Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: November 25, 2020
Report Number: SRPI.20.031

Department: Planning and Infrastructure
Division: Infrastructure and Engineering Services

Subject: SRPI.20.031 Road Watch App

Purpose:

To report back to Council on the Member Motion regarding the Road Watch Committee's proposed mobile app project.

Recommendation(s):

a. That Staff Report SRPI.20.031 with respect to the Road Watch Committee's App Proposal be received for information;

b. That the City not fund the Road Watch Committee's proposed mobile app project at this time;

c. That staff be directed to work with the Road Watch Committee and key Road Watch stakeholders to review the proposed project, assess opportunities, and refine the project's scope; and

d. That staff report back to Council in 2021 with an update on the proposed app project scope and funding request.

Contact Person:

Hubert Ng, Acting Manager, Transportation, 905-747-6501
Ryan Ban, Manager, Legislative Services/Deputy City Clerk, 905-771-5547
Davis Kwan, Manager, Technology Infrastructure, 905-771-5731

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Background:

Road Watch is a community-driven program supported by the City of Richmond Hill and York Regional Police (YRP) that facilitates residents' reporting of aggressive and dangerous driving. Road Watch is a long-running program found in numerous communities throughout Ontario. Residents are currently able to submit reports through the YRP Road Watch webpage found at the YRP.ca website, which is optimized for mobile use. YRP coordinates activity related to the Road Watch reporting program, and then provides reporting to the Road Watch Committee, an advisory committee to Council, on high incident locations and actions taken related to submissions.

At the October 28, 2020 Council Meeting, a Member Motion was made by Regional and Local Councillor Perrelli to the support funding and implementation of a proposed Road Watch mobile app. Road Watch Committee member Dean Gossi made a presentation and provided an overview of Road Watch, which outlined the need for an app, and proposed project details. The app, as proposed, is intended to provide a convenient Road Watch incident reporting tool, and a platform to increase visibility for the Road Watch program and road safety education and awareness. This report is in response to Council's request for staff to report back on matters raised by Council.

Staff from the Clerk's Office, Transportation, IT, Legal, Finance, and Communications have critically reviewed the proposal brought to Council on October 28, 2020. Staff are supportive of exploring opportunities to provide a more engaging and impactful Road Watch Committee approach. This report outlines the City's concerns with the Road Watch app proposal. The concerns have been discussed with Road Watch Committee members, and both staff and Road Watch committee members agree that the proposal's scope should be redefined to resolve identified concerns prior to moving forward.

Opportunity exists to explore how Road Watch Committee could increase road safety awareness

Discussion with both YRP and the Road Watch Committee have made it clear that there is interest in reviewing Road Watch stakeholder roles and needs, and in formulating a plan to address those needs with available resources. The Road Watch Committee's mandate is to work with YRP and City staff to undertake information initiatives to help make the City a safer place to work and live in respect of public highways and other similar roadways. Staff suggest that the City and the Road Watch Committee engage key stakeholders to review how the existing app proposal, or a variant of it, can increase Road Watch program awareness.

York Regional Police supports Road Watch and Road Watch Committee efforts but will not support the proposed app

As a participating partner in Richmond Hill's Road Watch Committee, and as the administrative body of the Region-wide Road Watch program, YRP has informed the

City and the Road Watch Committee that it is not supportive of the proposed mobile app. Submissions are currently made through YRP's Road Watch webpage, which is optimized for mobile use. The YRP Road Watch website has received a ten-year annual average of 540 reports within Richmond Hill.

Should the proposed app and supporting website directly collect report information (a possibility depicted within the concept website referenced in Mr. Gossi's October 28, 2020 presentation to Council) this information stream would not be supported by YRP. YRP also does not support the use of a link to its Road Watch reporting page.

Road Watch program marketing currently directs members of the public to YRP's website, and YRP's interest is in satisfying the community's reporting needs with a streamlined one window approach. Promotion of a separate app risks diluting YRP's key messaging about how to report an incident.

YRP has expressed interest in meeting with Road Watch stakeholders to better understand the Road Watch Committee's needs. They are also interested in participating in further discussion as to how the Road Watch Committee might approach increasing community awareness of the Road Watch program.

The City's interests are not in collecting personal information related to Road Watch

Concerns exist with the possible collection, use and disclosure of personal information, should the proposed app use a standalone form. Though project scope is still largely undefined, the concept website referenced in Mr. Gossi's October 28, 2020 presentation to Council contained a reporting form that functioned as an alternative to YRP's online form. The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act would apply to any information collected via the app and website, as this information would be considered to be under the City's custody and control.

This information collection would incur legislative obligations with respect to the collection, usage, disclosure and protection of Personal Information and the activities associated with providing access to information collected (personal, confidential and law enforcement / investigative information) through Freedom of Information requests made to the City with the information collected via the website or mobile app.

These obligations would be identified as part of the City's Privacy Impact Assessment of the project, were it to go forward as proposed. Incurring such obligations is not in the interest of the City, as they do not relate to the City's core business; Richmond Hill does not have a role in enforcement of the Highway Traffic Act. Additionally, the potential for citizens to use the app to submit information related to criminal activity—again, for which the City also does not play a prosecutorial role—would place the City in an unfavourable situation. Risk staff has highlighted numerous concerns related to the City's possible Road Watch report collection role, including potential reputational impact, possible litigation, and insurance program impacts.

