SUBJECT: Project Auto Find (PED08106) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That staff be directed to establish a permanent partnership with the Hamilton Police Service and the Insurance Bureau of Canada to allow continued participation with “Project Auto Find”.

(b) That the Director of Parking and By-law Services be authorized and directed to sign the Memo of Understanding or any other necessary documents in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Report PED08106 recommends that the Parking and By-law Services Division enter into a permanent partnership with Hamilton Police Service and the Insurance Board of Canada to operate a vehicle specially equipped with license plate recognition equipment which detects stolen vehicles.
BACKGROUND:

In January 2007, it was reported that, subject to the insurance and liability issues being attended to, staff intended to enter into a partnership with the Hamilton Police Service and the Insurance Bureau of Canada for a six-to-twelve month trial, to operate a vehicle specially equipped with license plate recognition equipment which detects stolen vehicles.

It was reported that with little extra effort and no additional expenditures, City staff could participate in this important community initiative in an effort to reduce automobile insurance costs and to assist in crime prevention. The Insurance Bureau of Canada provides the vehicle free of charge to the Hamilton Police Service (except for fuel and insurance which are costs inherent to the operation of any vehicle). Parking Enforcement Officers operate this specially equipped vehicle during routine patrols throughout the City in an effort to increase the number of stolen vehicles recovered and to reduce the time that a stolen vehicle is on the street.

The vehicle is equipped with roof-mounted cameras which scan license plates during routine patrols, and cross-references information with the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). When an operator receives a “positive hit” on a scanned plate, the information is verified in CPIC. Hamilton Police Service then dispatches an officer to recover the stolen vehicle. If the Police response time is greater than 15 minutes, the operator places a wheel lock (more commonly known as a “boot”) on the vehicle to ensure recovery and to allow City staff to promptly continue with their regular duties.

City staff has now been asked to continue the partnership on a permanent basis.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

Since February 2007, Parking and By-Law Services enforcement staff has operated the Auto Find vehicle in conjunction with their regular duties. The vehicle is normally operated up to 6 days per week for approximately 16 hours per day during 2 shifts.

Staff located 168 stolen vehicles between February and December 2007 with the use of Auto Find alone; an average of 3.3 recovered vehicles per week. According to Police, the recovery time of a stolen vehicle was approximately 72 hours to 84 hours. However, since Auto Find has been in operation the recovery time has been reduced to approximately 24 hours to 48 hours. Enforcement staff has also been indirectly involved in the arrests of 2 individuals due to the findings/operation of the Auto Find vehicle.

While participating in this trial, there has been minimal impact on staff time and no negative impact on parking fine revenues. The stolen vehicle recovery time has been reduced dramatically and Hamilton Police resources are being used more effectively on their core duties.

As Project Auto find has demonstrated a direct and positive effect on the health and safety of this community, it is recommended that the partnership continue on a permanent basis.
**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Discontinue participation in this program.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial: N/A

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

N/A

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION:**

Hamilton Police Service and Risk Management were consulted.

**CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:**

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, and economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☑ Yes ☐ No

MH:PC:jcs