Parking Signs Pilot

Phase 2 Public Engagement Summary

September 2022

Background

The City of Winnipeg (the City) recognizes the importance of parking and curbside management, including signage that is clear and easy to understand.

On January 28, 2021, City Council approved the implementation of a street signage pilot project on the following street segments in the Exchange District (see Image 3 for area map):

- Bannatyne Avenue between Main Street and Waterfront Drive
- King Street between Notre Dame Avenue and William Avenue
- Arthur Street between Bannatyne Avenue and Notre Dame Avenue

The pilot project had two phases:

Phase 1: Pilot parking guides (facing the sidewalk) were installed to make parking rules easier to understand.

Phase 2: Current regulatory signage (facing the street) was replaced with pilot signs and revised parking guides were installed. 155 signs and 59 parking guides were installed.

In Phase 1, the City engaged the public to get feedback on the current parking signs and the new pilot parking guides. The general public provided feedback on the current signs through a statistical survey, and an online comment form targeted those who used the pilot parking guides. The feedback was considered to develop new pilot parking signs (Image 1) and to revise the guides for the second phase (Image 2).

Phase 2 Engagement

In Phase 2, the City received feedback from the public about the new regulatory parking signs and revised parking guides through an online survey (results are in Appendix C) and focus groups (results in Appendix D).

The survey gathered feedback on the design, readability, and information on the pilot signage. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they were interested in participating in a focus group. Two focus groups sessions were held, which focused on assessing parking sign and guide readability and comprehension. All survey respondents who expressed an interest were invited by email to attend.

A summary of the engagement activities can be found in Table 1.



Image 1: Princess Street in the Exchange District in Winter 2022, with the pilot parking signs.



Image 2: Pilot parking guide facing the sidewalk in the Exchange District in Winter 2022.

Promotion

Public engagement opportunities were promoted using the following methods:

- City of Winnipeg webpage – launched January 24, 2022
- Signs posted in the Exchange District with QR code and prompt to call 311 (Appendix A) – 36 coroplast signs;
- News release - January 24, 2022;
- Facebook posts with 32,297 followers – 5 posts; January 24 to March 21, 2022;
- Twitter posts with 108,700 followers - 5 posts; January 24, to March 21, 2022;
- City of Winnipeg public engagement newsletter with over 2800 recipients – January 26, February 9, February 23, and March 7 2022;
- Postcards (Appendix B) - 420 postcards distributed through Exchange District BIZ to pilot area businesses; and
- Letters – 60 letters to Exchange District businesses

Table 1: Public Engagement Opportunities

Date	Activity	Participation
January 10 – March 30, 2022	Webpage	575 visits
January 24 – March 21, 2022	Online Survey	505 responses
Wednesday, March 30, 2022 - afternoon	Focus Group	9 participants
Wednesday, March 30, 2022 - evening	Focus Group	9 participants



Image 3: Map of Pilot Project Area

ZONE 1 King St. between Notre Dame Ave. and William Ave.
Arthur St. between Bannatyne Ave and Notre Dame Ave.

ZONE 2 Bannatyne Ave. between Main St. and Waterfront Dr.

Key Findings – Highlights from the Survey and Focus Groups

A majority of survey respondents are not supportive of the new pilot signs or the parking guides. Figures 1 and 2 show the distribution of views on the new signage.

