

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON  
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT  
RAPPORT

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Our File/N/Réf.           03-07-97-0095  
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE                       26 August 1997

TO/DEST.                 Transportation Committee

FROM/EXP.               Acting Committee Co-ordinator

SUBJECT/OBJET         **AUDIBLE PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS**

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### **REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

#### **For Committee discussion.**

#### **BACKGROUND**

A request has been received from persons wishing to discuss the issue of Audible Pedestrian Signals with the Committee. These provincially-approved signals help the blind and the visually impaired negotiate street crossing at certain intersections.

The following relevant correspondence has been received and is issued separately:

1. Copy of Correspondence dated August 14, 1997 from Marie and Chris Stark to Mr. M. Sheflin, Environment and Transportation Commissioner;
2. Copy of Correspondence dated August 14, 1997 from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to Mr. J. Bell, Manager, Traffic Operations Branch, R.M.O.C.;
3. Copy of Correspondence dated June 16, 1997 from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to Mr. Chris Stark;
4. Report on an Accessibility Workshop, Roads and Sidewalks, held on Saturday, March 22, 1997 in the City of Gloucester;

5. Report dated 9 Sep 91 from the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control re: Project 122, Audible Pedestrian Indications.
6. Audible Pedestrian Indications (information provided by the Transportation Association of Canada).

This material is respectfully submitted.

*Approved by*  
*M. J. Beauregard*

**Regional Municipality of Ottawa -Carleton**

**MEMORANDUM**

**Municipalité Régional d' Ottawa-Carleton**

**NOTE DE SERVICE**

**Our File/N/Réf.**

**Your File/V/Réf.**

**Date** Tuesday, August 26, 1997

**To/Dest.** Richard Cantin, Chair regional transportation Committee

**From/Exp.** Diane Holmes, Regional Councillor

**Subject/Object** **Audible Pedestrian Signals for Vision Impaired Pedestrians**

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Would you please place the attached communication on the Committee agenda of September 3.

I will be moving a motion for the Committee's consideration recommending the establishment of an ad hoc committee, the Audible Pedestrian Signals Advisory Committee, as described in the attachment.

Thank you for your assistance.



Diane Holmes

## **Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS): A Way To Resolve The Issues**

The increasing volume and complexity of traffic and of intersection design and operation has led to requests from the region's blind and visually impaired residents for review of the issues related to audible pedestrian signals (APS). This is a proposal to involve blind and visually impaired citizens in responsible problem-solving in a time-limited process to deal with these concerns. the present document:

- illustrates the various forms a consultative process has taken in several Canadian cities; and
- proposes an approach that could work in Ottawa-Carleton with a minimum of demands on resources.

### **Consultative Process in Several Canadian Cities**

In cities such as Metro Toronto, Winnipeg Victoria and Quebec City transportation authorities have taken responsibility for developing policy and procedures for the installation and operation of audible traffic signals by working with an inter-organizational access committee including visually impaired and blind persons, representatives of interested others, and technical specialists. These committees have

- advised on the selection of signals (bird calls, verbal messages, etc.)
- means to enable blind people to locate pushbuttons,
- advised on signals usable by deafblind pedestrians,
- drawn up criteria for the prioritizing of locations for the installation of audible signals.
- resolved concerns about noise for neighbouring residents.

The cities have differed as to whether they go on to use the committee as a mechanism for the application of criteria in selection of locations, or whether they devise a quantifiable, objective set of factors with a weighting scale which is then to be applied as a warrant by staff.

### **Proposed for Ottawa Carleton**

We suggest the following approach for use in Ottawa-Carleton:

- an ad hoc committee, to be called the Audible Pedestrian Signals Advisory Committee, to prepare for the Transportation Committee a plan for audible pedestrian signals, including
- preparing a mission statement for the APS program;

- factors to be considered and criteria to be used in prioritizing locations for installation of APS;

choice of sounds to be used;

- selection of technology to signal the blind pedestrian where the APS pushbutton is; located.

- how APS will be operated so as to ensure safety of blind pedestrians and to mitigate any unfavourable impact on adjacent communities;

p recommend ways to ensure that pushbuttons are accessible (access to islands, snow clearing practices, etc.)

- during a trial period, review and evaluate requests for the installation of APS at particular locations and advising on the application of criteria as to their relative priority;

- advise on awareness training for staff whose work relates to APS, and especially those whose work involves problem-solving with individual blind/visually impaired residents about APS at particular intersections.

- evaluate the trial phase, and recommend modifications to the criteria and plan as indicated.

- recommend to the Transportation Committee the procedures to be followed by the Transportation Department after the trial period and the conclusion of the ad hoc committee's work.

- bring to the attention of the Transportation committee any remaining issues regarding APS, and identify for the Committee any other traffic issues affecting blind and visually impaired pedestrians which remain unresolved.

#### Composition of the Ad Hoc Committee

To capture differing consumer perspectives, the participants should include:

- at least one blind person who is an experienced cane traveller;
- at least one blind person who is an experienced guide dog user;

- at least one person with low vision who is experienced in using adaptive travel skills;

- at least one person who is the parent of a blind or visually impaired child;

It would be advantageous to have on the committee a blind/visually impaired resident of each local municipality, as being familiar with and concerned about local conditions. Councillors may wish to identify such persons among their constituents. We recommend that the region also seek applicants through public advertisement on its automated telephone information line; on the vision BBS, the CNIB telephone newsline, and local radio stations.

We recommend that the following individuals/organizations be invited to take part:

- representatives from local organizations of blind and visually impaired persons, such as the Ottawa chapter of the Canadian Council of the Blind and the Gloucester Visually Impaired Persons Group, deaf-blind selfhelp group, etc.

- an orientation and mobility specialist experienced in teaching cane travel skills (Terry Keough, C.N.I.B.);

- an experienced guide dog trainer (Brian Francis, Trading manager, Canadian guide Dogs for the Blind, Manotick);

- liaison with the Ottawa pedestrian Advisory Group.

We recommend that the committee be chaired by a member of the region's Transportation Committee. Alternatively, the committee should select its own chair from among its members.

#### **Resources Needed for the Ad Hoc Committee**

- The work is likely to require half a dozen meetings over perhaps a year. it is likely that there will need to be a one-day conference of blind and visually impaired people and/or some site visits to selected intersections to assess problems and solutions.

There will need to be staff support for the committee. However, both RMOC staff and local activists have already done some of the research required. Documents may be required in various alternative formats as the needs of the committee members may vary.

#### **Conclusion**

Concerns about the design and operation of audible pedestrian signals have been growing over the past ten or fifteen years, not only in Ottawa-Carleton, but in other Canadian cities as well. This reflects the increasing volume and complexity of traffic and of roadway and intersection design and operation. RMOC can draw on its experience and on the experience of other cities, and of its blind and visually impaired citizens so as to address the concerns that are vexing RMOC and worrying the region's blind and visually impaired persons.

August 1997

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