

ITEM 21

MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 41

COUNCIL MEETING June 9/75

Re: Curb Drops for Wheelchairs

On May 27, 1974, Council during discussion of the attached report on curb drops (Item 12, Report No. 41) adopted only the first two recommendations, namely:

1. THAT wheelchair ramps not be adopted as a standard installation on all Municipal curb and sidewalk construction; and
2. THAT more information be sought from the appropriate Association(s) concerned with people in wheelchairs on the question of the actual need and location of need for ramps.

Following is a further report on this matter from the Municipal Engineer.

If Council adopts the recommendations contained in this latest report, future estimates for proposed works pertaining to curbs and sidewalks will make provision for the construction of drops for wheelchairs when applicable in commercial, institutional and recreational areas. Provision for wheelchair drops at the time of construction and reconstruction is estimated to be \$35 each.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT wheelchair drops be installed at intersections and crosswalk locations in commercial, institutional or recreational areas during the construction or reconstruction of new curbs and sidewalks.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER

MAY 30, 1975

FROM: MUNICIPAL ENGINEER

RE: CURB DROPS FOR WHEELCHAIRS

Further to our report of May 24, 1974 we would advise that in the interim we have been corresponding back and forth with the Canadian Paraplegic Association to try and determine their need for curb drops and where, if we were to introduce such a program, they would best be located.

We have been informed that they have about 600 members in the Greater Vancouver area with about 70 residing in Burnaby. We were further informed that their membership only represents a small percentage of the disabled population. Even if we were to increase this number ten fold we are dealing with a rather large undertaking for well under 1000 people in a population of over 136,000. If we were to place one drop on each finished intersection corner we would need to break out and construct approximately 5,500 drops at an estimated cost of \$100 each, for a total of \$550,000.

While we all appreciate the problems that people confined to wheel chairs must experience when they wish to venture out onto the public sidewalk system we would still find the expense hard to justify without being assured they would receive heavy usage. This is not to say that we would oppose the installation of wheel chair drops as they are being installed in adjacent Municipalities and in other large centres in North America. With this in mind we are prepared to recommend the following.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT wheel chair drops be installed at intersections and crosswalk locations in commercial, institutional or recreational areas during the construction or reconstruction of new curbs and sidewalks.

HB:wlh

cc: () Traffic Supervisor

E.E. Olson
MUNICIPAL ENGINEER

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Re: Curb Drops for Wheelchairs

Following is a report from the Municipal Engineer on the feasibility of constructing curb drops (ramps) for the purpose of facilitating the movement of wheelchairs and other types of wheeled conveyances from sidewalks to roads and vice versa.

The Solicitor advises that the determination of liability in any case would depend on a consideration of all the attendant circumstances. However, from a general point of view, he believes that there would be no liability on the Municipality if a person's wheelchair rolled down on of the subject ramps into traffic. In his opinion, the person operating a wheelchair would be responsible for keeping it under proper control. Likewise, he thinks that there would be no liability on the part of the Municipality if pedestrians should fall on these ramps. It appears to him that any pedestrian exercising a proper lookout would have no difficulty in seeing these ramps and place his feet accordingly. If the ramp in any fashion constituted a hidden danger, then the Municipality would be in a different position.

The Municipal Manager has mixed feelings about sidewalk ramps. His experience with them in other municipalities is that they are usually installed in commercial areas only and if he had to make a recommendation at this time, it would be to install curb drops on new work in commercial areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT wheelchair ramps not be adopted as a standard installation on all Municipal curb and sidewalk construction; and

THAT more information be sought from the appropriate Association(s) concerned with people in wheelchairs on the question of the actual need and location of need for ramps; and

THAT one or more wheelchair manufacturers be requested to consider developing some simple device which would enable the operator to negotiate a 6-inch high curb face.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER

MAY 24, 1974

FROM: MUNICIPAL ENGINEER

RE: CURB DROPS FOR WHEELCHAIRS

We have been requested to report on the above-mentioned subject.

The City of Vancouver has installed a few wheelchair ramps as a local incentive program subsidized by senior governments at a cost of approximately \$85.00 each. These ramps have the obvious advantage of permitting easier access to the road surface for people in wheelchairs; however, there are some disadvantages including an element of hazard to pedestrians who form the vast majority of users of sidewalks. Some of the hazards of the ramp are the danger of slipping on the ramp when it is wet or, more particularly, during periods of ice and snow. Also, when using sidewalks, pedestrians have become accustomed to approaching the edge of the curb and stepping off, whereas the ramp may appear as an unexpected down grade and any unexpected step down can result in jarring the back and/or falling. We should be aware of the special problems of other minority groups such as blind people who could find the ramps to be hazardous. It has been suggested that the ramps will be of use to more than wheelchair operators; however, it is our opinion that wheelchairs are the only wheeled pedestrian vehicle that have problems in mounting the curb inasmuch as baby buggies and strollers, for example, can be quite readily adjusted to get over a 6-inch high curb.

In considering a program to review existing sidewalks and commence constructing such ramps, we would suggest that it would be extremely difficult to determine at which locations to construct such ramps as one should properly determine the possible routes of the wheelchair public, which would undoubtedly include all commercial areas and extend to residential areas in which wheelchair people live. This would appear to indicate that the program should be one of an all or none nature.

Continued ...

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Considering the expense of installing ramps in existing curb returns (to line up with sidewalks in all directions would require 8 ramps at every intersection), determining the possibility of creating hazards, together with the problem of the extent of the program if it were initiated we would suggest that rather than commencing a program of constructing ramps, representation should be made to wheelchair manufacturers to have them study the possibility of incorporating some simple device on wheelchairs which would make the operator able to negotiate a 6-inch high curb face.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT wheelchair ramps not be adopted as a standard installation on Municipal curb and sidewalk construction and,

THAT more information be sought from the appropriate Association (s) concerned with people in wheelchairs on the question of the actual need and location of need for ramps, and,

THAT one or more wheelchair manufacturers be requested to consider developing some simple device which would enable the operator to negotiate a 6-inch high curb face.

HB/AP/EEO/wlb

cc: () Municipal Solicitor

EEOlsen
MUNICIPAL ENGINEER