Figure 1. View on the Pilot Signs

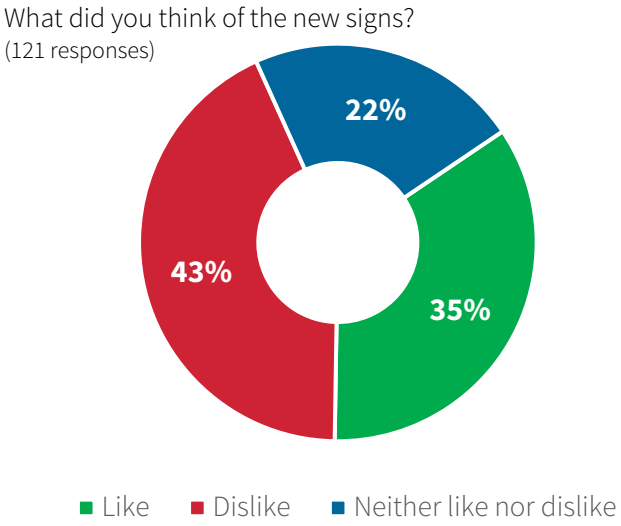
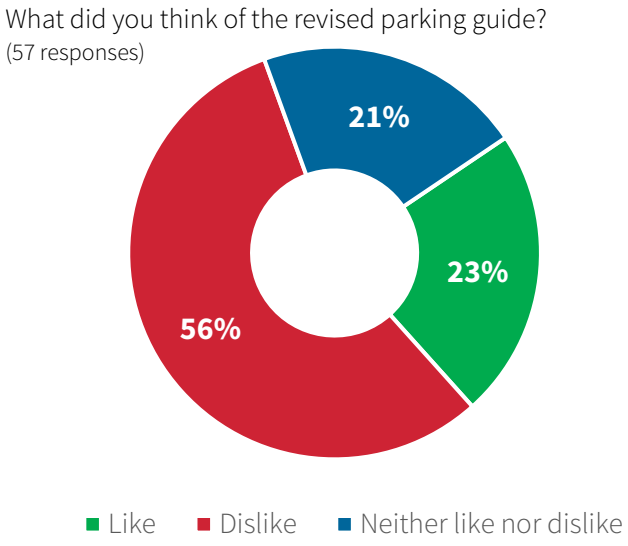


Figure 2. View on the Parking Guides



> "The colour coding is smart but can make it harder to read.

> "We don't need better signs, we need simpler rules.

Top Themes from the Survey and Focus Groups

1	**Understanding the signs**	Some people found the new colours and symbols clearer and easier to understand, while some found them less clear.
2	**Sign Colour**	Some people like the bright colour signs, while some people prefer the white and black signs.
3	**Poor Readability**	The new pilot signs are harder to read and less visually accessible. The white text on a colour background is hard to read.
4	**Status quo**	Desire to keep the current signs. The pilot signs were not a significant improvement and there is a preference for the current regulatory signs.

Additional themes:

- The signs are complicated and difficult to understand because the parking regulations are complex.
- There is support for bilingual signs. However, respondents expressed that the additional text contributed to poor readability.
- Single signs that display multiple regulations are preferred over multiple signs.
- The new signs diminish the streetscape.

> "I found the white lettering on the coloured signs much more difficult to read than the black on white. The red and green colours only serve to say that there are times when parking is allowed and times when it is not. I still had to squint to figure out what was allowed."

What We Heard – Public Survey

The online survey was open to all Winnipeggers to gather feedback about the sign design, readability, and functionality. The survey received 505 responses; 124 had seen the signs in person and 59 had used a parking guide. The survey shows mixed response to the new signs. The full survey results are in Appendix C.

A majority of respondents dislike the new pilot signs as a whole.

43% Dislike the parking signs
35% Like the parking signs
22% Neither like nor dislike the signs

However, when respondents were asked about individual signs and elements of the sign design, there was a positive response to some features. Some people found the sign colour and size helpful, as well as accessible parking rules easier to understand. Figure 3 below shows the perspectives on colour, sign size, readability, and accessibility.

> "The guides are extremely complicated. Perhaps they are an indication that we have an opportunity to simplify parking rules for those locations.

Regarding the parking guides, the survey found that:

56% Dislike the parking guides
23% Like the parking guides
21% Neither like nor dislike the parking guides

Table 2 outlines the feedback and comments received about the different types of regulatory signs and the parking guides, and how it was considered.

> "It is clearer that this is a paid accessibility parking spot. Permit required is important info.

