

Marius Miklea

From: Celeste Sharp [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 1:08:39 PM
To: Council
Subject: Paid Parking For Summer - Concerns

Dear Council,

Please find below my email regarding concerns about the newly implemented paid parking. It was great to discuss this in person and I hope my thoughts below can be taken into consideration when reviewing this trial initiative.

I would like to share my concerns relating to the new parking policy implemented this summer. I understand the new policy is reflective of an environmental initiative to reduce local carbon emissions and to also raise funds for park management which I take no issue with. My concern relates to the impact of social welfare within the community. I believe this policy change and its implemented improvements to park accessibility currently have a disconnect in that the goal is to limit local car emissions but you have implemented alternative transport options that mainly appear to benefit the tourists who visit Whistler. This disconnect means the changes are most likely to negatively impact our community, particularly the most disadvantaged who will still need to rely on car transportation because they don't have the accessibility to walk, cycle or take advantage of public transport. With this in mind, I think additional support needs to be implemented to limit this impact.

My concern with this initiative is that not only has it decreased parking further (is this necessary?) from those who genuinely need it, but it is pushing our local community to choose alternative means of transportation to the parks that aren't currently adequate and haven't been sufficiently improved on. It should be a consumer choice to not drive but what alternative transportation options have been made available to us?

Firstly, the option presented has been to walk or to cycle with a bike valet being rolled out this summer. This is appreciated but many people within the community are not able to walk or cycle the distances suggested. I am not just referencing members of our community that are mobility impaired and qualify for a permit. I speak from personal experience within my family on the difficulty to receive permits relating to disability. There are members within our community with varying degrees of mobility who are simply unfit, elderly, injured or sick who may not qualify for a special permit but do rely on their cars. It also doesn't take into consideration our community members with young families and small children who also can't take advantage of this scheme. I don't think this option is entirely inclusive and in addition to this, it is only running during the weekend when most locals work or are already making a conscious decision to avoid the crowded parks. To best support our community (and limit community emissions) this initiative would need to be week-long and bolstered by additionally improving transport options for those unable to cycle.

The other option presented is taking advantage of public transport - the emphasis seems to be on the free buses and shuttles at the weekend which I also find inadequate. Firstly, the free transit on the weekend was first designed to reduce traffic congestion relating to tourists travelling on the highway. A majority of our community members work during the weekends and only visit the parks during the week when transport is not free and the rainbow shuttle is unavailable. The current bus routes are well designed to get our community members to and from the village. They are not designed to take them from their homes, to and from the lakes. This can require taking multiple buses with varying bus schedules and wait times. Inconvenient (and not dog-friendly) public transit to the lakes is currently one of the reasons so many choose to drive. I think encouraging locals to limit driving to the lakes should be supported by improving public transport to those areas. This means that public transport to the lakes should be more accessible at all times, not just during peak tourist times (the weekend). Additionally, it would mean that transport should also be improved from community areas, not just from the village where most tourists stay for their vacation in Whistler.

Again, I have to question whether the currently supported alternative modes of transport are fit for purpose for our community members (both in terms of considering when locals choose to visit the parks and where they are usually travelling from). I would also like to mention that the most disadvantaged of our community often live in the most affordable housing which (it shouldn't be surprising) is often on the outskirts of the muni with fewer public transportation options available. And that the public transport options are significantly reduced in our shoulder seasons when (from my understanding) paid parking will still be implemented for an overlap of time.

I think not adequately focussing on alternative means of transport that benefit the entire community means that some community members (most likely the disadvantaged) will have no choice but to continue to rely on their cars. This means the disadvantaged are the most likely ones who will incur the new parking fees and pay for our park management. I don't think it is appropriate for our most in need community members to bear this burden. Personally, I feel that measures have been implemented that make access seemingly much easier for tourists but not for the entire community. This impression has fostered negativity and resentment that the community is being overlooked to improve facilities for tourism at the detriment of our members who fuel the industry. It is a small consideration for a tourist to pay for parking once. It is a much bigger consideration for our community members to pay frequently. It's a particularly tough pill to swallow when the parking policy has been implemented citing to improve our local carbon emissions when tourists are flocking to our lakes creating a much larger footprint. I think a local's pass would eradicate concerns over this disparity and help community members feel supported, valued and heard. Similarly, looking into improving alternative modes of transport that benefit the entire community would also help buy-in and better reduce local car rides for this new scheme. Considering the high cost of living and poor wages there are few and far between benefits to

residing in Whistler apart from being close to local attractions such as the parks. If we don't have easy or cheap access to them... Why should we choose to stay here?

Looking forward to your response and I do hope my thoughts are shared and considered when evaluating the parking policy for future seasons.

Kind regards,

Celeste