

# Calgary council mulls 220-km network for carpoolers, fine hikes

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CALGARY - With city council set to contemplate a 220-kilometre network of high-occupancy vehicle lanes, one alderman wants to hike the fine for drivers who illegally use carpool lanes.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said Wednesday the current \$60 charge does nothing to steer solitary drivers away from the special lanes meant for buses and vehicles with two or more people. "It's not a deterrent," she said of the \$60 hit. "We need to significantly increase that fine if we're going to take this seriously at all."

Colley-Urquhart pointed to Ontario as an example to follow when it comes to punishment. Anyone there caught wrongly using a provincial HOV lane is fined \$110 and given three demerit points.

Colley-Urquhart said she plans to raise the idea of boosting the fine at the next city council meeting, May 25, when council gets its first look at the proposed HOV network.

Even if the fine is increased, she added, it needs to come with more police patrols to actually make it effective. "We've bumped up their numbers significantly," she said of recent boosts to the ranks of Calgary police, adding she hoped police would find a way to do more HOV patrols should new carpool lanes be brought in.

Ald. John Mar said he backs the idea of hiking the fine, but only after the city makes a concerted effort to promote the HOV lanes and put up better signs explaining them.

"A lot of people see a diamond on the road and they don't have a clue what it means," he said of the symbol typically painted on HOV lanes. "So it's not fair (to raise the fine) if people don't know what that means."

Ald. Andre Chabot said it was also too early to talk about raising the fine when the city still hasn't settled on how to bring in HOV lanes.

A report by city staff called for 220 kilometres of lanes to be brought in over the next several decades, something that would give some exclusive access to buses and carpoolers. But Chabot said doing that could cost a lot of money if it means adding new lanes for all of those kilometres.

If it simply means converting current lanes to HOV lanes, Chabot said, that might only serve to increase congestion. He cited 52nd Street East and said it's a problem area with not much room to expand in some parts. "If you have people sitting for half an hour where before they were sitting for 15 minutes, you're going to have people screaming bloody murder," he said.

Anne Cataford, the city's manager of network planning, said staff haven't started looking at how the HOV lanes would be brought in, but stressed the new lanes will let some people speed up their commutes.

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