



STAFF REPORT

TO: Chief Administrative Officer
FROM: Jas Sandhu, Superintendent, Public Works and Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Seasonal Paid Parking Strategy – 2026 Soft Launch
MEETING DATE: June 9, 2026

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council direction regarding the implementation of a Seasonal Parking Management Strategy, including a paid parking pilot program to begin in 2026 in high-demand waterfront and tourism areas during the 2026 summer season.

Implementing the program as a pilot in 2026 will allow the Town to test parking management measures, gather operational and financial data, and receive feedback from residents, businesses, and visitors before making any long-term commitments. The pilot approach provides an opportunity to evaluate what is working, identify areas for improvement, and make informed adjustments to rates, locations, enforcement, and operations for the 2027 season.

BACKGROUND

This initiative represents the continuation of a longstanding community and Council discussion regarding the most effective approach to managing parking demand in a manner that balances the needs of residents, visitors, businesses, and the broader interests of the Town. As a popular tourism destination and regional service centre for the West Cowichan area, the Town experiences significant seasonal fluctuations in parking demand, particularly within the waterfront, Uptown, and commercial areas during the summer months.

Recognizing these challenges, Council previously commissioned a parking study to better understand current and future parking needs and to explore potential parking management strategies. Council has also provided direction to staff to investigate and prepare for the implementation of paid

parking, including the acquisition of equipment and technology necessary to support a future parking management program.

The Town has taken several incremental steps to improve parking management. Most recently, restrictions on buses and large commercial vehicles were introduced within the Saywell Park parking lot during the 2025 summer season. These changes improved safety, traffic circulation, and accessibility within one of the Town's busiest parking areas. The establishment of a designated bus loading and unloading area on Point Ideal Road further improved the organization and functionality of the waterfront area.

Despite these efforts, parking turnover and availability continue to present challenges during peak tourism periods. Staff continue to observe extended occupancy of premium parking spaces in key locations, reducing parking availability for customers, visitors, and users of public amenities. As visitor volumes continue to increase, there is a growing need to transition from simply providing parking infrastructure to actively managing parking as a municipal asset.

The proposed 2026 Parking Management Pilot Program is intended to build upon previous Council direction and operational experience by introducing paid parking in selected high-demand areas. The pilot will provide an opportunity to evaluate parking utilization, turnover, enforcement requirements, revenue generation, and public feedback before considering any permanent long-term parking management strategy. Following the 2026 season, staff will report back to Council with recommendations and any proposed refinements for implementation in 2027.

THE PLAN – 2026 SOFT LAUNCH

The proposed Seasonal Parking Management Strategy is based on four key objectives:

1. Improve Parking Turnover

Public parking is intended to support access to local businesses, parks, and community amenities. Parking turnover ensures that a greater number of users can access these destinations throughout the day.

2. Manage Visitor Demand

As a tourism destination, the Town experiences concentrated seasonal demand for parking. Paid parking is a recognized demand-management tool used by many destination communities to balance parking utilization and improve availability.

3. Enhance Public Safety

Improved parking management will reduce congestion, improve sightlines, maintain emergency access routes, and improve traffic circulation in high-demand areas.

4. Promote Financial Sustainability

Parking management programs create opportunities to recover a portion of the costs associated with maintaining parking lots, waterfront facilities, washrooms, parks, signage, enforcement, and other visitor-serving infrastructure.

PILOT PROGRAM

Staff recommend implementing paid parking in the following locations during the 2026 summer season:

Saywell Park Parking Lot

- Three-hour (3) parking limit.
- Paid parking during the pilot period.
- Enhanced enforcement and signage.

Point Ideal Road

- Paid parking within designated areas.
- Clearly marked parking boundaries.
- Improved traffic management and pedestrian safety.

Kaatza Place

- Combination of paid parking and short-term loading zones.
- Designated drop-off and accessibility spaces.

Centennial Park Gravel Parking Lot

- Paid overflow parking area.
- Long-stay parking option for visitors.

Additional parking management measures would include:

- Improved one-hour and two-hour parking zones.
- Additional signage within commercial areas.
- Enhanced enforcement during peak periods.
- Identification of supplementary public parking opportunities.

