



Date: August 29, 2000

**TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation**  
**FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: STANLEY PARK - PARK DRIVE CLOSURE**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the Board leave Park Drive open during any closures for the Lions Gate bridge construction.**

## **BACKGROUND**

On July 25, 2000 City Council passed the following motion:

“THAT staff be requested to report back at the September 12, 2000 meeting on the costs and feasibility of closing Georgia Street west of Denman on Sunday mornings this fall when the Lions Gate bridge is closed for construction in order to create a car-free Stanley Park.”

## **DISCUSSION**

As an overview of the issues surrounding getting to and from the park, the following extracts from the Board approved 1996 Stanley Park Transportation and Recreation Plan are provided below.

“Why should we consider banning cars from the park? A car-free Stanley Park would be more of a quiet, green oasis in a metropolitan region. The beauty of the scenery, the serenity of the forest, and the calm of the meadows would be enhanced. Noise and pollution would be reduced. People could enjoy the park as a more powerful antidote to the urban environment. Even the difficulty of reaching remote park locations would pay off in a heightened experience, a great view earned through a walk or a bike ride is more satisfying than a convenient drive-by view. Clearly, Stanley Park without cars would be a much greater treasure.

What would happen if cars were banned from Stanley Park now? Since cars are the primary means of access, and adequate public transit to replace the car will not be available in the short term, banning vehicular access is equivalent to keeping large numbers of visitors out, especially visitors from beyond the City of Vancouver. The impact on use of park and facilities would be

severe. Much lower numbers of visitors would threaten the viability of some facilities, and impede the use of others. Families with children would be most affected, as would be persons not capable of walking long distances. Facilities and destinations in the northern part of the park would be more affected than those closer to the West End. Park Board revenues would see a drastic decline, undermining the ability to maintain and operate the park. Legal difficulties could arise with lessees who assume vehicular access will not change during the term of their contract.

Why don't motorists simply take public transit? On a summer Sunday, Stanley Park is served by 86 bus trips. For comparisons, the University of British Columbia campus, in a similar end-of-line location, is served by about 400 bus trips per school day, transporting about 8,000 people. This is less than one fourth of the people arriving by car in Stanley Park. To give another example, to replace the 1,000 cars per hour entering the park from Georgia Street with public transit, buses would have to be filled to capacity and arrive at a frequency of more than one every minute.

The chart "Switching to Public Transit" illustrates the service required to replace private cars entering Stanley Park on a busy Sunday with buses. "Existing service" includes the #19 and #52 buses entering the park, "service within a few blocks" includes buses #3 and #8 on Denman Street and North Shore buses #241/242 and #250/251/252 on Georgia Street. The chart is based on a seating capacity of 40 people per bus.

The chart speaks for itself. It is not possible for every visitor to take transit if the current visitor volumes are to be maintained. Not only would a staggering number of buses have to roll into Stanley Park, increased service of the entire transit system would be required for people to get to the Stanley Park buses. Unfortunately, the park's peak visitor volumes happen on the weekend when overall transit service is at its lowest level. Public transit and travel to recreation facilities are currently not a good fit. BC Transit will not be able to deliver in the foreseeable future a service that makes the car redundant as a means of access to Stanley Park.”

In summary, we continue to require the car as the primary means of delivering people to the park. As part of the above referenced study and previous work, it has been observed that the vast majority of people visiting the park by any mode choose to be in the park between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. While a clear sunny, early morning in Stanley Park is hard to beat, only a small dedicated group show up to take advantage of the serenity.

In the early 1980' s a number of Bicycle Sundays were held. Park Drive was closed to most vehicles for Sunday mornings. While there was an initial flurry of interest and support for the event, attendance waned and the closures were discontinued. The morning only closure time slot was the most commonly expressed reason for declining participation.

The concept was revived in 1997 with a single event in conjunction with Bike to Work Week. This morning east side closure was poorly attended and logistically flawed. The Board did not pursue this idea further in 1998.

The following is a list of issues which reduce the viability of park closures as a popular or widely attended program:

1. The majority of park users prefer to be in the park in the afternoon. To exclude motorized traffic at this time would have major impacts on stakeholders like the Aquarium, our restaurants and sport and boating clubs, as their clients could not readily reach their premises. Even full morning closures have significant attendance impacts on the Aquarium and the restaurant brunch trade.
2. The growth of the tour bus industry and its use of Stanley Park would be significantly impacted.
3. With the redevelopment of the east side seawall, a full-time cycle/blade route exists along the water. This lessens the attraction of Park Drive except for the training/exercise set, who are generally not intimidated by cars. Also, on the west side, the Park Drive hill at Prospect Point discourages many recreational cyclists and bladers.

4. Public transit cannot deliver the service to bring the typical patronage to the park and there is inadequate public parking in the West End if patrons try to leave their cars near the park entrances.
5. Finally, given the historic unpredictability of bridge closures, short term decisions to act on a bridge closure undermine the logistics required to successfully implement a closure of the Park.

## **CONCLUSION**

The historic lack of popularity of “bicycle days,” the subsequent development of a separated east side bike/blade route, the inconvenience and income loss to park stakeholders, and the unpredictability of bridge closures make the value of a Sunday vehicle closure problematic. Staff do not recommend it.

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