



# The Corporation of the Town of Milton

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Report To: Council

From: Doug Sampano, Commissioner, Community Services

Date: June 3, 2024

Report No: COMS-004-24

Subject: School Crossing Guard Policy Update

Recommendation: **THAT the School Crossing Guard Policy Update be received for information by Council;**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of a Notice of Motion - Resolution 158-23 by Councillor Tesser Derksen at the November 13, 2023 Council Meeting staff were asked to:

- Undertake a review of the Town's Placement of School Crossing Guards Policy and report back to Council in Q2 2024 with recommendations on a new warrant methodology for justifying placement of crossing guards at locations within school zones and in the immediate vicinity of school zones (such radius or vicinity to be included in the recommendations brought forward);
- To explore options for shared funding opportunities with school boards to help offset the costs of hiring additional school guards

The Ontario Traffic Council (OTC) updated the 2017 School Crossing Guard guide in 2023. As a result of this recent update, the Town's Placement of School Crossing Guards Policy now incorporates provisions for school crossing guards at roundabouts and Pedestrian Crossovers (PXO's). Staff is also committed to conducting a review and municipal scan of the School Crossing Guard policy every four (4) years aligning with the term of Council. Staff also continues to work with school boards when new schools are opening to determine appropriate locations for school crossing guards, in line with the Town's policy.

## REPORT

## Background

School crossing guards are used to assign right-of-way for pedestrians, primarily children, at locations with conflicting vehicular traffic. The role of a school crossing guard is to stop traffic for school aged children (JK-6) walking to and from school where sufficient naturally occurring gaps do not exist. Currently, the Town of Milton has 38 school crossing guards at 35 locations. In addition, the Town has a pool of eight standby school crossing guards to cover locations when necessary.

In 2019, Council approved report ENG-023-19 Placement of School Crossing Guards Policy which provided a consistent method of evaluating existing and newly requested locations to determine if a school crossing guard is warranted. Staff have continued to utilize this policy.

The existing Town of Milton Placement of School Crossing Guards Policy has been effective for midblock locations and intersections that have all-way stops and/or traffic control, but it does not include new warrants for roundabouts or pedestrian crossover locations. The updated policy now includes this new warrant system for school crossing guards, and provides staff with a sophisticated approach for analyzing these types of school crossings.

## Discussion

In 2017, the Ontario Traffic Council (OTC) completed the School Crossing Guard Guide, which provides a technical approach to determine whether or not a school crossing guard should be provided at a specific location. It also included a range of the best practices across Ontario. Since 2017, the OTC has provided an updated 2023 School Crossing Guard Guide. Based on this guide, staff have updated the Town of Milton Placement of School Crossing Guards Policy (Appendix I).

The 2023 OTC updated guide now incorporates the warrant process for assessing the need for school crossing guards at roundabouts and pedestrian crossover (PXO) locations. The Town of Milton Placement of School Crossing Guards Policy has been updated as follows: (See Appendix I for policy updates in red text)

- The exposure index, will be employed to evaluate the necessity of a school crossing guard at PXO's located at minor street stop-controlled intersections. As per the policy, the exposure index method examines the level of interactions and conflict between vehicular and student pedestrian volumes. The Exposure Index method generates a graph based on historical trends at existing crossing guard locations. The graph is then used as a threshold for future crossing locations where a school crossing guard may be required.
- The gap study methodology will be utilized to determine the need for school crossing guards at PXO's located at midblock positions as well as at roundabout locations. As per the policy, the gap study method measures the elapsed time naturally occurring

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between vehicles, measured in seconds, as vehicles cross the intended study location. The gaps are recorded in five-minute intervals, and if there are less than four safe gaps present in 50% of the five minute intervals, in either the morning or afternoon study period, a crossing guard is warranted. The safe gap time is dependent on the width of the road, as defined in the policy (i.e. a wider road requires a longer gap time).

- To include a process for evaluating the placement of school crossing guards when new schools open
- To add text to confirm that the Commissioner, Community Services, has delegated authority to update the policy, as per ENG-023-19, and that a review of the policy, and updates as needed, will take place each term of Council.

The warrant process for midblock school crossings and all-way stop warrants in the OTC 2023 School Crossing Guard Guide remain unchanged, therefore no further changes have been made to the Town's policy with respect to these warrants

A jurisdictional review of several municipalities regarding their School Crossing Guard Policy was completed in Q1 2024. The municipalities contacted included: Cities of Brampton, Burlington, Cambridge, Hamilton, Kitchener, Markham, Mississauga, Oshawa, Waterloo and Niagara Falls as well as the Town of Halton Hills.

It was determined that all of the contacted municipalities are presently using the warrant processes provided by the 2023 OTC School Crossing Guard Guide.

