Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – January 23, 2013

Minute No. 116
Report – Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – January 14, 2013

Item No. 4 Taxi Hydrant Parking Zones

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services and submits the following to Council:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service be authorized to send a letter to Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation requesting consideration to amend Section 122(1)(d) of the Highway Traffic Act to allow traffic control devices (signs) to be installed to allow taxis to park in front of a designated hydrant, with the driver remaining in the vehicle.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – January 23, 2013

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – January 14, 2013

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Fielding,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On January 14, 2013, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: **Taxi Hydrant Parking Zones**

Critical Path: **Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services – Executive Policy Committee – Council**

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
L. Escobar, P.Eng. P.T.O.E.	B.W. Sacher, P.Eng.	n/a	D Joshi COO

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Public Service be authorized to send a letter to Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation requesting consideration to amend Section 122(1)(d) of the Highway Traffic Act to allow traffic control devices (signs) to be installed to allow taxis to park in front of a designated hydrant, with the driver remaining in the vehicle.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On September 28, 2011 Council adopted the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services that the following Council Motion of July 20, 2011 be concurred in and that the Winnipeg Public Service be asked to investigate and report back to the Standing Policy Committee on the viability of a Taxi Use of Fire Hydrant Space Project, with safety being the primary consideration.

> *WHEREAS it is in the public interest and the interest of the City of Winnipeg to make taxi cabs more accessible to the public;*
> *AND WHEREAS it is in the interest of the public and the interest of the City of Winnipeg to protect fire hydrant street side areas from illegal parking;*
> *AND WHEREAS the City of Calgary, in cooperation with the City of Calgary Fire Department has come up with a one year pilot project to explore the idea of taxis using fire hydrant space to wait or stand to optimize the use of street space, provided always that the vehicles are not left unattended, with anticipated benefits of:*
>
> *1) better protected hydrant space from illegal parking*
> *2) greater access to taxis*
> *3) better and more efficient use of street space*
> *4) increased public parking space;*
>
> *THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Winnipeg administration, along with the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, be asked to investigate and report back to the standing policy committee on the viability of such a project, with safety being the primary consideration.*

The Public Services' review of the Manitoba Highway Traffic Act and the City's Traffic By-law indicates that the Act must first be amended, followed by the Traffic By-law, prior to initiating a proposed six month pilot project for taxi hydrant parking zones.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

If the Province amends the Highway Traffic Act, and the City's Traffic By-law is amended accordingly, the Public Service would subsequently initiate a six month pilot project, respecting legal requirements, to test the taxi hydrant parking zone concept.

HISTORY

Appendix A details the taxi hydrant parking review and proposed pilot project locations.

Specific to the report recommendation, the Highway Traffic Act currently states the following with respect to parking in proximity to a fire hydrant:

Where stopping, standing, parking prohibited

122(1) Except when necessary to avoid conflict with traffic or to comply with another provision of this Act or the regulations under this Act or the directions of a peace officer or traffic control device, no person shall stop, stand, or park a vehicle

(d) within three metres from the point on the curb or edge of the roadway immediately opposite a fire hydrant;

The City's Traffic By-law No. 1573/77 contains a similar provision with respect to parking near a fire hydrant:

WHERE STOPPING, STANDING, PARKING PROHIBITED

21. Except when necessary to comply with the directions of a peace officer or traffic control device, no person shall stop, stand or park a vehicle:

(4) within three metres from the point on the curb or edge of the roadway immediately opposite a fire hydrant;

Because the Highway Traffic Act and Traffic By-law only allow parking when necessary to comply with a traffic control device (i.e. traffic signal is red and vehicle must stop in front of a hydrant to comply) and do not provide for a traffic control device to permit parking in proximity to a hydrant, there isn't currently a legal basis to allow parking in front of a hydrant by means of a sign on either a trial or permanent basis. It is noted that in Calgary's pilot project, the Alberta Traffic Safety Act and the City of Calgary Traffic Bylaw already allowed for taxis to use hydrant space through a traffic control device prior to the pilot project being initiated and, as a result, no changes to the Alberta Act or Calgary By-law were required in order for the pilot project to proceed.