Figure 3. Perspectives on Different Elements of the Signs

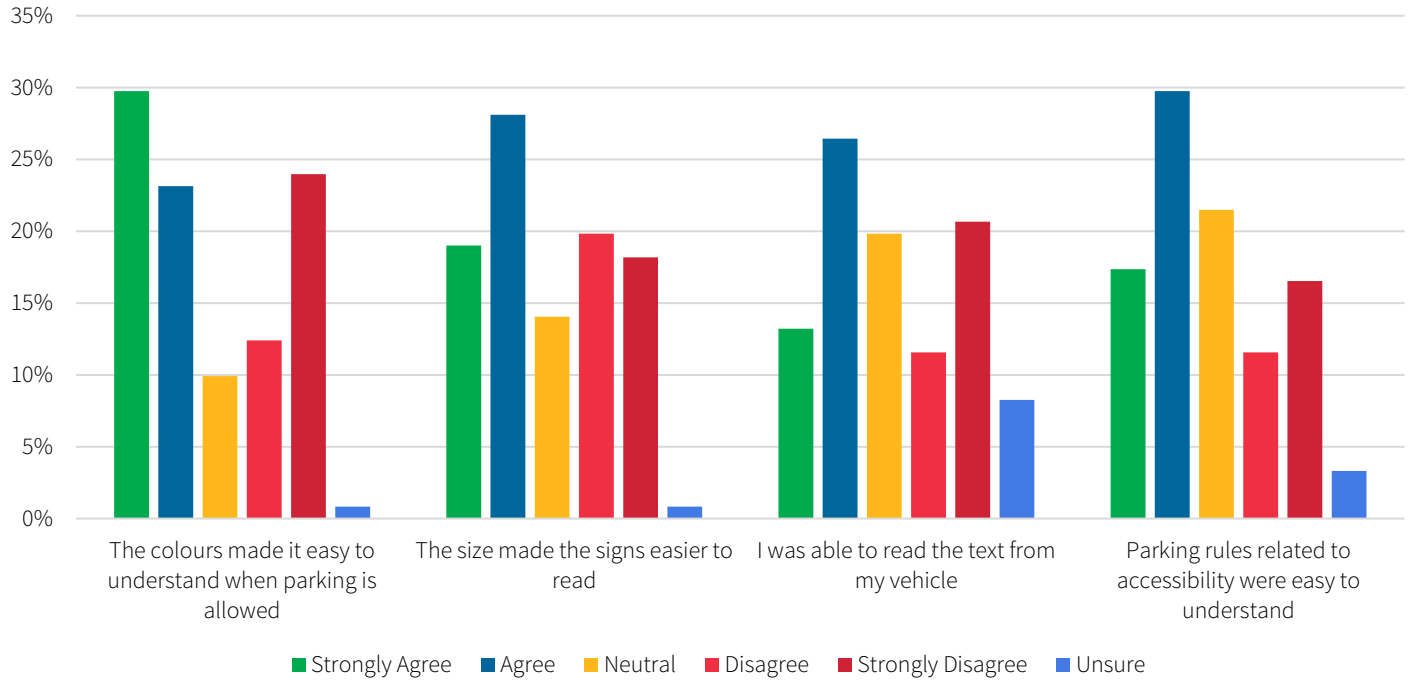


Table 2. Feedback on Each Sign Type

What We Heard

General



- Overall the sign colors make the parking rules easier to understand (300+ comments), but reduces the readability (230+ comments).
- White signs with black text are easier to read and more visually accessible (119 comments).
- The signs are unclear because the parking rules are complex (33 comments).
- New signs are not desired; due to a preference for the current signs to continue to be used as a preferred standard or due to minimal improvement over the current signs (225 comments).

Paid Parking



- Respondent preferences were mixed for the paid parking signs; 48% prefer the new signs, 36% prefer the current, and 16% have no preference.
- The new signs are easier to understand (63 comments).
- The green colour is more visible and easier to identify (40 comments) but the colour reduces sign readability of the text (74 comments) and diminishes the streetscape (8 comments).
- Some respondents like the word "MAX" to help identify the maximum parking limit (11); however, some respondents think it's unnecessary and contributes to clutter (4).
- Respondents like the current pay station symbol to identify the paid parking (20 comments), and a few like the new dollar sign payment symbol (9 comments).

