



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

OFFICE OF THE CAO

Mission Statement: As stewards of the Town of Amherstburg, we strive to improve the quality of life of all residents through the delivery of effective, efficient, and affordable services.

Author's Name: Sarah Sabihuddin	Report Date: June 19, 2024
Author's Phone: 519-736-0012 ext. 2216	Date to Council: July 8, 2024
Author's E-mail: ssabihuddin@amherstburg.ca	Resolution #:

To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: School Crossing Guard Feasibility Study - Report

1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. Based on the results of the Crossing Guard Feasibility Study conducted by Hrycay Consulting Engineers Inc., the Town's Crossing Guard Program **BE MAINTAINED** based on current service levels at the following three crossing locations:
 - a) Richmond Street & Fryer Street (AM & PM)
 - b) Victoria Street & Hamilton Drive (AM & PM)
 - c) Richmond Path, near 252 Richmond Street (AM & PM)
2. The School Crossing Guard Policy **BE AMENDED** as presented;
3. Administration **BE DIRECTED** to include in the 2025 Operating Budget, for consideration, an annual contribution of \$2,000 to the Plans and Studies reserve to undertake a School Crossing Guard Feasibility Study every 5 years as outlined in the School Crossing Guard Policy.

2. BACKGROUND:

In August 2018, the Town of Amherstburg retained HRYCAY Consulting Engineers Inc. (HCEI) to conduct an initial school crossing guard feasibility study. This study evaluated

current and potential crossing guard locations within the Town, providing a comprehensive assessment based on data collected at that time.

This feasibility report and corresponding staff report came to Council on July 13, 2020 and the following resolution was passed:

Resolution: 20200713-206

That:

1. Based on the results of Crossing Guard Feasibility Study conducted by Hrycay Consulting Engineers Inc. the Town's Crossing Guard Program **BE REDUCED** to 3 crossing locations based on a 35-pedestrian warrant, identified as:
 - a. Richmond Path (at, or near 252 Richmond Street);
 - b. Richmond Street and Fryer Street; and,
 - c. Victoria Street and Hamilton Drive
2. Administration **BE DIRECTED** to investigate alternative solutions, where necessary, and propose options in future budgets for locations where crossing guard services will no longer be provided.

On September 11, 2023, Council directed Administration to promptly prepare a report on the crossing guard study for Council's review. Subsequently, on October 10, 2023, Council passed the following motion:

Resolution: 20231010-005

That:

1. Administration **BE DIRECTED** to engage the WPS Amherstburg Detachment to undertake proactive enforcement activities in school zones at the commencement of each school year and periodically;
2. A public education campaign **BE LAUNCHED** for the community prior to the beginning of each school year and periodically;
3. Any recommendations of the Traffic Master Plan **BE CONSIDERED** with regards to traffic calming measures in school zones when this study is completed; and,
4. Funding for a revised School Crossing Guard feasibility study and use of a traffic engineer to **BE CONSIDERED** during the 2024 Budget deliberations.

Following 2024 budget deliberations and approval as well as the completion of the procurement processes Administration engaged Hrycay Consulting Engineers Inc in March 2024 and requested them to conduct a follow-up study. This follow-up included new data collection and the application of the previously developed warrants to ensure the continued safety and effectiveness of the Town's crossing guard program. The findings of this recent study have informed the current recommendations for the program, ensuring that crossing guard services are provided at the most critical locations.

The Town's program currently consists of 3 crossing locations and currently employs 7 guards inclusive of alternates.

3. DISCUSSION:

In Spring 2024, HCEI evaluated Eight (8) current or past locations and one (1) potential crossing site in alignment with those sites previously studied. These locations were:

1. Richmond & Victoria
2. Richmond & Fryer
3. Simcoe & Fryer
4. Fryer & Pickering
5. Sandwich & Richmond
6. Victoria & Hamilton
7. Simcoe & Victoria
8. Richmond Path, near 252 Richmond
9. Alma & Victoria (Potential)

Study Methodology:

Data collection was carried out over a six-week period from April 10th to May 16th, 2024. In accordance with the OTC school Crossing Guard Guide, no data was recorded on atypical days:

- First and last week of school;
- Winter break;
- Spring break;
- Statutory, public and “elective” holidays such as Remembrance Day;
- Days that precede or follow a holiday break;
- Days that precede or follow a weekend (i.e., Monday and Friday)
- Professional Activity (PA) days;
- Days that precede or follow a PA day;
- Days with special events at the school such as a concert or track and field;
- Days with inclement weather.

HCEI also considered any amount of rain as inclement weather, including very light rain. Site visits were not performed on any days where inclement weather was predicted on the radar, and recounts were performed in the event of unexpected light rain being encountered during data collection.