If the Province amends the Highway Traffic Act, and the City's Traffic By-law is subsequently amended, the Public Service would undertake a six month pilot project at a limited number of locations (see map in Appendix A) downtown to test the taxi hydrant parking concept. The pilot project would require development and testing of signs to enable taxis to park in a designated space, which incorporates the six metre clear zone opposite a fire hydrant, while the taxi driver is sitting in the driver's seat waiting for a fare. The underlying premise of this concept is that because the taxi driver is always in the vehicle, the driver should be able to quickly vacate the curb space if access to the hydrant is required by an emergency vehicle. The pilot project would test the understanding of the new traffic control signs designating taxi hydrant parking areas and monitor how these locations operate, including the level of demand and compliance by the taxi cabs. The pilot project would also monitor if use of the designated areas by taxis reduces illegal parking in these zones by other vehicles.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: November 26, 2012

Project Name:

Taxi Hydrant Parking Zones

COMMENTS:

There is no financial impact associated with the recommendation of this report.

"Original Signed by D. Stewart, CA"

Manager of Finance & Administration

CONSULTATION

In preparing this report there was consultation with:
Winnipeg Parking Authority
Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service

SUBMITTED BY

Department:	Public Works
Division:	Transportation
Prepared by:	S. Chapman, P.Eng., Traffic Management Engineer
Date:	November 20, 2012
File No.	G-02

Attachment: Appendix A: Taxi Hydrant Zones

Appendix A: Taxi Hydrant Zones (Prepared by Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Service)

Introduction

Downtown Winnipeg and other high traffic areas of the City have a high demand for short-stay parking space. The taxi industry has requested additional parking space downtown and studies in Winnipeg and other cities have indicated that parking adjacent to fire hydrants can be an effective means to increase available parking. Conversely, business communities in high demand areas are requesting additional on-street, short-stay parking for business operations throughout the day. There is a limited amount of on-street parking, which is in high demand. The following document outlines the evaluation undertaken to review the feasibility of using fire hydrant space for taxis.

Proposed Taxi Hydrant Zone Concept

The Winnipeg Parking Authority (WPA) with support from the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) is proposing to use the existing parking stall space at fire hydrants for taxis. Taxis would only be allowed to park in these stalls while the taxi driver is actively loading or unloading his taxi or while in the vehicle. This would be called a 'taxi hydrant zone' and would require the installation of traffic control signage similar to a taxi stand. Strict rules would apply.

Approved taxi hydrant zones would enable existing taxi stands to be converted to short-stay public parking.

The benefits include:

- Fire hydrants would be better protected from illegal parking
- Greater access to taxis for the public throughout the downtown
- Improved dispatch capability for taxi companies
- Efficient use of street space as fire hydrant space is infrequently used
- Increased public parking space
- Reduced driving for taxi drivers to seek customers

Background

Downtown Winnipeg, particularly in the vicinity of the MTS Centre and in the Exchange, has a high demand for on-street, short-stay public and taxi parking space.

Taxi Industry Request: The taxi industry has requested more taxi stands throughout downtown in a model fashioned after the City of Calgary.

Downtown Business Request: The downtown businesses have requested more on-street, short-stay parking for their customers.

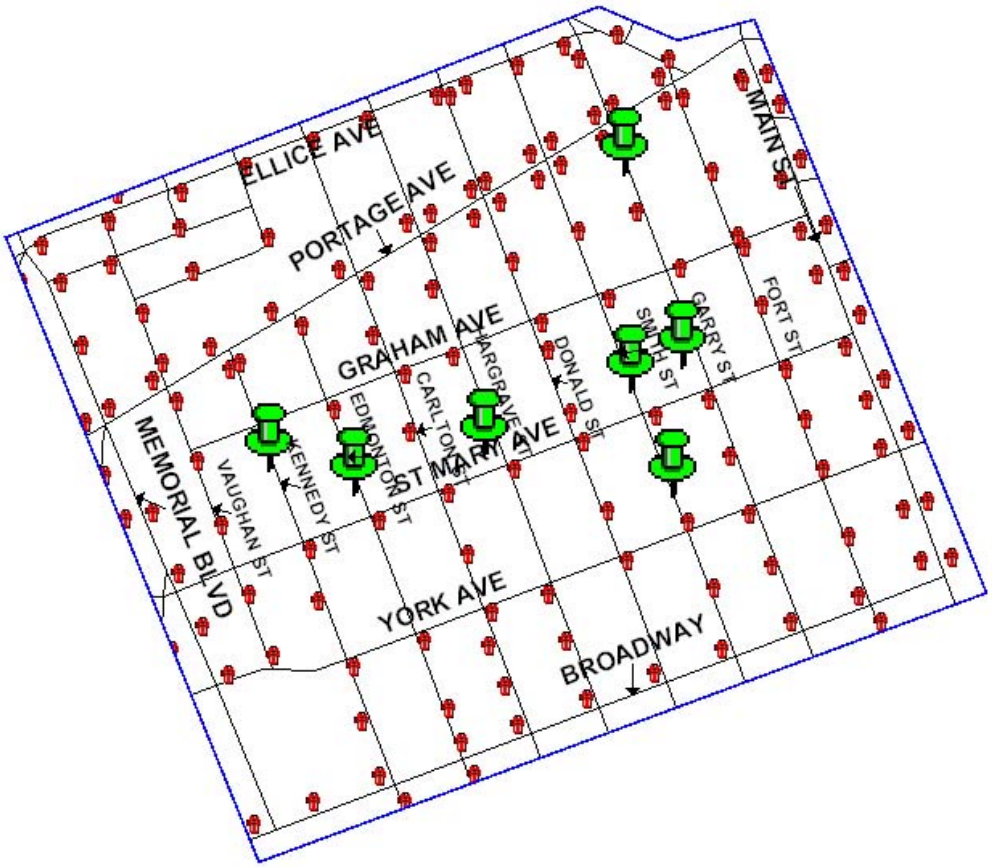
Taxi and Fire Hydrant Stalls and Cost/Benefit Analysis