Were the proposed app, or another Road Watch project to move forward, staff advise that the project not include inbuilt Road Watch reporting functionality to avoid collection of personal and road incident information.

IT outlines ownership determination and both the risks of developing the proposed app and the opportunities that may be available

Notwithstanding staff's recommendation to avoid personal information and road incident collection, significant measures would need to be in place to protect the proposed app's possible collection of personal and road incident information. Given the sensitivity of the data, IT recommends the typical City assessment procedures for considering a technology purchase. The purchase must be vetted through Technology, Information Security, Information Privacy, Financial, Legal, Risk and Cyber assessment processes to ensure the application is safe, secure, reliable, and lowers the risk of data breach.

Given that YRP does not endorse the proposed app, and would therefore not be expected to support interconnectivity with its own existing reporting database, the app is inherently limited in its potential reporting functionality.

As the project scope is more clearly defined through discussion with staff and Road Watch Committee members, the possibility exists that in-house IT services may be able to assist in the development of future project. This would significantly reduce costs, as outlined in Mr. Gossi's October 28, 2020 presentation to Council, and further reduce substantial costs—not reflected in the presentation— associated with the City's IT software purchase vetting requirements. The City would own anything created using its own resources, but a final ownership assessment is very difficult to provide with an unclear proposal and scope.

IT does not recommend an app due to the high level of effort of development and maintenance required, and the resources required to provide technical support should residents need assistance. Updates to the City's existing Road Watch page could, among other solutions, potentially address the Road Watch Committee's needs.

Project funding should follow project scope refinement

An application by the Richmond Hill Road Watch Committee to the Ministry of Transportation's Road Safety Community Partnership Program (RSCPP) for $15,000 has been withdrawn by the Road Watch Committee, in part due to the need to demonstrate matching funds from another source. Funding from the RSCPP would notably preclude—as a condition of the program—the possibility of future revenue generation. When staff met to discuss the project with Road Watch Committee members, Mr. Gossi assured staff that $25,000 would still be sufficient to complete a minimally viable product. Staff are unable to determine the sufficiency of a $25,000 budget for this project at this time, in large part because further work must be done to

refine project scope, and partly because cost savings may be achievable through in-house development.

The City's eventual funding of this project at or above $10,000 (amount subject to change, pending Procurement Policy Bylaw revisions)) would require a competitive procurement process. Non-competitive acquisition for this project would be difficult to justify, given that multiple vendors can complete app development work. Staff would not be able to support sole source acquisition, in the interest of obtaining the best value for the City.

Committee members may not benefit from the project

With respect to the Road Watch Committee's Terms of Reference, as a Committee of Council, concern exists regarding possible project implementation in whole, or in part, by one or more Committee members. As it was staff's initial understanding that the proposed project would largely be completed by a current Committee member, staff note the sponsorship section of the Richmond Hill Road Watch Committee's Terms of Reference:

 "Any and all sponsorship arrangements shall be approved by the Committee and shall align with the Committee's mandate. Sponsorships must not, in any way, confer a personal benefit, directly or indirectly, to any citizen member, member of Council or Town employee."

For this and other Road Watch projects to proceed, Committee members may not derive personal benefit. Staff have since been assured—in a joint November 13, 2020 meeting with Committee members—that the proposed project would neither directly nor indirectly derive benefit for any Committee member.

The Road Watch Committee is a valued partner in road safety efforts and efforts will continue to more clearly define this project

Both the City of Richmond Hill and YRP value the Road Watch program and the Richmond Hill Road Watch Committee for its work in engaging residents to help make our road network safer for all road users. City staff and YRP have expressed interest in further engaging Road Watch Committee members to explore ways in which the Committee can further promote the Road Watch program and increase residents' awareness of traffic safety issues.

Staff recommend that Transportation oversee the project's continuance by working in partnership with internal and external stakeholders to clarify the project's scope and support the work of the City's present and future traffic safety needs. Once clarified, this scope will allow staff to make a more comprehensive evaluation of options based on available resources, and make a recommendation as to how to proceed.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

For this staff report, there are no financial implications at this point in time. However, staff would continue discussions with Road Watch Committee members to define a scope of work and delivery method for this initiative and report back to Council with any financial needs.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

The Road Watch program and Richmond Hill Road Watch Committee enlist major road safety stakeholders and engage members of the public to create stronger connections in Richmond Hill.

Conclusion:

Staff recommend that the Road Watch Committee and YRP be further engaged in order to formulate a clear approach and defined project that addresses all Road Watch partners' natural interests in further road safety and road safety awareness, and specifically the desire of the Road Watch Committee to establish a greater community presence.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.20.031 Road Watch App.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 20, 2020

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

Dan Terzievski - Nov 20, 2020 - 1:58 PM

Rob Jones - Nov 20, 2020 - 2:14 PM

Paolo Masaro - Nov 20, 2020 - 2:50 PM

Kelvin Kwan - Nov 20, 2020 - 2:56 PM

MaryAnne Dempster - Nov 20, 2020 - 3:06 PM