

Region of Waterloo
Transportation Services
Transportation

To: Sustainability, Infrastructure, and Development Committee

Meeting Date: November 4, 2025

Report Title: Regional Road Sign By-law Update

1. Recommendation

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo revise By-law 10-030 titled “A By-law Respecting Signs on Regional Roads”, to include the following revisions to Part VI - Farm Accessory Signs:

Remove the following Part VI – Farm Accessory Signs from By-law 10-030:

No person shall place or permit to be placed on a Regional road any farm accessory sign except for a farm accessory sign that:

- (a) is a ground-mounted, moveable or wire-mounted sign; and
- (b) has no part of the sign within:
 - (i) 0.5 metres of a roadway if there is a curb and no shoulder;
 - (ii) 0.5 metres of a shoulder;
 - (iii) 3.0 metres of a roadway if there is no curb and no shoulder;
 - (iv) 0.5 metres of a sidewalk;
 - (v) 5.0 metres of a driveway other than the farm driveway, measured from the nearest edge of the driveway; or
 - (vi) 15.0 metres of an intersecting road, measured from the nearest edge of the shoulder or the roadway if there is no shoulder.

Add the following Part VI – Farm Accessory Signs to By-law 10-030:

No person shall place or permit to be placed on a Regional road any farm accessory sign except for a farm accessory sign that:

- (a) has dimensions that are not more than 2.0 metres in sign width (side to side) and not more than 1.0 metre in sign length (top to bottom);
- (b) is a moveable or wire-mounted sign;
- (c) has no part of the sign within:

- (i) 0.5 metres of a roadway if there is a curb and no shoulder
 - (ii) 0.5 metres of a shoulder;
 - (iii) 3.0 metres of a roadway if there is no curb and no shoulder;
 - (iv) 0.5 metres of a sidewalk;
 - (v) 5.0 metres of a driveway other than the farm driveway, measured from the nearest edge of the driveway; or
 - (vi) 15.0 metres of an intersecting road, measured from the nearest edge of the shoulder or the roadway if there is no shoulder;
- (d) is placed within the perpendicular projection into the road of the side property lines of the premises of the farm being advertised, on the same side of the road as the farm, but only where the physical location of the building in which the farm resides is so close to the road so as to preclude the sign from being located off the road; and
- (e) directs attention only to the activities, products, services or facilities produced, manufactured or provided by the business or enterprise at that same location.

as outlined in Report TSD-TRP-25-017 dated November 4, 2025.

2. Purpose / Issue:

Regional staff recently became aware that Part VI - Farm Accessory Signs within By-law 10-030, titled "A By-law Respecting Signs on Regional Roads" (provided in Appendix A) allows for an unintentional flexibility in the placement of farm accessory signs within regional road allowances. As currently written, any farm, located anywhere within Ontario, can erect farm accessory signs at any location within Region of Waterloo road allowances and without any limit to the size of the signs installed.

Based on this information coming to light, Regional staff are proposing revisions to Part VI - Farm Accessory Signs. This report serves to provide a summary of the proposed changes to By-law 10-030 as it relates to Part VI - Farm Accessory Signs.

3. Strategic Plan:

The recommendations of this report are aligned with the (2023-2027) Region's Strategic Plan in the following key areas:

- Equitable Service and Opportunities:
 - Design equitable regional services that meet local community needs

4. Report Highlights:

- In 2010, Regional Council adopted By-law 10-030, titled “A By-law Respecting Signs on Regional Roads” with a goal to regulate the proliferation of signs along regional roads to “enhance public safety and to reduce aesthetic blight.”
- It has been brought to the attention of Regional staff that any number of farm accessory signs are permitted to be placed anywhere along regional roads as long as the location of the sign adheres to the current Sign By-law, which addresses only the physical nature of the sign, and the placement relative to adjacent roadways;
- Part VI - Farm Accessory Signs does not currently mention any size limitations related to the dimensions of any farm accessory sign that can be placed within the regional right-of-way;
- As currently written, any farm within Ontario can place an unlimited number of farm accessory signs at any location(s) within the Regional right of way;
- The proposed revisions to Part VI - Farm Accessory Signs will:
 - only allow such signs to be placed along the farm frontage;
 - only allow signs that are moveable, eliminating the option of ground-mounted signs for traffic safety reasons; and
 - place a limit to the size of farm accessory signs that would be allowed within the regional right-of-way, allowing for signs up to 2 metres in width and up to 1 metre in height.

5. Background:

In 2010, Region of Waterloo Council adopted By-law 10-030, titled “A By-law Respecting Signs on Regional Roads”. At that time, there was an immediate need to regulate the proliferation of signs to ensure public safety is protected from hazards related to the size, placement and nature of various different road signs, and to preserve public spaces that are free from an over-abundance of signs. Signs on Regional roads often create safety hazards because the signs, due to their location, numbers, size and/or appearance, block visibility for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The location, numbers, size and/or appearance of signs can create distractions and general visual blight for the community.

In early 2025, the Region’s By-law Services was requested to investigate some farm advertising signs that raised concerns from members of the community but are technically acceptable under the current provisions in By-law 10-030. A farm accessory sign is defined as “a sign advertising or providing direction to the on-farm sale of any activity, product or service produced, manufactured or provided predominantly on the farm in compliance with the applicable local zoning by-law including, but not limited to,

pick your own operations, agritourism activities and the small-scale retailing of local farm produce and related goods”.

Upon review and further discussion, staff are proposing that farm accessory signs be revised to include the following:

- Only be permitted along the frontage of farm property;
- Such signage cannot be ground-mounted and must be moveable; and
- Limit the size of farm accessory signs to not more than 2.0 metres in width and not more than 1.0m metre in sign length.

The intent of the above revisions, to the Region’s Sign By-law, is to only allow farm accessory signs to be located along the property line of the subject farm frontage.

Although the Region’s Sign By-law will limit farm accessory signs to be placed along the frontage of farms, there are other avenues that these enterprises can explore for additional signs at locations that are not adjacent to the farm frontage. One such avenue is the approval of tourism signage through the provincial Tourism-Oriented Directional Program (TODS). The Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Transportation supervise the delivery and maintenance of TODS by a third-party company. Canadian TODS Limited works with specific businesses interested in placing signage directing motorists to their attraction or service.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities: Nil

Public: Nil

7. Financial Implications: Nil

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Subject to Council approval, staff will proceed with revising By-law 10-030 with the proposed changes highlighted herein. The revisions to the Sign By-law will be shared with the Region’s By-law Enforcement team should future enforcement be required.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A – By-law Number 10-030

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