The current distribution of taxi stands is very limited, with few in downtown Winnipeg. There are approximately 140 fire hydrants in downtown Winnipeg. Given the spacing requirements for fire hydrants most are suitable for taxi parking. WPA has identified seven hydrant locations to be used in this pilot project to determine the overall feasibility of the project (see Figure 1).

Currently, the only way to add taxi stalls would be at the expense of public parking spaces**.** The average revenue per paystation in high demand areas is $9,300 per stall – this works out to an average of $1800 per stall at $1 per hour. Paystations are open 6.5 (rush hour) or 8.5 hours per day. Revenue per stall is 220 x $6.5 for low demand = $1,430.

The few existing taxi stands are in locations where there is already limited on-street parking and it would be more appropriate to convert these to paid parking where appropriate.

Figure 1: Distribution of Fire Hydrants in the Target Area



Jurisdictional Review

Web-based searches revealed additional information from New York and Alberta. There is no evidence that any Canadian municipalities have a blanket usage of hydrant space for taxis throughout a municipality and that taxi hydrant parking is permitted only in designated areas with specific signage.

New York State Fire Hydrant Rules

According to the New York State DMV Driver's Manual, you may not park within 15-feet (in front of or behind) of a fire hydrant unless a licensed driver remains in the car so it can be moved in an emergency. Generally, a fire hydrant is followed by a red painted curb that designates a no parking zone however, if a hydrant does not have this marker, it is important to remember that the 15-foot rule still applies.

City of Peterborough By-law Number 09-136

4.29 Parking Near Fire Hydrant: No person shall park a vehicle on a highway within 3 metres of a point on the curb or edge of the roadway adjacent to a fire hydrant except in a parking space.

Alberta Traffic Safety Act

Parking Restrictions

44 A person driving a vehicle shall not, unless

- (a) required or permitted by the Act, this Regulation or by a traffic control device,
- (b) in compliance with a direction given by a peace officer, or
- (c) to avoid conflict with other traffic, stop or park the vehicle at the following locations:
  - (i) within 5 metres from any fire hydrant, or when the hydrant is not located at the curb, within 5 metres from the point on the curb nearest the hydrant;
  - (n) at any place where a traffic control device prohibits stopping or parking, during the times stopping or parking is so prohibited;
  - (p) at or near the site of any fire, accident or other emergency, if stopping or parking would obstruct traffic or hinder emergency vehicles or peace officers, firemen, ambulance drivers or assistants or rescue officers or volunteers.

Policy Direction

Allowing taxis to use hydrant zones aligns with the recent review of the Downtown Parking Strategy. In particular, it supports the maintenance of loading spaces downtown while increasing short-stay parking through the provision of additional on-street parking in former taxi stand locations.

Evaluation of Options to Enhance Taxi Access

The City of Calgary identified nine criteria that were compared with five options to select the best method to enhance taxi access (see Table 1 below). The nine criteria used are applicable to the City of Winnipeg and include: use of existing space efficiently, meet business parking demand, meet taxi parking demand, meet public parking demand, impact on other departments – Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, Winnipeg Transit, meet social aspects of taxi operations, identifiable taxi location, environmental, respect value of parking space.

The five options used were:

1. Taxi In Hydrant
2. Add More Stands
3. Use Loading Zones
4. Create Taxi Ponding Areas
5. No change Option

The results of the evaluation indicated that the optimal choice is to use a taxi hydrant zone concept.

