



Report to: Development Services Committee

Report Date: May 5, 2026

SUBJECT: Veterans Crosswalk Assessment

PREPARED BY: Mustafa Ismatyar, Program Manager, Mobility Safety, Ext. 4020
David Porretta, Manager, Traffic Engineering, Ext. 2040

REVIEWED BY: Eric Chan, Senior Manager, Transportation, Ext. 2048

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Staff report titled “Veterans Crosswalk Assessment”, be received; and,
2. That Council endorse the Staff recommendation to prohibit the use of decorative crosswalk treatments in the City of Markham; and,
3. That existing City programs continue to be used to commemorate veterans or other special interests/groups; and further,
4. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to respond to the Motion titled “Veterans Crosswalk”, which was passed at the December 16, 2025 Council meeting. The recorded details can be found in the [meeting minutes](#).

BACKGROUND:

The Motion speaks to the importance of recognizing and honouring of the service and sacrifice of veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces. As a visible symbol of gratitude and remembrance for our veterans, several municipalities across Canada have introduced veteran-themed crosswalks, providing a meaningful way to engage residents, promote awareness and demonstrate the City’s commitment to supporting those who served in our country.

Council directed staff to investigate the feasibility of installing a veterans crosswalk at a suitable location within the City of Markham, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Staff were also requested to report back to Council with potential design options, locations, cost estimates, and implementation timelines.

DISCUSSION:

The request for a veterans crosswalk prompted a broader examination of decorative crosswalks. Decorative crosswalks incorporate elements such as colour, imagery, texture, materials, and

design for purposes such as community identity, commemoration, culture and inclusion. These treatments go beyond standard crosswalk markings. Examples of decorative crosswalks are shown in **Figure 1**.

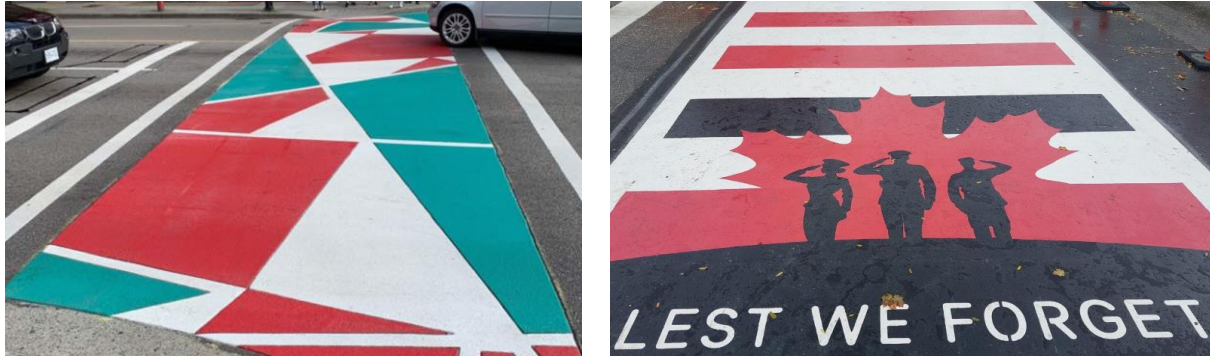


Figure 1: Decorative Crosswalk Examples

Review of Standards, Safety Considerations, and Impacts of Decorative Crosswalks

Staff conducted research and reviewed available standards, guidelines and literature related to decorative crosswalk feasibility, implementation, maintenance, and safety.

The Ontario Highway Traffic Act (HTA) does not provide guidance on decorative crosswalks, including veterans crosswalks. Provincial guidelines, such as Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) define crosswalks as uniform markings consisting of two parallel white lines with an optional “ladder” style application to provide visual contrast and enhance visibility. Maintaining uniformity is necessary to ensure a consistent understanding among road users.

OTM further notes that:

- Textured or coloured crosswalks require standard parallel crosswalk lines to delineate the outside edges of the crosswalk.
- Decorative materials may unintentionally convey meanings not intended by the road authority.

The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) conducted comprehensive research in April 2023¹, concluding that non-standard crosswalk markings can negatively impact safety. Key TAC research findings include the following concerns:

- Accessibility for pedestrians with visual impairments;
- Reduced visibility as markings deteriorate due to materials used, traffic, and winter operations;
- Increased slip and skid risk if non-slip materials are not used;
- Vandalism and degradation can reduce comprehension and effectiveness over time.

