

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, May 2, 2023

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: TAKING ACTION TO COMBAT AUTO THEFTS

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek Council direction on a proposed plan with options for implementing a pilot program to leverage the potential benefits of using key fob protective bags/pouches to help reduce auto theft in the community.

Report Highlights

- The report provides two options for Council's consideration;
- Funding of the \$30,000 commitment will be allocated from the City's 2023 Operating Budget;
- Staff believe that Option #1 provides the best public value;
- Key fob protection bags/pouches will be distributed to assist in combating auto theft in Vaughan.

Recommendation

1. THAT Council approve Option #1 and that staff from the Community Services Portfolio, supported by other corporate departments, be directed to implement Option #1 for the Distribution Program.

Background

Members Resolution

By Member's Resolution, at the Council meeting of April 4, 2023, Council directed staff to report to the May 2, 2023, Committee of the Whole meeting, with options for the provision of a time-limited pilot program aimed at providing Faraday bags/pouches (key fob protective cases) to residents in an effort to reduce auto thefts in the community, and that the report include considerations as following:

1. Establishment of a cross-functional working group, led by the City's Community Services Portfolio, supported by other corporate departments and community stakeholders, to oversee the administration of the pilot program;
2. Expenditures associated with this pilot program be covered through existing operating budgets to a maximum of \$30,000;
3. Procurement Services undertake the appropriate steps pertaining to the purchase of key fob protective bags/pouches; and
4. Collaboration with local safety partners, such as York Regional Police, to identify neighbourhoods for participation in a pilot program.

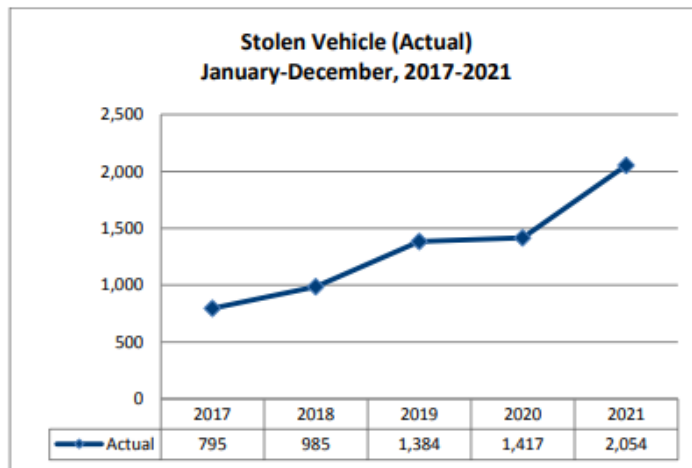
Auto Thefts in York Region

It has been widely reported through the media that auto thefts are on the rise across the province, and in particular, the rise of relay attack auto thefts, wherein thieves use a technological device to clone or receive signals from a vehicle key fob to start a vehicle with a keyless entry/start system.

In May of each year, York Regional Police (YRP) publish annual statistical reports pertaining to crime trends for the previous year. As of the writing of this report, the latest statistics available from YRP pertain to crime trends 2021. With respect to vehicle thefts, a 45% increase from 2020 was noted.

STOLEN VEHICLE
FIVE-YEAR TREND
JANUARY-DECEMBER (2017-2021)

Year	Actual	1 Year Comparison Variance	1 Year Comparison (%)	5 Year Comparison Variance	5 Year Comparison (%)	Rate per 100,000 Population	Rate Variance (%) 1 Year	Rate Variance (%) 5 Year
2017	795	-4	-0.5	-99	-11.1	65.89	-2.1	-16.7
2018	985	190	23.9	177	21.9	82.32	24.9	16.6
2019	1,384	399	40.5	553	66.5	115.09	39.8	61.5
2020	1,417	33	2.4	618	77.3	116.76	1.5	73.4
2021	2,054	637	45.0	1,259	158.4	167.24	43.2	153.8