Option Themes	Option Number	**Issues/Options Matrix** X - option has negative impact on issue A- option has some or no affect on the issue E - option Addresses issue in part * - option is needed to address issue + - option is key to addressing issue	Use Existing Space Efficiently	Meet Business Parking Demand	Meet Taxi Parking Demand	Meet Public Parking Demand	Impact other Business Units – Fire Department/Transit	Meet Social Aspects of Taxi Operations	Identifiable Taxi Locations	Environmental	Respect Land Value – Increase Revenue Opportunity	Preferred Option
1.Taxi in Hydrant	1A	Allow taxis to use hydrant space- 24 hours - 7 days	+	+	+	+	+	E	+	+	*	√
	1B	Allow taxis to use hydrant space and charge for space	E	+	+	+	+	E	+	+	*	
2.Add More Stands	2A	Use public parking space for more taxi stands	X	X	*	X	A	A	E	*	X	
	2B	Add more taxi stands but charge for the space	X	X	*	X	A	A	E	*	*	
3. Use Zones Loading	3A	Allow taxis in loading zones	*	X	E	A	A	A	E	E	A	
	3B	Require payment in loading zones including taxis	*	A	E	A	A	A	E	E	*	
4. Create Taxi Ponding Areas	4A	Create ponding area for large number of taxis outside core	A	A	E	A	A	*	A	A	A	
	4B	Allow taxis to pond on peak travel lanes9AM-4PM	E	A	E	A	A	*	A	A	A	
	4C	Remove large areas of on-street parking for taxis	E	A	E	A	A	*	A	A	X	
5. No Change Option	5A	Current practice	E	A	A	A	X	A	E	A	A	
	5B	Current practice but charge for existing taxi stands	E	A	A	A	X	A	E	A	+	

Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (Fire Department) Mitigation Measures

Discussions with the Winnipeg Fire Department required several issues to be addressed before this proposal could be further considered.

These included:

1) **Legality of using space**
   Ensuring the use of the space is authorized under by-law by designating the space as a taxi stand. Currently, the Highway Traffic Act and the City's Traffic By-law do not support implementation of taxi hydrant zones. Amendments to the Act and By-law are required prior to a trial or full implementation.

2) **Risk of using space for taxis**
   A risk review was conducted and the data shows the potential risk of illegal parking is reduced if fire hydrant space is used by occupied taxis. The data indicates that there is a 22 fold increase in the current practice of a restricted space related to parking space that has another use of higher occupancy. The municipality has taken proper care to evaluate whether there is a decrease in safety and would appear there is not. It appears this is a safer operation. Evaluation of the hydrant occupancy would be undertaken to establish whether fire emergency operations are negatively impacted.

3) **Enforcement of space if taxis were to use space**
   The Winnipeg Parking Authority and the Winnipeg Police Service are the agencies responsible for enforcement.

4) **Options if space were blocked**
   Two options are available should a fire hydrant space become blocked by any vehicle.
   1) Bypassing - the Winnipeg Fire Department rarely has had to access hydrants by removing the vehicle or connecting to an adjacent hydrant or valve.
   2) Hydrant Orientation - most hydrant connections have a 68mm port on either side parallel to the roadway, and a large volume 100mm port connection is set perpendicular facing the street. Hydrants that are set away from the curb by at least 4 feet do not present any particular problems for fire operations. However, for hydrants that are set within 3 feet of the curb it is possible to rotate the hydrant to provide better hydrant access. A hydrant is attached to a bolted flange which can be rotated to re-orient the hydrant. By realigning bolt holes the hydrant can be placed at various angles.

5) **Implementation plans**
   The percentage of fire hydrants impacted by taxi operations initially was a concern. However, after reviewing the downtown hydrants, seven hydrants were deemed suitable locations for a potential future pilot project.

6) **Training of taxi drivers and Winnipeg Fire Department staff**
Concerns were raised that taxis might obstruct passing fire trucks. This would not be the case as taxis would be expected to straddle the hydrant when parked (Figure 6) to allow for hose accessibility. During an emergency event drivers could quickly move their vehicles to ensure access to the fire hydrant.

Upon review, the Winnipeg Fire Department indicated their concerns regarding access to the hydrants were adequately addressed. They support a trial of the proposed taxi hydrant zone concept.

