



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Catherine Biss, CEO Markham Public Library

Prepared by: Andrea Cecchetto, Director, Service Excellence, Markham Public Library

Date: June 8, 2020

Re: Proposed Curbside Services at Markham Public Library

RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the rationale outlined in this memorandum and the rigorous consideration of safety identified in the Library's curbside service plan, the Board recommends that the City approve the implementation of curbside service. The Board therefore recommends to council:

1. Curbside service be implemented at Markham Public Library, effective July 6
2. This service will be implemented in a phased-in approach as outlined in MPL's CURBSIDE SERVICE PLAN (above), and contingent on:
 - a. Board, Provincial and City of Markham approvals/directions
 - b. Health and safety measures and protocols are in place, in compliance with York Region Public Health recommendations.

Purpose:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to present to Council Markham Public Library's plan for curbside services, as directed by the Markham Public Library Board motion of May 24, 2020.

Circulation of physical collections is a core service for MPL and an important means by which the library provides equitable access to information and supports community literacy. At the same time, MPL is deeply committed to the safety of its staff and community members, and in contemplating reintroducing physical circulation, has developed a strategy that focuses first on minimizing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and providing a safe environment for staff and Markham residents.

To this end, MPL's curbside service has been developed in accordance with public health guidelines, the City of Markham's guidelines for essential services, provincial guidelines on curbside service, library sector best practices for material handling, and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

MPL's curbside service has been designed to provide maximum value to the community in a cost effective way, requiring no additional resources or staffing. It has been developed following a rigorous risk assessment under the MPL Board's Enterprise Risk Management Policy and the City of Markham's Service Readiness Assessment.

Discussion:

BACKGROUND

Library Sector

The Province of Ontario announced that curbside service would be permitted for Ontario libraries beginning May 19, 2020. Since this announcement the vast majority of libraries in the GTA have announced plans to launch such a service, including neighbouring systems Toronto Public Library (launch date June 8), Vaughan Public Library (launched May 20) and Richmond Hill Public Library (launch date June 8), as well as all York and Durham Region systems.

Industry associations, notably the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), have been working collaboratively on establishing best practices for curbside services based on Public Health regulations from various jurisdictions – senior staff from MPL contributed to this industry level planning. Across Canada, the member library systems that comprise CULC have launched or have committed to a launch date for curbside service. These systems have, like MPL, developed plans that prioritize safety and are consistent with a phased-approach to service recovery. To date, there has not been a single case across North America of community spread related to library materials. Markham residents have been expressing interest in this services, with over 70 inquiries from customers in the two days alone following the Premier's announcement that this service would be permitted.

The Value of Curbside Service

Curbside service allows libraries to circulate physical materials – part of their core mandate. This is the main tactic by which all public libraries fulfil their core missions and legislated mandate: to provide equitable access to information to their communities. Over the past 3 months, MPL has expanded access to digital resources, launched virtual programs and developed new online services that guide the community through the use of our virtual services. While well received, the digital services fail to meet the needs of Markham's marginalized or vulnerable populations:

- Many residents lack the means or access to participate in digital environments and depend on the library's physical collections. This often includes vulnerable populations who are economically marginalized or socially isolated, and older adults who may not have experience using digital platforms.
- MPL is a major community provider of services that support newcomer settlement. Many of our newcomer members are residents who are particularly vulnerable to the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our physical collections play a significant role in this by

supporting access to materials that assist with citizenship and civic engagement, education, language learning and health.

- Parents, now acting as at-home-educators, have expressed their desire for access to physical collections to supplement at-home learning and to provide screen-free activities for children at home during the pandemic. This is significant both because children are at heightened risk for ‘learning loss’ (a phenomenon whereby they lose academic progress and even a back-slide in literacy levels when not in school) and because there is limited children’s content published in digital formats. As a result, residents will not have as much access to age/curriculum appropriate material through online collections alone. This is exacerbated for economically marginalized families. Having library materials in the home will benefit students without the devices (or sufficient devices) and Internet access they need to keep learning, and will help mitigate the risk of falling behind their peers.

The value of access to MPL’s physical collections is significant. MPL conducts a biannual economic impact study of its services using industry-standard methodology pioneered by the Martin Prosperity Institute. In 2019, the conservative estimate of the economic impact of library collections was \$60.6M annually, with an estimated 5:1 ROI on residents’ tax dollar investment in the overall library service. MPL has one of the highest per capita annual circulation rates of all comparator libraries in the province, and one of the lowest ratios of per capita investment for service. MPL takes pride in providing services with exceptional value to the community while fulfilling its critical mandate to support community learning.

