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Council approves rush-hour tow trucks



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City council wants to immediately alleviate traffic congestion on Calgary's major arterial roads and Monday they made the first move to make it happen.

Politicians endorsed administration's plan to put emergency stand-by tow trucks during morning and afternoon rush hours to keep stalls and fender benders from clogging the roadways.

It's a \$636,000 pilot project for now and the city will withdraw the cash from the Fiscal Stability Fund.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who brought the idea forward, said it's long overdue.

"I've been at this for five years and (traffic congestion) is worse today than it was five years ago," she said.

"We really need to get on with it because this is something that doesn't cost us a lot of money, will keep Calgarians moving and not frustrated sitting in traffic because of some minor collision," she said.

There's no specific date set when the pilot will begin but Colley-Urquhart said it can start as soon as the cash is approved, which council did Monday night.

Traffic bylaw is set to be amended to allow for the quick clearance of vehicles involved in minor fender bender and other road emergencies and administration has until June to draft the changes.

As planned by administration, the emergency towing service will be on hand at Crowchild Tr. N.W. crossing the Bow River, Memorial Dr. between Deerfoot Tr. and Edmonton Tr. N.E., Macleod Tr. from Anderson Rd. to 162 Ave. S.W., Glenmore Tr. between Crowchild Tr. and 14 St. S.W., and spots not yet determined along Deerfoot Tr.

The free emergency service will be on stand-by 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday.

The city's traffic management centre has 52 cameras to spot where there's an accident.

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Traffic staff will call the stand-by tow truck service alerting them of a trouble spot.

Once the pilot is done and evaluated, administration will include emergency tow trucks in its regular budget.

Colley-Urquhart said the pilot will make a big difference.

Ald. Ric McIver and Ald. John Mar both said they like the idea but they believe the users of towing service should pay and not city taxpayers.

Ald. Brian Pincott, among those who endorsed the pilot, said Calgarians are already paying for the price of being stuck in traffic.

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