To support the objectives of the 2026 Parking Management Pilot Program, staff recommend the following fee structure:

Proposed Rates

Location	Rate
Saywell Park	\$2.00 per hour
Point Ideal Road	\$2.00 per hour
Centennial Field Gravel Lot	\$2.00 per hour
Daily Maximum (all locations)	\$10.00 per day.

The proposed rates are intended to encourage turnover in premium waterfront parking areas while continuing to provide affordable access to visitors. The daily maximum ensures that visitors utilizing the Town's amenities for extended periods are not subject to excessive parking costs.

Resident Exemption Program

Consistent with the recommendations of the Town's Parking Study, residents would be exempt from paid parking requirements through a Resident Parking Permit Program. Residents contribute to the maintenance of municipal infrastructure through property taxation and should not be required to pay for access to public parking facilities within their own community.

Permanent residents of the Town would be eligible to apply for a no-cost annual resident parking permit. Permits could be issued electronically and linked to vehicle licence plates, eliminating the need for physical decals and reducing administrative requirements. Alternatively, the town can source and supply a small decal that must be visible when parking in designation areas in order to avoid any enforcement actions by the Town.

Resident permits would exempt eligible vehicles from parking fees but would not exempt vehicles from applicable time restrictions, safety regulations, fire lanes, accessible parking requirements, or other parking regulations.

Council may also wish to consider extending eligibility to local business owners and employees through a separate business parking permit program to support the Uptown commercial area.

Parking Violations

Parking infractions would be subject to the following penalties:

Violation	Penalty
Parking Violation	\$50.00
Early Payment Discount	50%
Failure to Pay Parking Fees	\$50.00
Parking Beyond Time Limit	\$50.00
Parking in Prohibited Areas	\$50.00

Towing and Impoundment

Vehicles creating a safety hazard, obstructing access, occupying prohibited areas, or repeatedly violating parking regulations may be subject to towing at the owner's expense.

Fee Category	Amounts
Tow Charge	Actual Cost or a minimum of \$200.00 per day, whichever is greater.
Impound Storage Fee	Actual Cost or a minimum of \$50.00 per day, whichever is greater.
Vehicle Release Admin Fee	\$50.00

All towing and storage fees would be charged on a cost-recovery basis and reflect the actual charges invoiced by the Town's contracted towing provider.

GRACE PERIOD - 2026

Recognizing that the 2026 season will represent the Town's first implementation of a paid parking program, staff recommend that the 2026 season be treated as **an education and transition period**. During this period, bylaw enforcement officers would focus primarily on public education, awareness, and voluntary compliance.

Parking violations related to paid parking would generally result in a written warning rather than a monetary penalty. Warning notices would provide information regarding the parking regulations, payment requirements, and the Town's parking management objectives.

The 2026 pilot season will provide residents, businesses, and visitors with an opportunity to become familiar with the new program while allowing staff to assess operational requirements, public feedback, parking utilization, and compliance rates. Following a review of the pilot program in the fall of 2026, staff will report back to Council with recommendations regarding the implementation of formal violation penalties beginning in the 2027 season.

Notwithstanding the above, vehicles creating a safety hazard, obstructing traffic, occupying accessible parking spaces without authorization, blocking fire routes, or parking in designated no-parking zones may continue to be subject to enforcement action, including ticketing and towing, where warranted.

IMPLICATIONS

a) Financial:

The estimated capital cost to implement the 2026 Parking Management Pilot Program is approximately \$45,000, which includes parking payment technology, signage, pavement markings, installation, and initial program setup.

In addition, staff recommend allocating up to \$20,000 for seasonal staffing, enforcement support, training, and administrative implementation costs associated with the pilot program. While the primary objective of the pilot is improved parking management and turnover rather than revenue generation, the program is expected to generate revenue that will partially offset implementation and operating costs.