MPL’S CURBSIDE SERVICE PLAN – PHASE I

The following is a summary of the proposed curbside service at MPL, including operational details of the service so that Council may make an informed decision whether to support this service.

CONSIDERATIONS	DETAILS
Service Description – HOLDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers will be able to place holds online/by phone at 3 Branches and pick up materials by appointment • Three branches will include Markham Village, Thornhill Village and Unionville to provide geographic coverage of community • Holds can only be placed on items available at the pick-up branch • Reduced service hours for Phase I – 10-6pm Monday to Saturday • Current holds to be processed first; then new holds will be accepted
Pick-up Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers book pick up time in advance • Appointments may be made online or by phone • Designated parking spaces will be used for pick up and clearly marked • Pick-up parking spaces will all be at 2m distance from each other • Customers arrive at designated time and identify themselves by order number • Use of custom app under investigation

CONSIDERATIONS	DETAILS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff bring items to beside the car – no contact with customer or vehicle • Customers will retrieve item after staff have cleared the area • Other than delivery, staff remain inside branch at all times • There will be a process available for customers picking up without a car – customers’ items will be delivered to a self-serve table which will be disinfected after each use
Returns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contactless returns – staff will place bins on carts and customers return items directly into bins • Carts are left in quarantine for 72 hours before items are processed • Returns from other branches will be held at drop off location • Returns would be optional – due dates for materials will continue to be extended during closure of physical branches
Health and Safety	<p>H&S Plan development based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act</i> • Public Services Health and Safety Association Guidelines • York Region Public Health Guidelines • Province of Ontario Curbside Service Guidelines • MPL’s Health and Safety Program • City of Markham’s <i>Field Guide for Essential Workers</i> • Canadian Urban Libraries Council Recovery Toolkit <p>General Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of designated staff entrance • Branch use limited to areas required to deliver service • Staggered arrival times, breaks • Pre-shift self-monitoring screening will be implemented • Any staff who are ill are NOT permitted to report to work • Staff will work at only one location, with the same colleagues for all shifts to minimize opportunity for contact <p>Physical Distancing Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No physical contact with customers at any part of process • No contact between customers • Physical spacing between designated parking spaces • Eliminate use of shared workstations for staff • Workstations arranged to maximize physical distance (ie in different areas of branch) • No contact with returns or customer vehicles <p>Materials Processing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72 Hour quarantine of returning materials (very conservative best practice) • No inter-branch hold or other courier services in phase I-IV

CONSIDERATIONS	DETAILS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All existing safe handling practices in place (e.g. safe lifting, weight restrictions for staff, workplace ergonomics, etc) • Drop-off in paper bags <p>Parking Lot Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Safety equipment – pylons, reflective vests • Training on parking lot safety to be provided by City of Markham’s H&S Coordinator and MPL’s Manager, Facilities and Workplace Safety • Designated spaces and routes to be marked • Adherence to bylaws including fire routes • Staggered appointments to reduce traffic <p>Cleaning/Disinfection, PPE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved cleaning supplies will be provided to disinfect workstations • Cleaning services to maintain overall cleanliness • Deep cleaning of spaces prior to staff entry into branches • Cleaning protocol established for all surfaces and spaces used, including for break rooms • Cleaning protocol consistent with City of Markham’s standards and public health guidelines • Sanitizer, soap and water to be available in all workstations • Use of PPE based on risk analysis – non-medical masks advised (required when performing drop-offs); gloves not recommended other than for moving carts of materials prior to quarantine • Masks must be disinfected after each use – staff will be trained on the proper procedures for this <p>Inclement Weather:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will remain indoors other than drop-off as part of service design • Contingencies for inclement weather may include rescheduling appointments, use of rain gear (umbrellas, etc) <p>Staff Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff will be trained on MPL’s procedures and H&S protocols, as well as the City of Markham Field Guide and will be required to review and comply with all procedures • Training for service delivery will be provided online and in person • H&S training covering safe use of PPE, COVID-19 requirements, parking lot safety will be provided to all staff by City of Markham H&S Specialist and the MPL Manager, Facilities and Workplace Safety
Staffing Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will work in two shifts each day • Staff will work with the same colleagues on each shift • Staff will be assigned to only one branch • Service will be run with minimum staffing resources to support physical distancing