Accessible Parking



- A majority of respondents prefer the new signs for both accessible paid parking (65%) and accessible loading (60%). Respondents expressed that the pilot signs are clearer and easier to understand (198 comments), while some feel the current signs are easier to understand (89 comments).
- Respondents like the blue sign colour (71 comments) because it improves accessibility and visibility of the signs.
- Some respondents found the signs easier to read and more visible (62 comments), while some thought they were less readable and prefer white with black text (72).
- Having all parking rules on one sign instead of multiple signs is helpful (79 comments).

Loading Zone

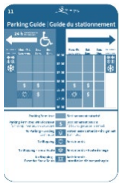


- Respondent preferences were mixed for the loading zone signs; 43% prefer the current regulatory signs, 45% prefer the pilot signs, and 11% have no preference.
- Some respondents found the new sign clearer and easier to understand (31 comments), while some respondents found the current signs clearer (36 comments).
- Some respondents like the red colour because it is more visible (28 comments), but some dislike the red (33 comments). The red signs have reduced readability (60 comments).
- Like that the new signs include French, but some people were confused by the French word "Chargement".



No Stopping

- A majority of respondents (56%) prefer the new 'no stopping' signs (31% prefer the current signs, and 13% have no preference).
- Some like the red colour because it is more visible and helps convey parking rules (19 comments), but some do not like the red colour (20 comments) due to impacts on streetscape and poor readability.
- Some respondents find the pilot sign has improved readability (28 comments) while other respondents think the current signs have better readability (33 comments).
- The new tow truck symbol is clear and provides clear information about repercussions and enforcement (43 comments).



Parking Guides

- The majority of respondents do not like the parking guides (56% did not like the guides, 23% liked the guide and 21% were neutral).
- The parking guides have too much information, are cluttered and unclear (123 comments) and have poor readability (45 comments).
- Respondents had mixed views about if the revisions; 42% thought the revisions were an improvement, 23% thought they were no better or worse, and 35% thought they were worse.
- Half of respondents didn't find any aspects of the parking guides helpful (colour, timetable, legend, or size). The least helpful aspects were size/readability, the timetable, and the legend.
- 52% of respondents support the use of parking guides in places where parking regulations are complex; 25% felt they should be used on every sign post and 23% thought they should not be used at all.
- There was a desire for easier access to additional information on the regulatory signs and parking meters; QR codes to share additional parking rules online and post the meter number on regulatory signs (8 comments).



Image 4: Arthur Street in the Exchange District in Winter 2022, with the pilot parking signs.

What We Heard – Focus Groups

Images of the new parking signs were shown to participants with different parking scenarios to test for comprehension of the new signs. A discussion followed to understand how participants interpreted the signs and where confusion might exist. Overall, participants understood the signs 60% of the time, with accessible signs comprehension ranging between 76-81%. Participant understanding for parking scenario examples are outlined in Figure 4.

People misunderstood the signs 40% of the time.

Table 3 summarizes the feedback and comments heard during these sessions. The full results can be found in Appendix D.