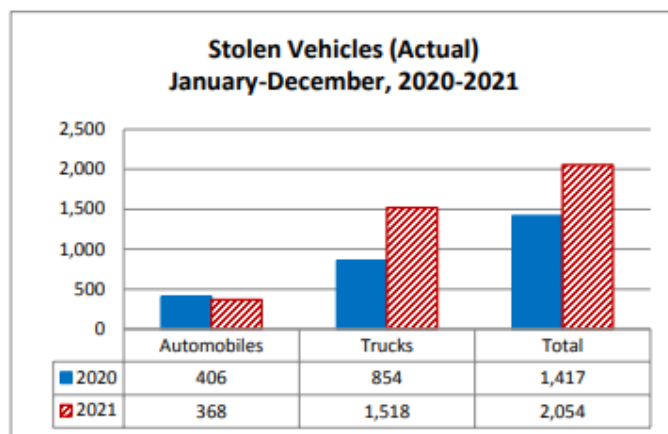
Top 5 Most Commonly Stolen Vehicle Models in Vaughan	
2022	2023
Dodge Ram 1500	Dodge Ram 1500
Land Rover/ Range Rover	Toyota Highlander
Toyota Highlander	Land Rover/ Range Rover
Lexus RX350	Lexus RX
Ford F150	Lexus RX350
Source: Vehicle Theft Dashboard (arcgis.com)	

STOLEN VEHICLES

JANUARY-DECEMBER (2020-2021)

Vehicle Type	2020 Actual	2020 Rate	2021 Actual	2021 Rate	2020/21 Variance Actual (%)	2020/21 Variance Rate (%)
Automobiles	406	33.45	368	29.96	-9.4	-10.4
Trucks	854	70.37	1,518	123.60	77.8	75.6
Motorcycles	44	3.63	50	4.07	13.6	12.3
Construction/Farm	36	2.97	45	3.66	25.0	23.5
Tractor Trailers	48	3.96	46	3.75	-4.2	-5.3
Other	29	2.39	27	2.20	-6.9	-8.0
Total	1,417	116.76	2,054	167.24	45.0	43.2

Note: stolen vehicle counts include vehicles taken without owner's consent. Does not include attempt theft and vehicles obtained by fraud. Trucks include pickup trucks, bus, van, minivan, SUV and recreational vehicles. Tractor-trailers include tractors with or without a trailer.



Further to the crime statistics provided by York Regional Police, staff's review included further analysis to better understand related factors that may contribute to increases in auto theft and vehicle-related demographics in Vaughan. This included, but was not limited to, engaging with the City's Economic Development Department.

At the time of authoring the report, the City's Economic Development team did not currently have access to statistics that would demonstrate the average number of vehicles owned per household in Vaughan.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Members Resolution, Taking Action to Combat Auto Thefts, April 4, 2023.](#)

Analysis and Options

Options

In response to the Members Resolution, staff developed and reviewed the feasibility of two options: first, a distribution model of distributing key fob protective bags to key areas across the City; and second, the development of a grant and rebate subsidy program for residents to purchase key fob protective bags at a reduced cost, with both options supported by the appropriate communication plan.

This report was prepared in consultation with Legal Services, Corporate and Strategic Communications, Procurement Services and York Regional Police.

Option 1: Distribution Program

The City of Brampton recently approved a three-month pilot project, in partnership with Peel Crime Stoppers and the Brampton Community Safety Office, to distribute City-funded anti-theft key fob protectors to five (5) pilot areas identified by the City, in partnership with Peel Regional Police. A similar initiative occurred in Barrie in collaboration with a theft prevention device supplier, Garda World Security, Barrie Police, and the local Crime Stoppers program, where key fob protective bags were distributed free of charge at an event at a local business.

Option 2: Subsidy Program

As an alternative to providing the key fob protective cases directly to residents, staff considered a subsidy program wherein residents can purchase anti-theft key fob protectors from the municipality at a reduced cost. Allotment is considered either on a geographical basis based on risk or need, or on a “first come, first served” basis.

Analysis

Both options were assessed by staff, looking specifically at benefits, drawbacks and potential liability concerns associated with each course of action.