As indicated by HCEI, pedestrian and vehicle counts were conducted during AM and PM school peak periods, and the study applied both the Exposure Index Method and Gap Study Method, depending on the crossing type. In addition, HCEI maintained the established threshold of 40 pedestrians crossing during a peak period to warrant a crossing guard in conformance with the recommendations of the Ontario Traffic Council School Crossing Guide.

In this study, "pedestrians" refers to elementary school children from kindergarten to Grade 5, per the OTC School Crossing Guard Guide. To manage the subjectivity of estimating ages, any pedestrian appearing under 15 was considered elementary school age. This may result in slightly higher pedestrian volume totals.

Keeping in line with past practice at the Town of Amherstburg and previous Council direction, Administration is recommending maintaining the threshold of 35 pedestrians.

This adjustment recognizes the need for flexibility by lowering the threshold from the standard 40 pedestrians to 35, ensuring continued adherence to Council's directive while still prioritizing pedestrian safety. Maintaining this reduced threshold demonstrates a balanced approach that considers both safety requirements and practical implementation.

Key Findings:

Crossing Guard location warrants were developed using the Exposure Index Method, the Gap Study Method, and pedestrian volumes, with a threshold of 40 pedestrians. Based solely on existing traffic and pedestrian volumes, most crossings in the Town of Amherstburg would not require crossing guards at their current locations. However, if the warrants are met for a given period (either AM or PM), based on pedestrian volume and gaps, it is then recommended that a Crossing Guard be stationed at that location for that period.

Of the existing crossing locations observed and based on observed pedestrian volumes and the developed warrants HCEI is recommending that crossing guards are being stationed at 3 locations which are: Richmond Street & Fryer Street, Victoria Street & Hamilton Drive, Richmond Path, near 252 Richmond Street. Due to these locations meeting the warrants for either the AM or PM we are recommending that they are staffed for both periods of time.

Policy Amendments

In addition to conducting the Council-directed crossing guard feasibility study, Administration reviewed the Crossing Guard Policy to ensure uniformity and consistency with the current Council-approved policy framework and the warrant analysis methodology used in the study. The policy was also updated to align with current Town employment and recruitment practices and administrative responsibilities, and to ensure a 5-year review schedule for Town policy.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

The implementation of, and the adherence to, the feasibility study conducted by the HCEI regarding the deployment of crossing guards has significantly mitigated a tangible and pressing risk that the municipality had been grappling with in the past regarding this program.

Historically the Town of Amherstburg has experienced difficulties in the recruitment and retention of crossing guard and has experienced shortages which present significant risks to pedestrian safety, particularly for school children. The role of a crossing guard, owing to its limited daily hours, less than full-year schedule, and exposure to all weather conditions and outdoor environment, is not often seen as an attractive employment opportunity. Since the Council directed reduction of crossing guards from 9 to 3 in 2020. The Town has managed to utilize its existing roster to service the reduced number of crossings and maintain alternates.

If Council does not support the recommendations in this report to maintain the service level for crossing guards and instead increases the level of service then there are a number of key risks that may emerge. Consequently, the Town may be faced with pronounced risk by taking on activities which provide an enhanced level of service but for which consistent and reliable expectations around service and safety could become compromised due to resource challenges. Some risks could include the following:

Difficulties in Recruiting and Retention of Crossing Guards: Recruiting crossing guards is inherently challenging due to the nature of the job. The larger a program becomes, the more people are required to be trained and maintained in an on-call position, in order that the program can run effectively. Lower pay, intermittent hours (up to 2 hours a day), and exposure to adverse weather conditions make these positions unattractive. Additionally, an alternate needs to be available at a moments notice but has no guaranteed income. This difficulty in recruitment leads to chronic shortages, impacting the overall effectiveness and reliability of the crossing guard program.

Inconsistent Availability and Intermittent Coverage:

The shortage of crossing guards can lead to inconsistent availability and intermittent coverage at critical crossing locations. This inconsistency increases the risk of accidents, as drivers and pedestrians may not reliably anticipate the presence of a crossing guard. Unreliable coverage can erode public confidence in the safety measures provided by the town, leading to decreased compliance with crossing rules by both pedestrians and drivers.

Offering a program for which the Town cannot maintain a consistent and reliable level of service increases the Town's potential liability should an incident occur at a crossing location where a guard is said to be offered but is not for whatever the reason. Applying a level of service that includes providing consistent and reliable crossing guard services for the 3 locations identified by HCEI's study will limit the Town's risk and illustrate due diligence.

Public Perception and Trust:

Persistent crossing guard shortages can damage public perception and trust in the town's commitment to pedestrian safety. Parents and community members may become increasingly concerned about the safety of school routes, potentially leading to decreased walking or biking to school and increased car traffic, which can further exacerbate traffic congestion and safety issues around schools. The deployment of fixed, permanent traffic safety elements often provides a more reliable level of service compared to crossings that rely solely on crossing guards.

