



Hamilton

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Built Environment Subcommittee**

**REPORT
January 06, 2015**

Recommendations/Reports for Approval

B. Lane / P. Cameron

That ACPD recommend to Council that the Urban Braille Policy approved by Council on April 10, 2010, be reviewed as soon as possible and that ACPD be consulted as a significant partner in the process and included in the site selection and criteria for Urban Braille implementation.

CARRIED.

Background:

Further to the presentation by staff from Traffic Engineering on December 2, 2014, committee followed up at the January 6, 2015 meeting, with respect to the Urban Braille Policy approved by Council on April 10, 2010. Committee is concerned that the current Urban Braille implementation criteria and process is not consistent throughout the City and that ACPD needs to be consulted more significantly.

Currently, the Urban Braille system is predominantly located in urban areas with a concentrated volume of pedestrian traffic including Hamilton Downtown core, sections of Main Street Est adjacent to McMaster University, and sections of Parkdale Avenue. In the section titled 'Putting People First: The New Land Use Plan for Downtown Hamilton' (2001), it states that "...all streets in Downtown Hamilton will provide a safe pedestrian realm through appropriately designed sidewalks, provision of Urban Braille, landscaping, seating areas, transit shelters, and other amenities".

According to the report, direction based on ACPDs recommendation was that "Urban Braille be implemented on a priority basis in the Hamilton Downtowns...and incorporated into municipal parks, public building locations in consultation with Public Works staff and ACPD, on a case-by-case basis, and only implemented based on demonstrated need, transit accessibility, and budget availability" (Location and Implementation of Urban Braille PED10089). In addition, that "Urban Braille be incorporated into the

standards of all new site plans and all retrofitted streetscapes in the City of Hamilton”, and, Urban Braille guidelines be converted into standards which should be mandatory for all new site plans for both the public and private facilities including institutional, industrial, commercial, and multi-unit residential uses” (Location and Implementation of Urban Braille PED10089).

However, committee also indicates that Urban Braille needs to be installed throughout the City because people are mobile everywhere in the City, not just the downtown core areas, but should be installed everywhere where there is a new construction.

To ensure consistency, efficiency and effective implementation of the policy, committee is also recommending that ACPD become a significant partner in the Urban Braille site selection, design and implementation process, so that the accessibility needs of all persons with disabilities are taken into consideration. Currently, Public Works staff consults with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, on urban braille design and placement.

However, committee notes that CNIB primarily provides recommendation based on the needs of persons with visual disabilities. For example, at the CNIB travel training, persons with visual disabilities are instructed to use grass shorelines as markers on a path of travel. However, grass is not a suitable marker for persons in wheelchairs, scooters or other mobility devices, as they get stuck in the grass, or sometimes the grass does not continue throughout the path of travel. As such, Urban Braille is recommended because it is a solid pathway and a system of travel that continues, and serves the needs of persons with various types of disabilities.

As stated in the policy, Urban Braille is an accessible sidewalk system based on barrier-free design principles, and is designed to serve the needs of persons with disabilities including persons who are blind, or with vision loss or low vision, seniors, users of mobility devices such as wheelchairs and motorized scooters, the parent with a stroller, in addition to the general public (Location and Implementation of Urban Braille PED10089). Committee agrees that when implemented effectively, Urban Braille could serve as a coherent, inclusive mobility network for entire local populations. It is also stated in the policy that for Urban Braille to be effective, it must be a logical, continuous path of travel from A to B as part of a planned network.