the installation of commercial billboards in the public ROW has the ability to generate revenue, by their inherent nature, commercial billboards (which includes static and electronic billboards) are intended to attract a motorist's attention and therefore conflicts with best practices in road safety. Knowingly permitting these types of signs will lower the level of public safety, and also potentially open the City of Saskatoon to be liable for collisions and injuries. Other jurisdictions do not permit commercial billboards within the public ROW and have policies to administer or restrict commercial billboards on private land immediately adjacent to, or within sight of, roadways.

Details of the review of best practices are provided in Attachment 1.

Saskatoon's Traffic Safety Action Plan/Vision Zero

City Council approved Saskatoon's Traffic Safety Action Plan (STSAP) in September 2014, which was developed through a collaborative process with the Saskatchewan Centre of Excellence in Transportation and Infrastructure, Saskatchewan Government Insurance, Saskatoon Police Service, and several other stakeholders. Using historical collision statistics, the STSAP identifies seven emphasis areas including:

- Aggressive Driving;
- Distracted Driving;
- Impaired Driving;
- Intersections;
- Older Drivers;
- Vulnerable Road Users; and
- Young Drivers.

Through a combination of engineering, education and enforcement efforts, the STSAP outlines a number of initiatives to achieve a targeted 10% reduction in fatal and serious injury collisions in each emphasis area.

The Administration is developing a plan to transition from the STSAP to a formal Vision Zero approach to road safety. Vision Zero is a road safety approach with the goal of zero traffic related fatalities or severe injuries. Canada adopted Vision Zero as a federal strategy in January 2016. A copy of a recent Vision Zero session primer held with stakeholders is included in Attachment 2. Capital Project #0631 – Transportation Safety Improvements included approved funding to launch the Vision Zero initiative and begin an education campaign in 2018.

The introduction of commercial billboards along in the public ROW is not consistent with the direction to reduce collisions related to distracted driving.

Developers and proponents of commercial billboards have suggested that including traveller information such as road closures or upcoming road maintenance could occupy some portion of the messaging of the billboard in order to justify the location on the public ROW. Providing traveller information in this manner is not standard traffic engineering practice and will increase distracted driving by training drivers to look at all commercial billboards for potential public information. A Traveller Information System for motorists will be developed as part of the Intelligent Transportation System Strategic Plan for Saskatoon. More details are provided in Attachment 3.

Bylaw No. 8770, The Zoning Bylaw

The size, location and type of signs are regulated by Bylaw No. 8770, The Zoning Bylaw. Generally, under the provisions of the Zoning Bylaw, billboards are permitted only on private property, in specified commercial and industrial areas and typically are used to advertise off-site products or services.

From a planning perspective, billboards may block access to scenic vistas, may contribute to light pollution, and do not enhance the urban environment by providing distracting messaging. Digital billboards, which are increasingly the more common form of billboard signage, have a far greater visual reach with digital images that could change as often as every six seconds.

The regulations contained in the Zoning Bylaw ensure that signs are located in appropriate locations, and maintain a separation distance from each other in order to

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minimize the impact to the urban environment and distraction to motorists. Allowing billboards in the public ROW would significantly increase the number of potential locations where billboards could be located in the city which contributes to visual clutter in the urban environment and generally would not enhance community aesthetics.

The current regulations endeavor to ensure a balance between providing for business opportunity and maintaining desired community aesthetics and limit driver distraction.

Communication Plan

At the time a Traveller Information System is ready for implementation, the City will communicate city-wide to advise road users about the new system and how they will be used.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no options, public and/or stakeholder involvement, policy, financial, environmental, privacy or CPTED considerations or implications.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

None planned at this time.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachments

1. Distracted Driving and Billboards
2. Vision Zero Session Primer
3. Traveller Information System

Report Approval

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