CONSIDERATIONS	DETAILS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service will be launched with existing staffing resources – no additional staff will be recalled for Phase I-III • Service will launch with no anticipated labour impacts – job descriptions of the staff who will be assigned to this service allow for this work (it is included within their normal job duties) • The staffing for this plan is consistent with language in the Collective Agreement for FT staff; Senior staff have further consulted with MPL’s legal counsel to further mitigate any risk • MPL is communicating regularly with its union to implement curbside pick-up with both parties committed to addressing any concerns raised • MPL’s Health and Safety program provides direction for handling work refusals or other potential issues – all management staff have been trained on these processes as well as managing workplace accommodations to support vulnerable staff
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This service will incur no additional staffing costs • Courier service will remain suspended until Phase V of curbside service
Accessibility and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have developed contingency plans for customers whose accessibility needs preclude curbside delivery • This includes mail delivery of materials and/or adapted curbside service where needed • Provisions will be made for customers who do not have access to a vehicle to allow contactless pick up outside the branch – this will include additional physical distancing requirements to manage the space outside and disinfecting protocols • Physical requirements of this work are consistent with regular staff duties i.e. staff are expected to lift up to 50lb, work a majority of their shift on their feet etc as per their job description,

SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION – PHASES

MPL proposes to implement curbside service in a phased manner. The benefits of this approach include the ability to monitor the use and effectiveness of the service and to ensure that this service is managed within the Provincial Recovery Framework and direction from the City of Markham. The proposed phases of this service are outlined below; however, they are highly contingent on the following:

- Approval by the MPL Board and Markham Council
- Public Health guidelines
- Provincial regulations

PHASE	OVERVIEW	TIMING
PHASE I – HOLDS DISTRIBUTION	Prior to making available to customers the option to place new holds, customers will be able to pick up current holds, if they still wish to borrow these materials.	July 6

PHASE II – PICK-UP & RETURNS	As described above	July 6
PHASE III – FULL HOURS	Continue to offer curbside pick-up at select branches, but expand to MPL’s normal operating hours. No additional staff required.	July or later
PHASE IV – ADDITIONAL BRANCHES	Expand service to all MPL branches. This is contingent on community centre staffing (i.e. availability of facility operators). Additional library staff would be required at this time to support the expanded hours and locations since staff will continue to be assigned to only one location.	August or later
PHASE V – INTER-BRANCH HOLDS	At this stage, MPL would reactivate its courier service to allow holds to be placed on materials at other locations. At this point, returns would also be shipped to their home location for processing. This phase would proceed return to branch operations which is not anticipated until Stage 3 of recovery under the provincial framework.	September or later (prior to stage 3 of Provincial Recovery)

SERVICE READINESS REVIEW SUMMARY

Review and Reinvention of Service: curbside service is an initial option towards a return to physical circulation. This is a core function for MPL. Throughout recovery, modifications will be made to this service to ensure the safety of staff and residents.

Resource & Fiscal Requirements: the first phase of implementation will be implemented within MPL’s existing staffing complement and without additional resource requirements. There are no fiscal requirements to initiate this program.

Adaptations Required for Safety: as outlined above in the Health and Safety Plan, MPL has developed a robust set of requirements to ensure this service will be delivered safely. This includes considerations for cleaning/disinfecting, physical distancing in the branch, parking lot safety, safe material handling, and intensive training for staff prior to launching the service.

Reinvention Option for Delivery: while the curbside concept is well tested in retail environments and will be rolled out across libraries, it is a reinvented option for the delivery of physical circulation and an option to provide access to collections to customers in the absence of the opportunity for in-branch borrowing.

Stakeholder Engagement: residents have been requesting curbside pick-up, even prior to the provincial announcement of the service. In developing this plan, staff investigated different models that were

being used to determine a safe and efficient approach. Further, culture-sector research provided insights into public sentiment about return-to-service.

Timeframe: as indicated in the recommendation, MPL is proposing a tentative launch date no earlier July 6. This will provide time for staff scheduling and training, and to manage the logistics for the service launch. Subsequent phases of this service would be rolled in over the summer months pending developments with the pandemic and the City's recovery planning.

Impact of Not Launching Curbside Service

- Lack of access to physical collections disproportionately impacts vulnerable individuals and children who have limited access to materials through virtual platforms
- MPL would be the only library in York Region not to launch this service – Toronto Public Library and the Durham Region Libraries are also launching this service – creating negative public relations impacts
- Given requests from the community for this service, MPL would fail to respond to community needs resulting in negative customer service impacts. Since the provincial announcement on May 19, MPL staff have responded to over 175 customer complaints on this topic; this accounts for almost 20% of all customer inquiries since MPL's closure in March.