Based on preliminary assumptions and a four-month operating season (June to September), estimated revenues are as follows:

Scenario	Average Paid Vehicles Per Day	Daily Revenues	Weekly Revenues	Monthly Revenues	Seasonal Revenues (122 days)
Conservative	25	\$150	\$1,050	\$4,500	\$18,300
Moderate	50	\$300	\$2,100	\$9,000	\$36,600
High Utilization	75	\$450	\$3,150	\$13,500	\$54,900

Return on Investment

For an investment of approximately \$65,000, the Town gains a modern parking management system, improved turnover, better visitor management, enhanced customer access for businesses, valuable utilization data, and the potential to generate between \$15,000 and \$35,000 annually once the program is established. Staff believes these financial assumptions will be clearer following the completion of one season.

b) Policy/Legislation:

Implementation of the pilot program will require a comprehensive review and amendment of the Town's regulatory framework. This includes amendments to the Traffic and Parking Bylaw, Municipal Ticket Information Bylaw, Fees and Charges Bylaw, and any

related policies governing parking enforcement, towing, impoundment, resident exemptions, and permit administration.

Additional bylaw provisions may be required to establish designated paid parking zones, time-restricted parking areas, resident parking decal requirements, violation penalties, towing authority, and fee schedules. Staff anticipate bringing the required bylaw amendments forward to Council for consideration prior to implementation of the pilot program.

c) Strategic Priority:

The proposed Parking Management Pilot Program directly supports Council's strategic objectives related to economic development, tourism management, transportation planning, public safety, and sustainable infrastructure management.

The initiative builds upon previous Council direction, recommendations contained within the Town's Parking Study, and ongoing discussions regarding the management of seasonal visitor demand. The pilot program seeks to improve parking turnover, enhance customer access to local businesses, support tourism activity, improve traffic circulation, and maximize the utilization of existing municipal parking assets.

Consistent with the Parking Study recommendations, the pilot program will focus on paid parking within high-demand waterfront areas, enhanced enforcement, improved wayfinding, and strengthened time-restricted parking zones throughout the Uptown area. Additional signage and parking management measures will be implemented on South Shore Road, Coronation Avenue, Wellington Road, and Lakeview Avenue. Staff will also explore opportunities to utilize existing public parking assets, including the Kasapi parking area and Town Hall parking lot during weekends and special events.

d) Sustainability:

The proposed parking management program supports the long-term financial and operational sustainability of municipal infrastructure by transitioning toward a user-pay model for visitor parking. This approach helps reduce reliance on property taxation to fund infrastructure and services primarily utilized by seasonal visitors.

The program also promotes more efficient utilization of existing parking infrastructure, reducing the need for future capital investment in additional parking facilities while supporting active transportation, pedestrian safety, and improved traffic management. Revenue generated through the program can be reinvested into maintaining and enhancing community amenities that benefit both residents and visitors.

e) Communication:

A comprehensive public awareness campaign will be essential to the successful implementation of the 2026 Parking Management Pilot Program. Communications will focus on educating residents, businesses, and visitors about the purpose of the program, parking regulations, resident exemptions, payment options, and the pilot nature of the initiative.

The campaign will include website updates, social media communications, media releases, business outreach, public information materials, and on-site signage. Public education efforts will commence in Spring 2026, followed by an education-first approach during the 2026 operating season utilizing warning notices in lieu of most parking penalties.

Following the conclusion of the pilot season, staff will gather public feedback and report back to Council in Fall 2026 with recommendations for any adjustments prior to the potential implementation of formal enforcement measures in 2027.

f) Staffing Implication:

Implementation of the pilot program will require dedicated staff resources for administration, permit issuance, public communications, parking enforcement, reporting, and program evaluation.

Staff recommend allocating funding of up to \$20,000 to support a casual or seasonal employee during the 2026 operating season. This position would assist with public education, resident decal administration, parking enforcement activities, data collection, and customer service inquiries.

Additional staff training and professional development will also be required to ensure consistent application of parking regulations, enforcement procedures, customer service standards, and parking management technology. Existing staff will continue to support policy development, bylaw amendments, financial administration, communications, and ongoing program oversight.