Dimensions of Parking Stalls

Typical Taxicab Dimension = 5.1 metres - 5.3 metres

Fire Hydrant Restriction Zone = Within 3.0 metres from the point on the curb immediately opposite a fire hydrant

Taxi Hydrant Zone - Single Stall Dimension = 10 metres

Taxi Hydrant Zone - Double Stall Dimension = 12 metres

Occupied Hydrant Access Dimension = 1.4 metres

Figure 4: Single Stall Taxi Stand

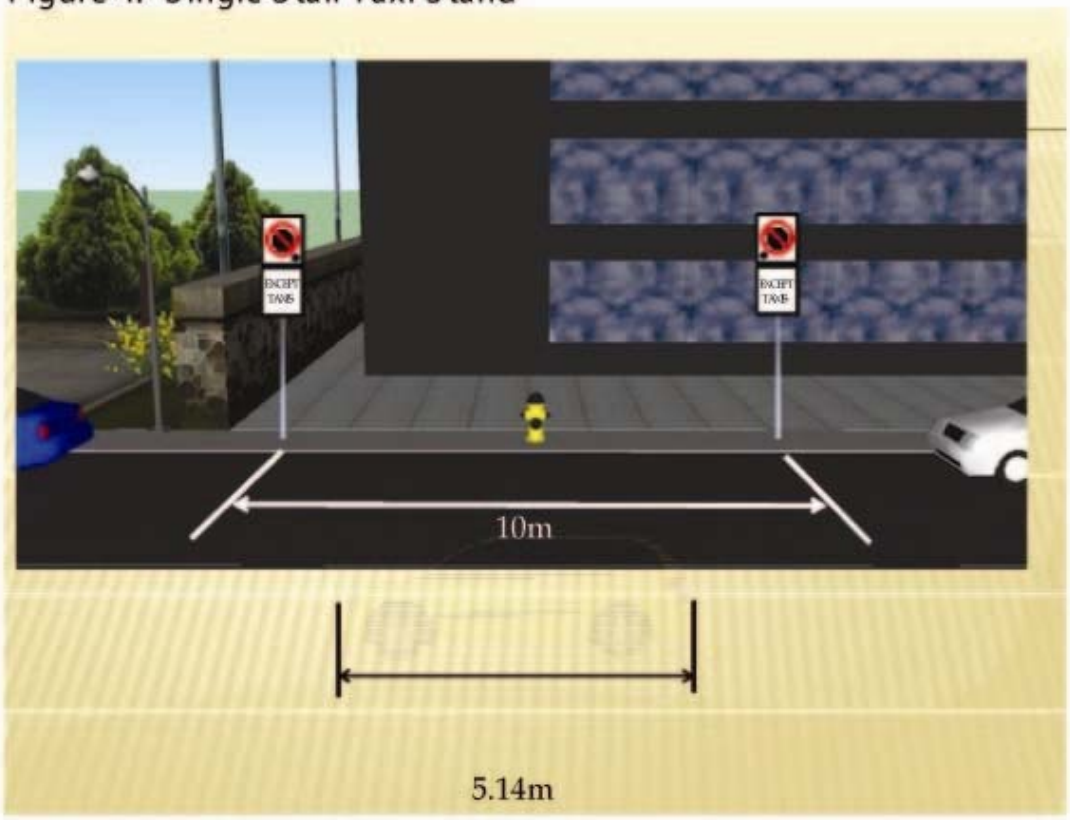


Figure 5: Double Stall Taxi Stand

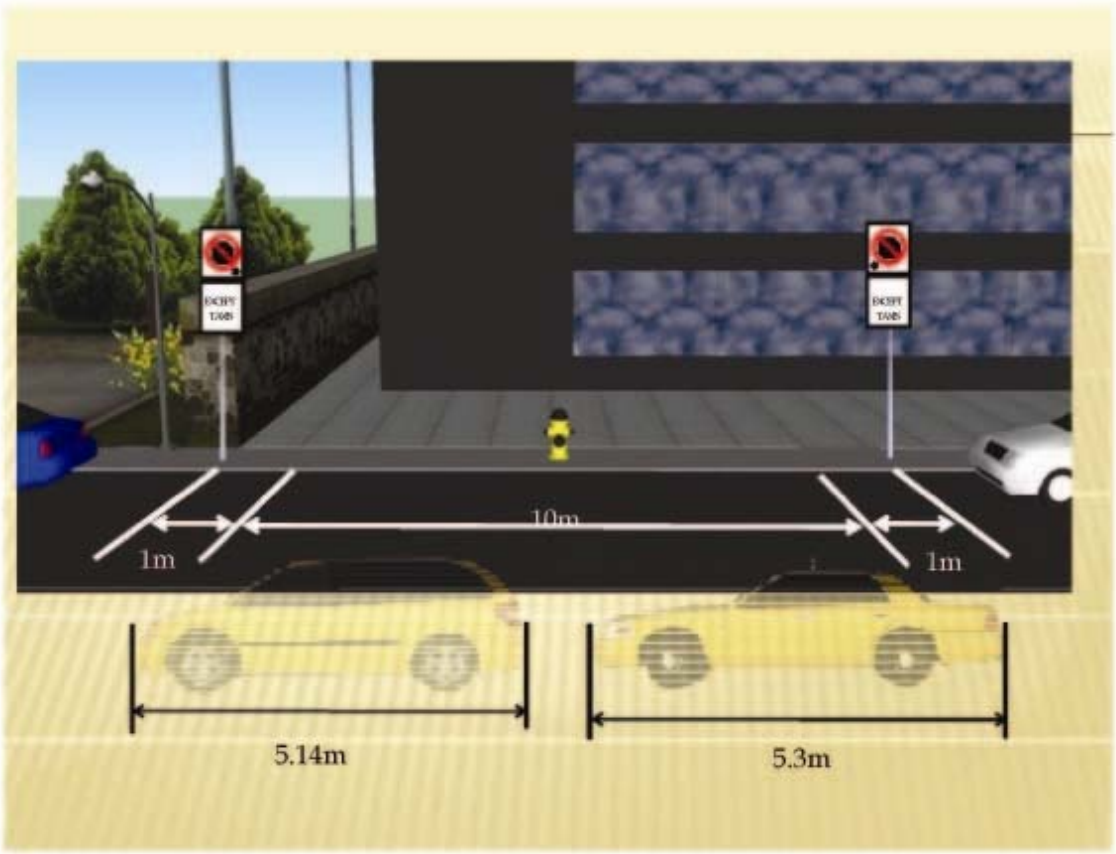
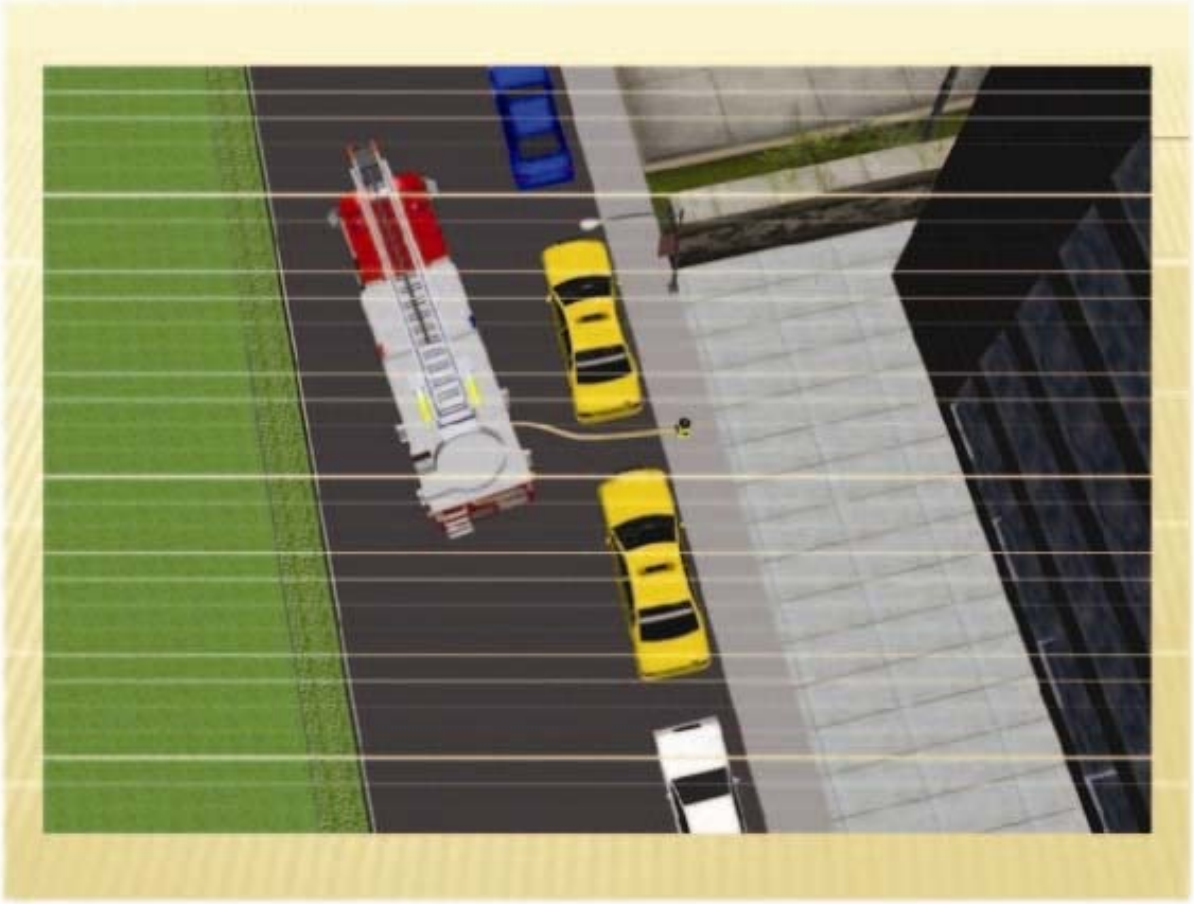