Option 1: Distribution Program	Benefits	• Provides prevention tool to residents free of cost • May contribute to decreased auto thefts
	Drawbacks	• Distribution limited to the number of items that can be procured within budget • Provided only to certain areas of the City • Number of bags (estimated at 3,700 – 5,700) to be provided to residents • Procurement process will require time for completion

	Liability	Potential liability risk to City if bags are ineffective/defective/used incorrectly resulting in theft of a vehicle
	Mitigation of Risk	Obtain release of liability from resident in exchange for the item
Option 2: Subsidy Program	Benefits	- Provides prevention tool to residents at a reduced cost - May contribute to decreased auto thefts
	Drawbacks	- Number of bags (estimated 7,400 – 11,400), to be provided to residents at a reduced cost - Procurement process will require time for completion
	Liability	Potential liability risk to City if bags are ineffective/defective/used incorrectly resulting in theft of a vehicle
	Mitigation of Risk	Obtain release of liability from resident in exchange for the item

Distribution vs Subsidy Program - Considerations

Procurement Matters

Innumerable companies produce key fob protective bags or similar products, not just Faraday. As a result, the City's Procurement Services department has confirmed that a competitive procurement process would have to be undertaken to acquire the goods in compliance with the City's Corporate Procurement Policy. Based on an estimate of between \$5.00 to \$8.00 per item, with a budget of \$30,000.00 for the pilot program, approximately 3,700 to 5,700 units could be distributed through a fully funded program, and 7,400 to 11,400 could be distributed through a subsidized program.

Liability and Risk Transfer

To avoid the unnecessary assumption of risk or liability in the event that the key fob protective bags are found to be faulty or user misuse results in auto theft, it would be strongly recommended that the units only be distributed in exchange for a complete release of liability in favour of the City.

Limited Availability

Approximately 3,700 to 5,700 key fob protective bag units could be distributed through a fully funded program, or 7,400 to 11,400 could be distributed through a subsidized program. The City of Vaughan has a population of approximately 324,000 citizens living

in approximately 104,000 private residences, with an average of 3.1 persons per household.¹ Although it was not possible to obtain data on the number of vehicles per residence prior to the deadline for this report, it is easy to observe that the majority of households in Vaughan have more than one vehicle. Depending on the type of device, this means distribution may be limited to only one vehicle per household. However, although the procurement of these items is limited by the \$30,000 commitment, staff believe the options provided demonstrate a responsible use of available funds that further supports the City's commitment to assist residents in combatting auto theft.

Price/Performance Ratio

The above two options are reflective of the same financial commitment of \$30,000. However, although Option 2 Subsidy Program will provide a broader distribution, the implementation, staff time and efforts required for that option would add a level of complexity that would be avoided by Option 1 of direct distribution of key fob protective bags at no cost to residents.

The distribution of key fob protection bags, accompanied by the appropriate communication support plan, will achieve the intended outcome, and further assist in better informed residents with respect to its use along with other preventative measures the resident may wish to consider independently.

Financial Impact

The Members Resolution directed that \$30,000 should be utilized from within the City's existing budgets to implement this project.

Operational Impact

Either of the two options would be delivered by existing City staff, with varying degrees of involvement and commitment depending on the chosen option. The Community Services Portfolio would remain the lead on this project and would work closely with Legal Services, Procurement Services, and Corporate and Strategic Communications, all of whom were consulted in the preparation of this report. It is anticipated that the recommended course of action to establish a distribution program could be implemented effectively without further operational impact, beyond staff time.

Staff would seek to work closely with external partners including York Regional Police and York Region, and others, such as local crime prevention groups, as appropriate. York Regional Police were consulted in the authoring of this report and support the use

¹ [Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Ontario \[Province\];Vaughan, City \(CY\) \[Census subdivision\], Ontario \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

of key fob protection bags/pouches and have expressed interest in participating in a working group.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Continued collaboration between the City, York Regional Police and any identified community partners will be necessary to ensure the successful implementation and delivery of this initiative.

Conclusion

Based on the direction received by Council in the Member's Resolution, staff conducted a review of options available to the municipality to address auto thefts in Vaughan. The results of the review revealed that Option 1 can be implemented within the budget allocation identified, done so within a reasonably short period of time, predominantly dictated by the procurement of the items, and will achieve the desired outcome. Staff believe that Option 1 provides the best public value; the second option of a subsidy program, that may offer a greater distribution, will require greater staff time, effort and commitment.

Staff have prepared and provided two options for Council consideration in this report. The options provide the necessary information for the Mayor and Members of Council to arrive at an informed decision and form the basis of the City's response to this matter.

For more information, please contact: Susan Kelly, Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services, ext. 8952.

Attachments

N/A

Prepared by

Susan Kelly, Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services, ext. 8952.

Approved by

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gus Michaels".

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager
Community Services

Reviewed by

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nick Spensieri".

Nick Spensieri, City Manager