Options:

1. THAT Council:
 - a. Approve the implementation of the 2026 Parking Management Pilot Program, including seasonal paid parking at Saywell Park, Point Ideal Road, Kaatza Place, and the Centennial Field gravel parking lot;

- b. Direct staff to prepare the necessary amendments to the Traffic and Parking Bylaw, Municipal Ticket Information Bylaw, Fees and Charges Bylaw, and any other bylaw or related policies required to implement the program;
 - c. Approves the creation of a Resident Parking Decal Program to exempt eligible Town residents from paid parking fees;
 - d. Authorize up to \$65,000 for implementation of the pilot program, including parking infrastructure, signage, communications, staffing, and training requirements;
 - e. Direct staff to undertake a comprehensive public awareness and education campaign prior to implementation; and
 - f. Direct staff to report back to Council in Fall 2026 with a program evaluation and recommendations for the 2027 season.
2. THAT Council defer consideration of the Parking Management Pilot Program and direct staff to undertake additional public consultation, refine the implementation plan, and report back to Council with revised recommendations and financial projections.
3. THAT Council direct staff not to proceed with the implementation of a paid parking program at this time and maintain the existing parking management framework.

4.

Recommendation

I have no recommendations on an option; this will be totally up to Mayor and council to decide.

If you have any question or concerns, please feel free to call or email me to discuss this matter.

Signed:

Jas Sandhu

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Superintendent, Public Works and Engineering Services

Concurrence:

John T

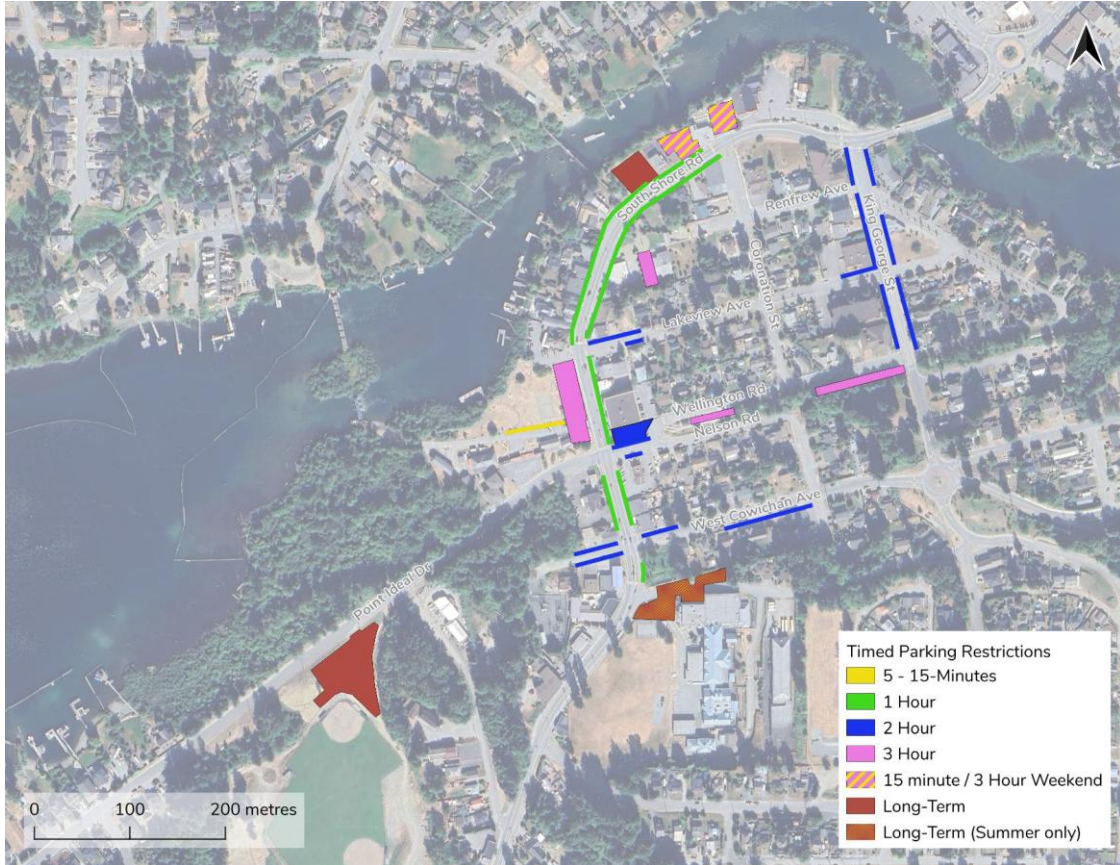
John Thomas

Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT 1 – List of Parking Study Recommendations

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the Town adopt a parking restrictions framework as illustrated below:



2. Up to three loading zones should be established on either one or both sides of South Shore Road. The three proposed locations are 122 South Shore Road, 103 South Shore Road, and 92 South Shore Road.



