

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 7, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Feasibility of the Community Hosting a Picnic on the T.B. McQuesten High-Level Bridge (PED16189) (Ward 1) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Ward 1
PREPARED BY:	Bridget MacIntosh (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4514
SUBMITTED BY:	Jason Thorne General Manager Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

The following motion was passed by City of Hamilton Council at the June 22, 2016, meeting:

“That Planning and Economic Development Department staff, in consultation with Public Works Department staff, be directed to review the feasibility of the community hosting a picnic on Thomas B. McQuesten High-Level Bridge and report back to General Issues Committee.”

Background:

In 2013 the idea of hosting a picnic on the Thomas B. McQuesten High-Level Bridge was first raised by Hamilton Industrialist Patrick Birmingham. The intention of the picnic was “to celebrate and appreciate what this city has to offer.” The picnic has since evolved into an event to build an awareness of and raise funds for the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System. The Ecopark’s vision is to “be known internationally as a protected, permanent and connected natural lands sanctuary from the Harbour to the Escarpment that promotes ecosystem and human health within Ontario’s Greenbelt”. At this time, the event proposal includes a ticketed fundraising dinner as well as a public component where people can reserve a table on the bridge and bring their picnic to enjoy. Ticket and reservation fees are not determined at this point. An external committee has since been formed to co-ordinate the event. This committee approached senior City management to inquire about closing the High-Level Bridge for their event. The proposed date is Friday, June 9, 2017.

Information:

The animating of public space is one of the twelve recommendations from the City of Hamilton's Cultural Plan. One of the best ways to do this is through events. Events that reflect the "vibe" and "uniqueness" of a community are often referred to as community builders and reveal an authentic city. In the case of the proposed High-Level Bridge Picnic, the combination of using an unusual, historic and architecturally beautiful public space allows the community to celebrate City assets in a unique way. Event organizers in Hamilton have a history of animating unique public spaces for the enjoyment and education of our citizens and visitors through such events as Open Streets and Pop-up Dinners to name a few. These organizers appreciate the assistance of the City of Hamilton's Special Event Advisory Team (S.E.A.T) to ensure events are safe and enjoyable for all.

S.E.A.T. is the Council-mandated body responsible for approving event requests. S.E.A.T is administered by the City's Events Office (Tourism and Culture Division) and is comprised of representatives from Divisions across the organization, including those in Public Works, which are affected by event activity. S.E.A.T ensures that events are healthy, safe, act by all municipal policies and procedures and that organizers secure all required permits and insurance.

To provide an indication of the potential approvals that may be required and other considerations the organizers may need to take into account, details about the proposed event and Bridge closure were circulated to the members of S.E.A.T. The comments provided below are provided only based on the concept, however, and may change when a formal application is received. Applicable comments are as follows:

Corridor Management / Road Operations:

On a typical weekday Main Street carries 40,000 vehicles, York Boulevard carries 33,000. Closing the York Boulevard on and off ramps to the 403 would result in most of this traffic detouring onto Main Street. Corridor Management, therefore, recommends that this event be held on a Sunday. The Around the Bay Road Race currently does a similar closure on a Sunday every year successfully. There are also multiple ongoing projects in this area by Canadian National Railway (CN) and the Ministry of Transportation (MTO). Depending on the timing, there may be a conflict. This closure would also require approval from the MTO as well as the City of Burlington as one end of the detour would be onto Plains Road.

The Ministry of Transportation provided the following response when asked about the feasibility of such a closure.

The following information would need to be provided:

- How many people are expected to attend?;
- Who will be there (dignitaries)?;

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- A draft Traffic Management Plan (TCP) will need to be provided for review; and,
- The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) will have to be in full support of the closings.

The request will then be reviewed by the Head of the Highway Corridor Management section, and, if accepted, the next step would be the submission of an Encroachment Permit Application. The cost of this Permit is \$520 (2016 costing).

Hamilton Police Service:

No concerns. They advise that there should be one Officer located at each road closure point to restrict other vehicles from accessing the “emergency lane.” The estimated cost for two Officers is \$2,086.48 (2016 costing).

Parking:

Parking has no concerns as the event is not utilizing any parking areas. Note that there is very little legal parking in the immediate area.

Public Health:

No objections from Public Health Services provided they are notified of the proposed fundraising dinner and any food service being offered to the public outside of attendees’ personal food items for the picnic.

Parks:

Parks would need to know if the event will require picnic tables and garbage cans supplied. Parks would have to deliver these items. Based on 50 picnic tables and 20 to 30 garbage cans, the estimated cost would be \$3,500 to \$4,000 (four employees, two trucks, two trailers @ \$220/hr X 16 hrs). If it is a Saturday event, overtime charges may apply.

Parks also note that the MTO will be replacing a bridge on the 403 and that CN will be building a new bridge in the area. The MTO and the rail company have made an access from Harvey Park (adjacent to the High-Level Bridge) to do work on the bridges they are building and replacing. There could be a conflict between this event and the construction schedule. Parks would also like to know if members of the public will still be able to use the path that runs along York Boulevard and the stairs that provide access to the Waterfront trail.