Figure 6: Fire Department Access with Taxi in stall



Parking Occupancy Operations

Fire Hydrant Usage

Fire hydrant usage is based on emergency requirement and in consideration of the overall area usage is minimal. Often hydrants used are in the vicinity of a street intersection at locations were hydrants that would not be eligible for taxi hydrant zones due to proximity for pedestrian travel.

Stakeholder Involvement

Taxi Industry: The taxi industry for this report is defined as taxi company owners, individual taxi drivers and members of the Taxicab Board.

Various owners and drivers were contacted and provided positive feedback with respect to fire hydrant zones. The main concern was that there was a lack of space for taxis to park while waiting for a fare.

Winnipeg Fire Department: The Winnipeg Fire Department is defined as the Fire Chief and select operational Deputy Chiefs for the purposes of this report. Members of the department were consulted to discuss concerns around exclusive use of fire hydrant space for occupied taxis. As the concept is very new, a reliance on the experience of the City of Calgary was very useful.

Potential Benefit to Fire Department: Ensure fire hydrant space is not blocked by unattended vehicles and taxis could be stewards of the hydrant space. When an emergency occurs, the taxi simply drives away.

Winnipeg Parking Authority (WPA): The WPA consists of the Chief Operating Officer and key staff. Their response was favourable as they perceived this operational change as improving the use of the on-street space, and increasing positive client based service.

Public: No formal public consultation was undertaken other than responding to requests received for more on-street parking in the downtown. The media has published information regarding the taxi hydrant zone concept and favourable public responses were received.

Winnipeg Police Service: The Traffic Section of the Winnipeg Police Service received a briefing on the concept and did not have any objections.

City Legal Services: Legal Services was contacted regarding issues with existing provisions regarding parking in proximity to fire hydrants.

The Highway Traffic Act currently states the following:

Highway Traffic Act

Where stopping, standing, parking prohibited
122(1) Except when necessary to avoid conflict with traffic or to comply with another provision of this Act or the regulations under this Act or the directions of a peace officer or traffic control device, no person shall stop, stand, or park a vehicle

(d) within three metres from the point on the curb or edge of the roadway immediately opposite a fire hydrant;

And the City's Traffic By-law indicates:

Traffic By-law

WHERE STOPPING, STANDING, PARKING PROHIBITED
21. Except when necessary to comply with the directions of a peace officer or traffic control device, no person shall stop, stand or park a vehicle:

(4) within three metres from the point on the curb or edge of the roadway immediately opposite a fire hydrant;

Because the Act and By-law only allow parking when necessary to comply with a traffic control device (i.e. traffic signal is red and vehicle must stop) and do not provide for a traffic control device to permit parking in proximity to a hydrant there isn't currently a legal basis to allow parking in front of a hydrant by means of a sign.

City of Winnipeg Departments: Utilities and Environmental Protection, Water and Waste were also consulted and there were no objections to taxi hydrant zones.

Summary of Benefits and Opportunities

- Fire hydrants would be better protected from illegal parking
- Greater public access to taxis throughout the downtown
- Improved dispatch capability for taxi companies, including reduced driving time for taxi drivers to seek customers
- Efficient use of street space as fire hydrant space is not used daily
- Increase public parking space

Additional benefits may include:

GPS/GIS Accessibility
Dispatching Capability
Downtown Winnipeg has a high volume of customers requiring taxis. The geographic distribution of the fire hydrant zones allows for nearby dispatch of taxis.

