



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 26, 2007
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Meeting Date: October 18, 2007

TO: Standing Committee on Transportation and Traffic
FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Veterans Parking

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT vehicles displaying veteran license plates be exempted from on-street parking meter fees on Remembrance Day, November 11, annually.

CONSIDERATION

- B. THAT EasyPark be requested to provide a parking rate discount (20-50%) to vehicles displaying veteran license plates at all City-owned parking lots operated by EasyPark for the month of November on a trial basis beginning in 2007.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Engineering Services RECOMMENDS approval of A and CONSIDERATION of B.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council authorizes the provision of parking meter exemption to vehicles.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to review a request for parking meter exemption to vehicles displaying veteran license plates.

BACKGROUND

In 2005, in recognition of the Year of the Veteran, vehicles displaying a veteran license plate were exempted from parking meter fees for the week of Remembrance Day (Nov. 6 - Nov. 12). On November 14, 2006, Council again supported the provision of free meter parking for a week (Nov. 5 - Nov. 11) and directed staff to "explore options to provide free metered parking for Vancouver resident veterans on an ongoing basis for future weeks of Remembrance Day and report back to Council for consideration". Although Council's resolution in 2006 was made after Remembrance Day, free metered parking was provided to vehicles displaying veteran license plate on that day in honour of veterans.

In B.C., veteran license plates are issued by the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) upon receiving verification from the B.C. Veterans Commemorative Association (BCVCA) that an individual is eligible. The plates are available to veterans who served:

- during wartime,
- in post-war capacity,
- during a NATO or UN operation, including members of the RCMP & Municipal Police, or
- as a similarly qualified member of a British Commonwealth of Nations Force.

The plates are available for a fee of \$5 paid to the BCVCA (not ICBC).

The City receives many requests for parking meter exemption from government agencies, special interest groups and organizations, and businesses. Most requests are denied because of the anticipated impact on the availability of short-term parking, the difficulty in controlling the use of meter exemption by non-City government agencies, and the inequity of providing exemption to one agency and not another. Most recently on April 5, 2007, Council reaffirmed the issuance of parking meter exemption only to those who require it for direct City-related operations, for those who require it out of necessity (e.g. severely disabled), and for some in special recognition (e.g. Freedom of the City recipients).

DISCUSSION

Parking meter exemption for vehicles displaying a veteran license plate on Remembrance Day annually is not problematic and can be continued because:

- The on-street parking demand on that statutory holiday is lower.
- It does not set a precedent for other requests because it is on a national holiday in special recognition of veterans.
- It would assist those veterans who are more car-dependent in attending Remembrance Day services, especially within the downtown.
- The impact to meter revenues is low (estimated to be no more than \$3,000).

The extension of parking meter exemptions for veterans for the week of Remembrance Day, or more, has the following implications:

- It would lower parking meter revenues by about \$20,000 per week based on the free week-long parking provided in 2005. This would vary depending upon the usage, the current parking rates, and the number of vehicles with a veteran license plate.
- There is the potential of misuse by non-veterans, particularly if the parking meter exemption is provided for an extended period (e.g. all year), because the privilege is provided to the vehicle bearing a veteran license plate and not a specific driver.
- The number of vehicles with veteran license plates may increase dramatically because of the potentially significant parking value added, the low cost of obtaining a veteran license plate, the broad category of eligible vehicles, and the broad category of veterans eligible for veteran plates. Last year there were approximately 640 veteran plates registered to residents of Vancouver, and well over 3,000 within the neighbouring municipalities.
- Adding a significant parking value to the veteran license plate is counter to the main intent of the veteran license plate program as a form of recognition and pride for veterans.
- It will impact the availability of short-term on-street parking for other users because the cost of parking will not be a factor in determining their length of stay. This is counter to the policy of metering on-street spaces to encourage parking turnover. Although time limitations can be prescribed, enforcement is much more difficult.
- It could establish a precedent for future requests from other organizations if the parking exemption is extended beyond the one day national holiday for assisting veterans in preparation of Remembrance Day or their fundraising efforts.
- It becomes a parking subsidy that only benefits veterans who drive a vehicle and is counter to the City's sustainability objectives of promoting alternative forms of transportation over the automobile.
- We cannot effectively monitor the usage and accurately determine the financial impacts of free metered parking for vehicles displaying veteran plates.

Based on the above, free metered parking for vehicles displaying a veteran license plate for the week of Remembrance Day is not recommended.

Restricting the exemption to Vancouver resident veterans only is problematic in that Vancouver veterans would need to be issued a special parking meter exemption decal or pay-by-phone account to distinguish them from non-Vancouver residents. This is more administratively difficult and costly (about \$3,000 annually), and therefore is also not recommended.

Some neighbouring municipalities provide free parking for vehicles displaying veteran plates. Most provide it year-round to either all veterans or veterans residing within their municipality through a decal system. A reasonable comparison with Vancouver cannot be made because Vancouver's parking operations are so much larger both physically and financially. For example, year-round free parking for veterans in Richmond and White Rock is estimated to reduce revenues in those municipalities by \$12,000 to \$25,000 annually. Vancouver's revenues could be reduced by that amount in one week. Other large Canadian cities such as Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto and Ottawa do not provide any free parking for veterans.

CONSIDERATION

Should additional parking benefits for vehicles displaying veteran plates be desirable, Council could request that EasyPark provide a 20-50% parking discount at all City-owned off-street parking lots operated by EasyPark for the month of November on a trial basis beginning in 2007. Attended lots such as Pacific Centre or Library Square could provide discounts of 20%, and unattended lots could provide discounts of 50% upon registering and using the pay-by-phone system. Although not recommended, this option does not set a precedent in terms of our parking meter exemption program, does not impact the availability of short-term on-street parking, allows users to park for as long as they desire at a lower cost for the month of November, and the operational and financial impacts are more easily assessed. EasyPark does not have any concerns with the request because it would not have any significant impact on revenues (estimated to be less than \$1,000 for the month).

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The provision of parking meter exemption to vehicles displaying a veteran license plate on Remembrance Day (November 11) every year is one way of recognizing the contributions of veterans. It would assist veterans who are more car-dependent to access the memorial services held during that day. The impact to the City's sustainability objectives of promoting alternative forms of transportation over the automobile would be minimal because it would be restricted to one day only.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There would be no significant financial implications to providing free on-street parking to vehicles displaying veteran plates for one day on Remembrance Day (November 11) every year because this has been provided in the past.

Free on-street parking for vehicles displaying veteran plates for the week of Remembrance Day will reduce revenues by about \$20,000. Limiting the free parking to Vancouver resident veterans only will lower this loss of revenue, but it would not necessarily change the net cost due to increased administrative costs.

EasyPark could be requested to provide a 20-50% discount to vehicles with veteran license plates for parking in City-owned off-street parking lots for the month of November. This would have no significant financial implications for EasyPark or the City because of the very low impact on revenues (less than \$1,000).

CONCLUSION

The provision of parking meter exemption for vehicles displaying veteran plates every year on Remembrance Day (November 11) is recommended in special recognition of the contribution of veterans. It would not have significant financial implications, would not significantly impact the availability of on-street parking during the national holiday, and is consistent with the current parking meter exemption policy.

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