3. Adopt a 1-hour parking restriction on South Shore Road from King George Street to Cowichan Secondary School.
4. 2. Adopt a 2-hour parking restriction on:
 - Both sides of King George Street from South Shore Road to Wellington Road
 - a. Both sides of Lakeview Avenue from South Shore Road to 87 Lakeview Avenue
 - b. The north side of Lakeview Avenue from 33 Lakeview Avenue to King George Street
 - c. Both Sides of Wellington Avenue from Point South Shore Road to Nelson Road
 - d. Both sides of West Cowichan Avenue West of South Shore Road
 - e. The north side of Cowichan Avenue North from South Shore Road to 89 West Cowichan Avenue
 - f. The South Side of Cowichan Avenue from 79 West Cowichan Avenue to Coronation Street
 - g. IDA Lake Cowichan Public Parking Lot
5. Adopt a 3-hour parking restriction in the following locations:
 - a. Town Hall

- b. Vancouver Island Regional Library
 - c. Saywell Park
 - d. Trans Canada Trail Western Terminus Lot
 - e. Wellington Road Cowichan Valley Trail Lot
6. It is recommended that Point Ideal Drive Sports Field be paved with delineated paint lines to provide organized parking within its boundaries. Paving and other capital costs associated with this project could be recovered through revenues from paid parking. Parking would be restricted to up to eight hours.



7. It is further recommended that parking be allowed at Lake Cowichan Secondary School during summer weekend periods. This is to reduce potential overflow into residential areas and would allow approximately 36 vehicles to park. This parking lot would also be subject to paid parking and restrict parking to eight hours.

8. Establish a base parking rate for hourly pricing within the recommended paid parking zone. The specific rate would need to be determined through a market scan, consultation with local businesses, and based on the expected capital and operating costs associated with paid parking.
 - a. Time limits in areas not covered by the paid parking zone would still be in effect.
 - b. There would still be a time limit. Drivers would have the ability to pay for parking (i.e., buy time) for as long as the time limit allows for the recommended short-term and long-term parking restrictions.
 - c. If drivers want to park longer than the time restriction, they will have to relocate to a different block or park in an off-street parking lot that allows for longer term parking.

9. Establish payment to be in effect on Monday to Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 - a. There would be no paid parking during evenings and on holidays.

10. **Introduce paid parking as a pilot program in effect for three years from May 1st to September 30th.** The Town's busier summer season is typically from June to August with tourists / visitors also visiting during the late spring and early fall. Introducing paid parking as a pilot would provide the Town with sufficient time to educate the community about the benefits of the program and acquire the parking technology needed to facilitate paid parking. At the end of the pilot program, it is recommended that the Town report the following indicators:
 - a. Parking utilization over the course of the day during the period it is in effect (i.e., May 1-September 30) compared to the off-season.
 - b. Parking duration and turnover over the course of the day during the period it is in effect (i.e., May 1-September 30) compared to the off-season.
 - c. The overall revenue generated from the pilot program and the cost to implement it.
 - d. A summary of how the revenues from the program have been spent.

11. **Exempt residents from the program.** It is recommended that residents of Lake Cowichan be exempt from paid parking. Residents already contribute to the community through paying property and/or business taxes, strengthening the local economy by shopping at local businesses, and through other means. Other communities that have introduced seasonal paid parking such as Tofino have taken a similar approach whereby residents are not subject to paid parking if they present a parking decal. The Town will need to determine "who" constitutes as a resident and whether that means those within the Town's boundaries only, for example.

- 12.

