

## Report CCR-PCD-30-14

**To:** Chair Wright and Members of the Planning and Community Development Committee  
**From:** Bryan Plumstead  
**Meeting Date:** September 16, 2014  
**Subject:** **Information and Tourism Signage Plan**  
**Status:** Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution PCD98-14; Endorsed by County Council October 7, 2014 per Resolution CC136-14;

### Recommendation(s)

**WHEREAS** having consistent signage on a road is essential to the overall safety of the road;

**AND WHEREAS** at the May 22, 2014 meeting of the Transportation Services Committee, staff was directed to develop a comprehensive road signage policy encompassing the criteria contained within Report CCR-TAPS-11-14 as well as such items as information and tourist signage;

**AND WHEREAS** Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) has developed a way-finding and tourism signage manual for the Counties of Grey, Bruce and Simcoe;

**AND WHEREAS** staff has researched the many types of information and tourism signage which includes directional and assurance signage;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Planning and Community Development Committee receives Report CCR-PCD-30-14, and recommend that the Transportation and Public Safety Committee adopt a recommendation to contract the services of a consultant to create a Grey County Information and Tourism Signage Plan based upon the RTO7 Signage manual.

## Background

Traffic control and management relies on a system of traffic control devices (including signage) for conveying messages to the road user. The objective of these messages is to advise motorists of traffic regulations in order to enable observance of the law, warn them of roadway characteristics and road hazards, and provide them the information necessary for route selection. Meeting these objectives improves safety and convenience for the road user, and promotes the efficient movement of people and goods in the orderly flow of traffic. Simplicity of the driving task through uniformity in the design and application of traffic control devices is necessary to accomplish these objectives.

If traffic control devices are not carefully designed and properly installed they can interfere with and distract from each other, becoming visibly ineffective and lose their authority through excessive use. Therefore simplicity and consistency in the design and placement are essential.

For the safety of the roads, criteria should be developed to determine what and where information and tourist signs should be installed to provide the needed information to motorist operators while ensuring the drivers are not saturated with information and the signage is provided in a timely fashion.

Over time, information signage throughout Grey County has not been implemented in a consistent or driver friendly method. This year, County Council has taken an incremental approach to dealing with the different types of information signage. The most immediate need was County, Municipal and Community identification signage on County Roads, and county road route markers which were in very poor shape and non-brand-compliant. Report CCR-TAPS-11-14 was supported by County Council and new signage has been purchased and is being installed.

The Planning and Community Development Committee also requested at its March 18, 2014 meeting that staff develop recommendations for the Committee's consideration with respect to signage for historical communities. Staff is currently working on this report and it is anticipated the report will be before the Committee at its October meeting.

The final, and most complex piece in Grey County's information signage system includes direction, assurance and tourism Signs. Staff was asked to address this signage, along with the previously completed criteria for entry and municipal identification, and historical signage in a comprehensive signage policy.

## *Information (Way-finding) Signage*

Way-finding is defined as “The consistent use of signs, maps and other graphic methods to convey location and direction to visitors throughout a region.” Although there is no question that GPS and smartphones are increasingly being used to locate and navigate to destinations, signage still has an important role to play in guiding travellers to their destination, providing assurance they are on the right track and also identifying tourist features that may not be on their itinerary. Ideally way-finding or information signage is consistent across the provincial, county and municipal road systems.

Information and tourism signage is in place today across Grey County but over the years the lack of a policy has culminated in an inconsistent system, with different types of signs in place. This is not conducive to drivers being able to make quick decisions.

## *RTO7 Way-finding Signage Manual*

Regional Tourism Organization 7 (representing Bruce, Grey, and Simcoe) has published a generic Tourism Way-finding Signage Standards and Specifications Manual. The manual contains general guidelines for a system of directional, assurance, community amenities, route markers and interpretive signage for rural and urban applications. This system applies to public facilities and has been widely applied in Bruce County, in some municipalities in Grey County in isolated cases, and in some municipalities in Simcoe County. The opportunity is to create as consistent a signage system as possible across Bruce, Grey and Simcoe Counties to facilitate visitor movement and tourism.

## *Next Steps*

Staff’s research of the options, including the experience of other road authorities and expertise, and staff’s own experience in setting criteria and signage types for entry, community identification and historical signage, has determined that creating an information or way-finding signage policy on a county-wide level is a big project. While staff could take it on, it would be over an extended timeframe and require significant staff resources. County staff recommends that the best approach to proceed in a timely manner is to hire a signage engineering consultant to guide this process.

Funding is available through RTO7’s Partnership Funding program for one third of the costs for this proposed plan, estimated at \$49,500, which includes at 10% contingency, leaving Grey County’s share at \$33,000. Transportation Services and Tourism staff would work with the Purchasing Department to create a Request For Proposal for this work based on the following requirements.

## *Grey County Information and Tourism Signage Plan Needs*

The overall intent of a signage plan is to ensure a coordinated and consistent system to provide direction, information and confirmation and assurance to road users in Grey County. This approach will balance the number of signs throughout Grey County and its municipalities to provide a clear, methodological sequence of directional elements to municipal and privately-owned destinations. The main needs for this plan are as follows:

- 1) Develop policy to determine criteria for information and tourism signage
- 2) Set criteria to determine what public facilities and tourist attractions should be included on information signs
- 3) Set criteria for tourism signs (pay as you play) and outline administration requirements
- 4) Determine size, colour, messaging and lettering on each sign type
- 5) Recommend preferred signage fabrication and installation specifications to deliver best value keeping in mind RTO7's Signage Manual
- 6) Develop a multi-year signage implementation work plan

## Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

### Considerations

While there are no specific legal implications, a poorly designed signage system could potentially lead to claims of liability in the case of accidents which in turn would impact both the County's legal and insurance costs.

There will be implications for staff in the Clerk's Office, Tourism and Economic Development and the Transportation Services' Department in both the development and implementation of the strategy. Hiring consulting assistance is recommended as the best use of staff resources.

No funding is currently within the 2014 budget for this purpose. A one-time funding allocation of \$190,000 was approved by County Council for the gateway/identification and route marker signage. Most of this signage has now been purchased and the actual cost is estimated to be \$100,000 to \$120,000.

It is unlikely that the historical signage signs will be installed in 2014 as winter is fast approaching. Currently, the total cost of the historical signage is estimated at \$10,000.

Consulting services for a project of this size is estimated at \$45,000. Staff recommend that a 10% contingency be added to provide for a total project size of \$49,500.

Consulting services for way-finding and directional signage is currently an eligible project under RTO7. It is recommended that the project be funded from the One Time Reserve and that staff put in an application to RTO7 for funding. Should the funding application be successful, the County's contribution would be reduced by \$16,500 to \$33,000.

Once a strategy has been developed, there will be ongoing costs to implement the program. Clearly, signs in need of replacement will be dealt with on an as needed basis. Beyond that, staff will develop an implementation plan to be brought forward for consideration. One of the considerations will be whether to consolidate all signs within the Transportation Services' budget or to retain tourist route signing such as waterfall, canoe access, etc., within the Tourism budget.

## Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

The creation and implementation of a road signage policy that incorporates the County's new brand meets Goal 6.6 of reviewing and updating the County's corporate branding. Additionally, Goal 3 of securing our place as Ontario's recreation jewel is supported by consistent, coherent and visually pleasing way-finding signage.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Manager, Economic Development and Tourism

Director Sign Off: *Sharon Vokes and Michael Kelly*