This new updated policy, in conjunction with the 2023 OTC Crossing Guard Guide, assists staff with determining placement of school crossing guards. School crossing guards can be placed on all roadways within the urban boundary of Milton, with a posted speed limit of 60km/h or less as per the Ontario Highway Traffic Act Section 176. The OTC School Crossing Guard Guide includes warrants that combines engineering principles, observation and judgement as a basis for data collection. The warrant also takes into consideration vehicle and pedestrian volumes during the key times around school entrance and dismissal. The OTC School Crossing Guard Guide recommends a gap survey for mid block/minor stop controlled locations or pedestrian crossover locations and an Exposure Index for all-way stops, roundabouts and traffic control signal locations.

The Town has 27 school crossing guard locations presently within school zones. A school zone is defined as the frontage of the school property extending to a distance of 150m each side of the school property line. School Zone Flashers are also installed within a school zone for schools from JK- Grade 8. It is important to note that school crossing guards are also

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located within a radius of 500m from the school. Each school is reviewed on an individual basis and often these guards are located within the school board set boundary of the individual school. At some locations outside of school zones, crossing guards may cross students for two different schools based on walking routes.

The Town continues to work with school boards related to new school openings. As per the Town of Milton Placement of School Crossing Guards Policy, school boards must notify the Community Services Department three months in advance of the opening dates of all new schools in Milton. They are to provide the catchment area of the registered children for the subject school and a scatter map showing the potential walking students.

A site visit will occur within three weeks of the school opening to review potential sites for future studies based on student volumes at all significant crossings. School crossing guards will not be placed before school opens as traffic/pedestrian patterns have not been established. Prior to a crossing guard being assigned a location, the construction surrounding schools should be nearing completion, which would include sidewalks and curbs. The safety of pedestrians and the school crossing guard must be taken into consideration. Approximately six to eight weeks after the school opens (pending construction progress) applicable studies would be conducted and warranted guards would be placed based on budget availability.

The Town's yearly operating budget has availability for two new crossing guards on a year by year basis. Staff have consulted with several local municipalities and have found that there is no cost sharing that takes place between the municipality and school boards for the placement of school crossing guards. The municipalities contacted included: Cities of Brampton, Burlington, Hamilton, Mississauga, as well as the Town of Halton Hills. It is important that municipalities ensure that school crossing guards are only placed where warrants are fulfilled, traffic patterns are established and when safe to do so. If a municipality installed school crossing guards without the appropriate studies completed and warrants fulfilled this could lead to a high number of unwarranted crossing guards. Town staff are responsible for the hiring, training, and managing of all school crossing guard locations.

Having said this, staff are committed to continue to work with the school boards in Milton to ensure the public and school staff are aware of the Town's policy, and procedures in determining crossing guard locations, as well as continuing public education regarding the Town's many PXO's and how to navigate these safely. While there currently is no precedent for cost sharing with school boards to fund crossing guards, this is something staff will discuss with the school boards in Milton, however only in the context of funding crossing guards that are warranted, in line with the Town's policy.

An example of the Town working with the school boards on pedestrian safety related initiatives, staff worked with the Halton District School Board (HDSB) on Rattlesnake Point Public School which is located along Kovachik Boulevard. The Town installed a PXO along

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the school frontage prior to the school opening as this would be considered a desired pedestrian path as there will be a neighbourhood park that will be constructed to the north of the school. This PXO provides a protected crossing for pedestrians outside of school hours. This PXO was recently upgraded to roadside mounted signs with rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) at the school board's cost as the request for the higher level PXO originated from the board.

In addition to staff following the updated School Crossing Guard Policy, it is important to highlight enhancements that will be made at some of the existing school crossing locations.

The following two (2) school crossing guard locations will be upgraded to Level 2 Type C Pedestrian Crossings. The "Type C" PXO consists of roadside mounted signs at the crossing for both directions with an RRFB on top of the roadside mounted signs with a flexible bollard in the middle of the road.

- Scott Boulevard and Finney Terrace
- Child's Drive and Clements Drive

The following six (6) midblock school crossing locations will be converted to Level 2 Type D Pedestrian Crossings. The "Type D" PXO consists of a roadside mounted sign at the crossing in both directions with a flexible bollard in the middle of the road. Staff recommends converting these midblock school crossing locations to remain consistent with the other school crossing locations along the school frontages and to mitigate driver confusion:

- Farmstead Drive and McFarren Crescent (Anne J. MacArthur Public School)
- Scott Boulevard and Farrington Crossing (Escarpment View Public School)
- Bennett Boulevard and Lee's Gate (Guardian Angels Catholic Elementary School)
- Dixon Drive and Sprucedale Lane (St. Peter Catholic Elementary School)
- Bennett Boulevard and Wickson Way (Hawthorne Village Public School)
- Savoline Boulevard and Merkley Gate (Lumen Christi Catholic Elementary School)

The Town of Milton is dedicated to safeguarding children's welfare by implementing school crossing guards where warrants have been fulfilled.