¹ [Non-Standard Pavement Markings for Crosswalks](#)

Jurisdictional Survey and Municipal Experience with Decorative Crosswalks

A jurisdictional survey that was distributed to several municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), to obtain information regarding the logistics and impacts of implementing decorative crosswalks on the public roads. A total of ten municipalities responded to the survey, with seven municipalities having previously implemented decorative crosswalks on their public rights-of-way. Of the 10 municipalities surveyed, only two (i.e., City of Hamilton and Peel Region) recommended continuing the practice of implementing decorative crosswalks. City of Hamilton has established its own guideline for decorative crosswalks and will continue to implement them. Peel Region generally supports the implementation of decorative crosswalks, on an individual case-by-case basis. City of Burlington identified legal and liability implications, and maintenance costs as the main reasons for not continuing to implement decorative crosswalks in the future.

Many municipalities lack formal guidelines and rely on templates from external stakeholders (i.e. Royal Canadian Legion). Some municipalities noted insufficient experience to form a definitive position about the use of decorative crosswalks. Responses are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Jurisdictional Survey Responses

Municipality	Have Implemented Decorative Crosswalks?	Recommend implementation of decorative crosswalks on public roads?
Region of Peel	Yes	Yes
Region of York	Yes	No
City of Brampton	No	No
City of Burlington	Yes	No
City of Hamilton	Yes	Yes
City of Richmond Hill	No	N/A
City of Vaughan	Yes	Unable to comment due to insufficient experience and data
Town of Aurora	Yes	Unable to comment due to insufficient experience and data
Town of Milton	Yes	No response
Town of Newmarket	No	N/A. No plans to implement

To mitigate liability and public safety risks, some municipalities have installed decorative crosswalks within municipal parking lots or access roads where the HTA does not apply. However, this does not eliminate public safety concerns or maintenance requirements.

The cost of installing one decorative crosswalk using durable thermoplastic pavement markings can exceed \$20,000. Thermoplastic pavement markings have an average life cycle of seven years depending on the asphalt condition and traffic volume. This factors in winter maintenance activities. Standard traffic paint can be 75% less expensive but requires re-application at least twice annually (i.e., spring and fall). Installation of decorative crosswalks also requires specialized equipment for the application of non-standard designs and materials, and is more labour-intensive, increasing operating and maintenance costs.

Staff Assessment and Rationale for Not Implementing Decorative Crosswalks

Staff do not recommend implementing decorative crosswalks on public roads or City-maintained facilities for the following reasons:

- No Federal or Provincial guidelines for decorative crosswalks exist. Deviation from regulations and guidelines for standard pavement markings will increase the City's liability risk.
- Allowing individualized designs erodes uniformity and weakens the legal and operational clarity of crosswalks as regulatory devices.
- The City could risk non-compliance with accessibility obligations if decorative designs compromise clarity, contrast, or night-time visibility.
- Decorative crosswalks create **maintenance, durability, and cost burdens due to need for more frequent repainting** due to fading and wear, specialized materials that may **perform poorly in winter**, and one-off designs that are harder to replace consistently.
- Non-standard roadway elements increase the risk of misinterpretation and safety issues (e.g., poor retro-reflectivity at night, trip/slip due to non-standard paint materials, extra challenges for visually impaired persons), creating liability concerns.
- Maintenance requirements and costs for non-standard treatments are significantly higher than standard crosswalk designs.
- Decorative crosswalks are vulnerable to vandalism, as reported by other municipalities.

Staff recommend adopting an operational policy that prohibits non-standard applications of pavement markings for crosswalks. The City regularly receives requests for decorative crosswalk treatments; accommodating them would require extensive design work, increase risk exposure and strain municipal resources.

Current City Programs and Initiatives are Available to Commemorate Veterans

The City has existing programs in place that acknowledge the service and sacrifice of veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as programs that can be leveraged to commemorate individual veterans:

- Veterans banners for Remembrance Day
- Veterans Square & Cenotaph at Markham Village Community Centre
- Unionville Cenotaph
- Park & street naming dedications to soldiers (street name signs with poppy logo)
- Annual Remembrance Day Ceremony
- Commemorative Tree Program
- Commemorative Bench Program

These programs provide meaningful opportunities to recognize veterans and can continue to be used to commemorate veterans and special interests/groups.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

This report does not have an immediate or direct impact on the Operating Budget or Life Cycle Reserve Study.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The recommendations identified within this report align with the strategic focus for a Safe & Sustainable Community, through the ongoing management and stewardship of the City's transportation network.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Operations, Legal, Finance, Planning & Urban Design, and Corporate Communications departments were consulted in the preparation of this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Frank Clarizio, P.Eng.
Director of Engineering

Trinela Cane
Commissioner of Development Services