Figure 4. Understanding of Different Parking Scenarios

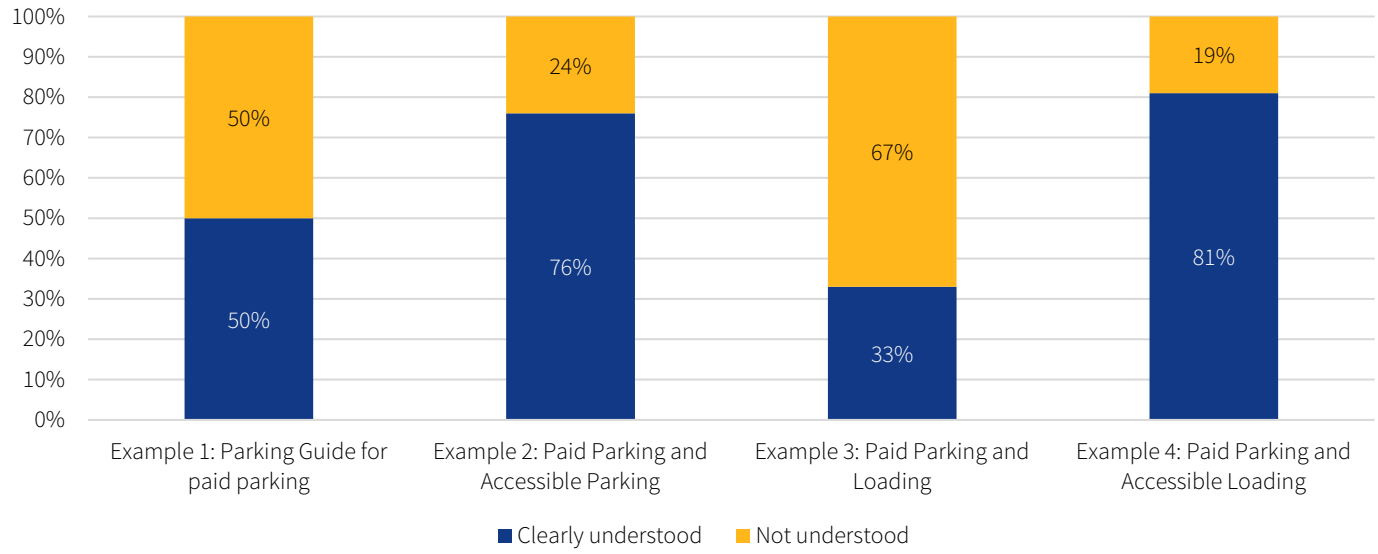


Table 3. Focus Group Feedback

What We Heard	
	Participants expressed a preference for the current regulatory signs. • The pilot signs have too much information and are difficult to understand. • The pilot signs are difficult to read as a result of the white text on a colour background, and the font size is small and thin. There was a desire for black text that is a larger size. • The current regulatory signs are easier to read because they have less text on them; bilingual signs are good because they are inclusive but are harder to read. • Some participants like the colour of the pilot signs, but some do not like the colours. • Some signs have information that seems contradictory and makes the signs confusing; such as no parking allowed alongside a sign for loading. • Mixed views on the accessible parking signs; some people prefer the larger blue signs and some prefer the current signs. • Signs are easier to understand and read when posted side-by-side to identify different regulations on the right and left, instead of stacked. • The arrows on the pilot signs are confusing.

How Feedback Was Considered

The City considered the feedback on the different types of regulatory signs and the parking guides from both the online survey and focus groups.

Parking Guides

The feedback received about the revised parking guides demonstrates that they continue to be confusing and unclear; and the guides will not be pursued further.

Regulatory Signs

There was mixed feedback about the regulatory signs for loading, paid parking, and no stopping. Concerns were expressed about poor readability and visual accessibility; the red and green colour with white text made the signs hard to read and were not visually accessible. As a result, the pilot signs will not be explored further; however, updates to some of the existing accessible regulatory signs will be explored based on feedback received.

Accessible signs

Positive feedback was received for the accessible signs in the survey and comprehension of the signs were high during the focus group. Based on this, the City will explore redesigning accessible parking and accessible loading zone regulatory signage using the current sign designs as a starting point. Elements that received positive feedback such as having a consolidated sign and incorporating the color blue to distinguish accessibility will be considered in the redesign.

Parking Rules

Feedback was heard that parking regulations are complex, and result in complicated parking signs. The City may reassess parking regulations and curbside management, to simplify the rules, as a follow-up project to the Transportation Master Plan. For example, a review of the loading zones could lead to more standardized loading zones times and create more consistency to simplify loading zone rules.

Next Steps

Public engagement activities are complete, and the City is considering feedback to make recommendations to City Council.

A report will be submitted to Council in fall 2022. This report will include a summary of all feedback from the public engagement and the following recommendations.

- Continued use of the current regulatory signs;
- Review of parking rules to simplify parking regulations as a follow-up project to the Transportation Master Plan;
- Development of consolidated signage for accessible parking and accessible loading.

Appendices

Appendix A – QR Code Signs
Appendix B – Postcards
Appendix C – Online Survey Results
Appendix D – Focus Group Notes