

# TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

**MEETING DATE:** May 24, 2013

**SUBJECT:** TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS AND MITIGATION FOR TRANSIT

**ACTION ITEM**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the TTC Board:

1. Forward this report to the City of Toronto Public Works and Infrastructure (PWI) Committee, and the General Manager of Transportation Services, in order to advise PWI Committee that through the City's Downtown Transportation Operations Study (DTOS) the TTC Board supports significant increases in the fines for and, increased enforcement of, violations of traffic by-laws in the City of Toronto, particularly on those roads that are designated as Transit Priority corridors in the City's Official Plan;
2. Note that the DTOS is evaluating ways to improve traffic flow within a specific area in the downtown, and will be examining areas where on-street parking is now permitted during the peak periods, as well as ways to more effectively deter illegal activity such as prohibited stopping and parking, and blocking of intersections.

## **FUNDING**

This report has no effect on the Board's operating or capital budgets.

## **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on March 27, 2013, TTC Board member Alan Heisey advised of his concern with the frequency with which he observes delays to surface transit operations caused by motorists who proceed into congested intersections on a green light, and get stuck in the intersection when the light turns red, thereby blocking traffic and transit on the intersecting street. Brian Leck, TTC General Counsel, provided information that the current fine in Toronto is \$40 for blocking an intersection, while comparable fines in other large US cities are \$75-150.

The Board approved Mr. Heisey's recommendation that TTC staff review this matter and report back to the Board with recommendations.

## DISCUSSION

High-frequency TTC routes operating on congested, mixed-traffic roads continually exhibit slow operating speeds and unreliable service. The cumulative effect of even seemingly-minor traffic delays cause these routes to bunch and gap and the service to deteriorate, thereby causing the need to short-turn vehicles to fill gaps in the service.

The challenge of operating very-frequent transit services in congested, peak-period traffic conditions is even greater when traffic is obstructed by motorists who block traffic lanes. In many cases, such blockages are illegal: motorists flagrantly and continually, ignore traffic and parking regulations intended to permit the efficient flow of traffic. One clear, and readily observable problem -- and an illegal one -- is intersection blockage, where traffic is backed up on the far side of an intersection, but motorists proceed into the intersection on the green light anyway, usually becoming trapped in the intersection when the light turns red, thus blocking traffic on the intersecting street from proceeding when they get a green light: in other words - 'gridlock'.

Sometimes, peak-period traffic and transit gets delayed and blocked for reasons that are legal. There are specific areas where parking has been permitted on major transit routes during the peak period, blocking the curb traffic lane, in the 'off-peak' direction. Such areas will continue to be the subject of vigorous debate between the TTC and other stakeholders.

### Peak Period Delays due to Traffic Violations

Enforcement blitzes by the police, in both the downtown area and the suburbs, have shown that illegal activity by motorists is common in Toronto. The fines, when compared to other cities, are too small to deter people.

The issue of increased fines for traffic violations - including intersection blockage - have been discussed with City staff who are leading the DTOS, which is examining traffic issues in the downtown area bounded by Lake Shore Boulevard/Harbour Street, Queen Street, Jarvis Street, and Bathurst Street. City staff have already requested Provincial approval of a substantial increase in the set fines for illegal parking, stopping, and standing, in order to improve traffic flow during peak periods. The study is examining ways to more effectively deter motorists who block intersections, including increased police presence and higher fines.

The DTOS team is also considering a measure that has been promoted by the TTC for many years: an extension of the hours that define the morning and afternoon peak periods.

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