Social / Environmental / Economic Implications

Social

There are three key positive social impacts of taxi hydrant zones:

- Taxi drivers are important to the community because they provide a specialized mobility option which reduces overall vehicle usage and parking demand.
- Taxi hydrant zones promote a stronger downtown and consequently a stronger neighbourhood. They can also improve our City operations and safety. The public and business community benefit from this more integrated land use space and improved access. There is also an opportunity to expand the handicapped cab accessibility through these hydrant locations.
- Downtown safety may improve because there would be more active eyes on the street.

Environmental

The environmental benefits of taxi hydrant zones include improved air quality and land stewardship. Emissions would be reduced because taxis would not need to drive around city streets to maintain legal occupancy status within the downtown. Currently, taxis that are parked must be at a taxi stand or register for a paid parking session within a parking restricted zone. Land stewardship is improved with the taxi hydrant zone concept because it results in more efficient use of street space.

The vehicle emissions that may be reduced through implementation of taxi hydrant zones include Carbon Monoxide, Nitrogen Oxides and Sulphur Oxides. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a product of incomplete combustion that reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen; Nitrogen oxides (NOx) is generated when nitrogen in the air reacts with oxygen at the high temperature and pressure inside the engine. Sulphur oxide (SOx) is a general term for oxides of sulphur, which are emitted from motor vehicles burning fuel containing a high concentration of sulphur.

Economic

Having better access to taxis promotes an environment conducive to attracting, retaining and nurturing businesses. Freeing up street space that is currently used as designated fire hydrant space has the potential for improving the overall business context: access to clients and customers, increased market share, and deliveries or courier service. The taxi hydrant zone concept has been successfully adopted by other municipalities and has had a net benefit to the community.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How many taxi stalls exist today?**
   There are only a few in Winnipeg in the downtown and airport area.

2. **How many tickets are issued to vehicles parked in fire hydrants?**
   There were 8,442 tickets issued in 2011 to unoccupied vehicles.

3. **What if a fire occurs and a hydrant is needed?**
   The taxi drives away.

4. **What if a taxi driver leaves the vehicle?**
   The by-law would be enforced the same way it is today if a public vehicle were to park at a hydrant. If the taxi were to be left unattended the driver could be issued a ticket.

5. **What risk does the Winnipeg Fire Department assume with the proposed taxi hydrant zone operation?**
   The Province of Manitoba and the Office of the Fire Commissioner have adopted the Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Act wherein it states that a fire service organization (which includes a municipality that has a fire department) is not liable for loss or damage "caused by anything done or omitted to be done in good faith in the performance or intended performance of their functions, duties, or powers in providing or carrying out fire services".

6. **What are the rules for taxis when in a taxi hydrant zone?**
   An owner or operator of a taxicab that is stopped in a taxi zone that is within 3 metres of a fire hydrant, or when the hydrant is not located at the curb, within 3 metres of the point on the curb nearest the hydrant, must remain in the taxicab, unless assisting a passenger to enter or exit the taxicab.

Recommendations

Send a letter to Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation requesting consideration to amend Section 122(1)(d) of the Highway Traffic Act to allow traffic control devices to be installed to allow taxis to park in front of a hydrant with the driver remaining in the vehicle.

If the Province amends the Highway Traffic Act the City's Traffic By-law would need to be amended to reflect the changes to the Act and the Public Service would initiate a six month pilot project, respecting legal requirements, to test the concept. The pilot project would likely utilize seven hydrants in the downtown core (see Map). Monitor for six months and investigate additional locations with high taxi demand areas like the Corydon and Osborne Village areas if the operation is considered successful.

The benefits include:

- Improved emergency access to fire hydrants due to better protection from illegal parking
- Greater access to and ease of finding taxis throughout the downtown
- Improved safety due to more active eyes on the street (occupied taxis at hydrant locations)
- Reduced emissions from taxis driving in search of customers
- Improved dispatch capability for taxi companies
- Efficient use of street space
- Increased business opportunity due to possible additional short term public parking space and improved access to downtown businesses

Conclusions

The concept that taxis use fire hydrant space to wait or stand for fares is optimizing the use of street space. The fire hydrant space is rarely used and taxis require drivers to remain at the vehicle. If an emergency situation arises, the space can be quickly vacated and emergency service personnel can have the assured access to hydrants. Research conducted in Calgary and other municipalities show that fire hydrant space is frequently occupied by unattended vehicles. Over 8,000 tickets are issued annually to vehicles parked at hydrants. This concept improves the accessibility to hydrants, to taxis and provides the opportunity to open up more space for public parking. Winnipeg can take advantage of the lessons learned in other jurisdictions and has the opportunity to enhance on-street parking efficiency through adopting this basic concept.