Fire:

The Suppression Division indicates that as long as they have a minimum one full clear lane as emergency access through the entire length of the event, this would suffice for emergency apparatus access. This reserved lane would need to be totally clear of any and all items, and be able to be cleared of pedestrians immediately. Also, there would have to be staffed entry/exit points at either end of the event to affect the removal of cones, barriers, etc. Final approval would be given after a review of the site plan submitted for this event.

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The event organizers indicated that they might want to have fireworks included in the event. Fireworks would require the proper permit and approvals from Fire.

Emergency Medical Service (EMS):

No concerns identified.

Municipal Law Enforcement (MLE):

The event would need to be in compliance with the Noise By-law. As event details emerge, MLE can advise on any other licence or permits that would be required for participating vendors and activities.

Waste Management:

No objections raised by Waste Management. The event organizer will be required to submit a Waste Plan to receive waste diversion collection.

Hamilton Street Railway (HSR):

The closure of York Boulevard would have a severe impact on incoming westbound traffic at the end of the evening peak period. By closing York, the on-ramp from Highway 403 westbound to Main Street eastbound would most likely back up beyond Highway 6. It currently backs up considerably during the evening peak. This diversion, in turn, would back up traffic coming eastbound on Main across the Highway 403 bridge. As a result, all HSR service in the west part of the City would most likely be affected and delays, possibly severe, would result. Also, four of six GO trains arrive in Hamilton after 6:00 p.m. so the York Boulevard closure would likely have a domino effect on traffic in the Downtown area with people travelling to the GO Station to pick up commuters. The other route affected is Burlington Transit's Route 1 that provides a connection between Downtown Hamilton and Burlington. Burlington Transit will also need to be in support of this closure for the HSR to be receptive to it. A weekend event date would most likely not be a problem, but there are serious concerns with holding the event on a Friday evening.

Events Office:

Staff who serve on S.E.A.T also note the following that impacts the feasibility of the proposed event:

- Any inclusion of alcohol is subject to the requirements of the City's Municipal Alcohol Policy and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario;
- Dundurn Castle, located within the proposed closure area, notes that there are no issues with the proposed event date. However, construction on York Boulevard and within Dundurn's parking lot is scheduled to be completed Q2, 2017. Any unforeseen delays will impact the proposed event. Also, if the event date is moved, Dundurn has 50th anniversary celebrations planned for later in the month that could conflict;
- The Ontario Heritage Trust (in regards to the Ontario Heritage Conservation easement on the Bridge) notes that: "...the easement is silent on use. As long as

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you do not require any alterations (to the Bridge) for the event and the use does not negatively impact the heritage features of the Bridge, the Trust would have no issue with it.”;

- There are no Events Office staff resources available to assist in the co-ordination of this event;
- The event organizers would be responsible for all costs associated with the event and required closure. As the scope of the event takes shape, S.E.A.T will be able to provide a more accurate estimate of all the costs involved. A copy of the S.E.A.T Guidelines outlining potential costs and event organizer responsibilities has been provided to the event organizers;
- S.E.A.T does not have the ability to waive any such Council-approved fees. S.E.A.T would require direction from senior management responsible for the fee and Council to waive such fees;
- The event would need to provide proof of insurance of \$5,000,000 naming the City of Hamilton as an additional insured; and,
- The addition of any other event elements and activities would also be subject to S.E.A.T’s review and approval before being implemented.

Due to the location of the High-Level Bridge and the impacts such a closure would have on the City of Burlington and services such as Burlington Transit, the proposed Bridge closure and event information was also circulated to the City of Burlington’s S.E.A.T equivalent, the Special Event Team (S.E.T), for feasibility comment.

S.E.T’s applicable comments are as follows:

- On the timing of the event, S.E.T is concerned as the MTO is in the midst of a rehab program on bridges. The timing of the event would need to be co-ordinated / confirmed as often York Boulevard and Plains Road are used as detour routes. A detour would add to congestion in the area, and a resident notification plan may be required;
- Should there be an accident on the 403, detour routes could get complicated;
- Timing: Friday, 12-hour closure – This is a concern during peak hours as volumes of commuters, etc. are quite high, the detour route would be quite extensive, more planning and scheduling would be required. S.E.T. feels that a Saturday or Sunday closure would have less impact on residents, Transit, etc. Sunday would be most ideal. S.E.T would also need to approve the final event proposal; and,
- S.E.T. has not been provided the number of expected attendees. However, parking for these patrons may be a concern. Thinking a shuttle service may be a reasonable expectation pending the availability of parking at the Royal Botanical Gardens, etc.

Based on the above comments, S.E.A.T feels that a Friday evening closure of the T.B McQuesten Bridge is not feasible and recommends a Saturday or Sunday date be selected as a basis for moving forward. The closure will need to include an unobstructed emergency lane across the length of the road closure as required by Fire.

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The construction schedule for the MTO and CN bridge repair or replacement work could also affect the proposed Bridge closure and will need to be taken into consideration if event plans continue.

At this time, S.E.A.T is not in a position to grant an approval of this event proposal but moving the proposed event date and agreement to include an emergency lane would allow the discussion between the event organizers and S.E.A.T to continue.

BM:ro