13. **Exempt employees from the program.** It is recommended that employees of businesses within the Uptown area be exempt from paid parking. They would require an employee parking pass. Employees contribute to the local economy and are often required to park for several hours each day. Like residential exemptions, employees would display a decal within their vehicle. The Town will need to determine “who” constitutes as an employee of the Uptown Area and what geographic boundaries are most appropriate for this exemption.
14. **Conduct daily enforcement once pilot is in effect.** The Town will need to ensure that there is regular enforcement of the paid parking spaces. This can be done through their own enforcement efforts or by using a third-party operator. Parking infractions should result in fines being issued accordingly.
15. The first step is for the Town to approach a paid parking vendor to determine the capital and operational requirements associated with introducing paid parking in the Uptown area. There are several different paid parking vendors in British Columbia including HONK, Robbins Parking, PayByPhone, and Impark, for example.
16. Provide a select number of parking kiosks. The cost of parking kiosks depends on the manufacturer, the size of the unit, the number of transactions, etc., with a range of \$7,000 to \$15,000 per kiosk. Even though it is anticipated that most visitors would prefer to pay for parking using their phones, that may not be a viable option for all. The Town should consider providing kiosks in the most sought-after parking areas including:
 - a. Saywell Park
 - b. The Point Ideal Drive gravel lot
 - c. South Shore Road (from Renfrew Avenue to W Cowichan Avenue). Parking kiosks should be consistently located near the middle of the block face to ensure customers are familiar with the location for any given block and minimize walking distance to a kiosk
 - provide a mobile app option to maximize convenience and flexibility for drivers.
17. In consultation with business owners, provide inverted ‘U’ racks and post-and-ring racks in the following locations:
 - a. At least four racks on each side of South Shore Road from Renfrew Avenue to Lakeview Avenue
 - b. At least three racks on each side of South Shore Road from Lakeview Avenue to Point Ideal Drive Avenue

18. Provide up to six inverted 'U' racks and post-and-ring racks in Saywell Park. The specific location would need to be determined but a concrete pad could be provided in the park itself to accommodate the bike racks to avoid using a vehicle parking stall.
19. Develop accessible parking design guidelines to ensure all Town-owned off-street parking lots and on-street spaces have a consistent and functional design.
20. Formalize up to 12 drop-off and pick-up spaces on Kaatza Place.
21. Prioritize the South Shore Road Intersection Improvement (project #1 in the ATNP project list). This would provide multi-modal crossing improvements of South Shore Road at Point Ideal Drive / Wellington Road and include a tie-in and extension of Cowichan Valley Trail. This would not only result in an improvement to Lake Cowichan's active transportation network but also improve pedestrian safety for drivers who have parked their vehicles farther away and are trying to access Saywell Park and/or destinations along South Shore Road.
22. Prioritize construction of a sidewalk on Lakeview Avenue (South Shore Road to Coronation Street). A sidewalk along this stretch of the road would make it easier for residents to walk to South Shore Road while also improving safety for those who park their vehicles and walk along Lakeview Avenue to access Saywell Park and/or destinations along South Shore Road.
23. Install parking signage for all Town-owned lots to indicate the parking restriction. This should include information such as the name of the lot, the time restriction, and that it is publicly (Town) owned.
24. In the summer months (i.e., the peak season), provide sandwich boards along South Shore Road to direct drivers to the long-term parking lots including Lake Cowichan Secondary School (July/August only) and to the Point Ideal Drive lot (May to August).
25. Dedicate 0.5 FTE of staff time to parking enforcement in the off-season when paid parking would not be in effect. This would allow bylaw services to enforce parking at least once per week.
26. Adopt the Bylaw Offense Notice system for parking violations. This would allow the Town's bylaw services to formally issue tickets for bylaw violations. Specifically:
 - a. Disputes are heard by a dispute resolution adjudicator appointed by the province and held at the local government level
 - b. Fines of up to \$500 per offence can be issued

27. The Town should monitor where parking violations are occurring and evaluate whether the parking restriction needs to be reformed.
28. Invest in handheld tablet or smartphones and an app technology (for example T2) for parking enforcement. This technology would also allow the enforcement of paid parking, should the Town decide to implement that in the future.
29. Over time and depending on the demands placed on parking enforcement, explore the feasibility of an Automated Licence Plate Recognition system.