Legal and Liability Issues:

The Town may face legal and liability issues if accidents occur at crossings that are supposed to be monitored by a crossing guard as identified in HCEI's data informed traffic study. Failure to provide adequate safety measures could result in legal action and potential financial penalties. Additionally, the town's reputation could suffer, impacting its ability to implement other safety and community initiatives effectively.

Operational Challenges:

The administration and management of the crossing guard program in the past became increasingly challenging with staff shortages. Coordinating schedules, managing absences, and ensuring coverage across multiple locations require significant administrative effort. This can divert resources from other essential services, projects and initiatives and strain the town's operational capacity.

Maintaining consistency in the adopted standards for crossing guard placement is crucial for ensuring pedestrian safety and upholding the town's legal and operational integrity. The reliance on data-driven service standards, such as those established by the Exposure Index Method and Gap Study Method, provides a robust and evidence-based framework for decision-making.

Adhering to these standards not only enhances the effectiveness and reliability of the crossing guard program but also offers legal protection by demonstrating a commitment to systematically addressing safety concerns. Consistent application of these criteria ensures that the town's actions are defensible and based on objective data, thereby reducing liability risks and reinforcing public trust in the town's commitment to pedestrian safety.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

The proposed recommendation maintains existing service levels, and does not impact the current budget for the School Crossing Guard Program.

Given the requirement to undertake a School Crossing Guard Feasibility Study every five years as outlined in the School Crossing Guard Policy the Town will need to budget for future traffic studies as proposed and commit an annual contribution of \$2,000 to the Plans & Studies reserve.

If Council supports the recommendations in this report then there would be a financial impact of \$2,000 annual to ensure the availability of funds for the committed 5-year traffic study for the School Crossing Guard Program for the Town of Amherstburg.

Should a change in service level be contemplated, there would be a commensurate impact on the associated budget areas. At this time, no funds have been identified for such a service level change and therefore would need to be funded from Town reserves. Although, reserves may contain adequate funding to address such concerns, these funds are regularly identified as insufficient to cover the costs associated with the reserves stated intent and so the cumulative impact of drawing down reserves continues to worsen the financial position of the Town of Amherstburg to meet its funding obligations.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

- HCEI was engaged to perform the crossing guard feasibility study.
- The Director of Corporate Services / CFO was consulted with respect to financial impacts and the policy revisions.

- Managers of Human Resources were consulted with respect to staff related impacts and policy revisions.
- Clerk / Risk Manager was consulted with respect to identification of Town Risks and associated liabilities.

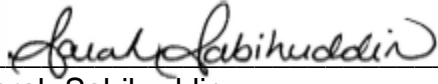
7. CORPORATE STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Vision: Preserving our past while forging our future.

<i>Amherstburg Community Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026</i>	
<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 1 Deliver Trusted & Accountable Local Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve trust between council and staff, and residents, by strengthening governance and internal accountability structures. <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver transparent and efficient financial management. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase effective communication and engagement with residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop our staff team, resources, and workplace culture. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue to deliver strong core municipal services. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Amherstburg is an inclusive accessible and welcoming community committed to reconciliation. 	<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 3 Encourage Local Economic Prosperity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage development of commercial and industrial lands. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to promote local tourism industry, especially overnight accommodation. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to facilitate downtown development for residents and visitors. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to leverage partnership opportunities with other provincial, federal, and local governments, agencies, and organizations.
<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 2 Invest in Community Amenities and Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain safe, reliable and accessible municipal infrastructure and facilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase access to recreation opportunities for all ages. <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize and execute plans for town-owned lands (e.g. Duffy’s site, Belle Vue) <input type="checkbox"/> Create public access to water and waterfront <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize opportunities to reduce environmental impacts of Town operations and increase Town resilience to climate change. 	<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 4 Shape Growth Aligned with Local Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define and communicate a vision for the Town’s future and identity. <input type="checkbox"/> Promote and plan for green and “climate change ready” development. <input type="checkbox"/> Review and implement policies that promote greater access to diverse housing. <input type="checkbox"/> Protect the Town’s historic sites and heritage. <input type="checkbox"/> Preserve the Town’s greenspaces, agricultural lands, and natural environment.

8. CONCLUSION:

It is recommended that the findings of HRYCAY Consulting Engineers Inc. be followed and the Towns Crossing Guard Program maintain existing service levels. Further, it is recommended that the amended School Crossing Guard Policy be adopted to align with the Town's policy framework and continuous improvement processes. Finally, the funds utilized to undertake future studies be budgeted as an annual contribution increase to the Plans and Studies Reserve to offset the associated costs in any given year.



Sarah Sabihuddin

Deputy Clerk

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	School Crossing Guard Feasibility Study.docx
Attachments:	- M465 - Amherstburg School Crossing Feasibility Study - Final Report - 2024-06-19.pdf - 2024 06 19 - Crossing Guard - (Clean) FINAL DRAFT RM.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 27, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



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Kevin Fox