



Report
Staff Report
 The Corporation of the City of Brampton
 5/21/2025

Date: 2025-05-07

Subject: **Capital Project Request for Hearing Loop Pilot Project and Budget Amendment**

Contact: Shawnica Hans, Deputy Clerk, Elections, Accessibility & Lottery Licensing, City Clerk's Office

Report number: Legislative Services-2025-415

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the report from Shawnica Hans, Deputy Clerk, Elections, Accessibility & Lottery Licensing to the Committee of Council Meeting of May 21, 2025 re: **Capital Project Request for Hearing Loop Pilot Project and Budget Amendment**, be received; and
2. That a budget amendment be approved and a new capital project be established in the amount of \$60,000 for the implementation of hearing loops as described in the report, with funds from the Inclusive Community Grant (ICG) which has already been awarded to the City.

OVERVIEW:

- **Hearing loops are a type of assistive listening system that improves communication by enabling users to hear sound sources directly by cutting out background noise.**
- **The new 2024 Ontario Building Code (OBC) requires new service desks to be equipped with assistive listening systems.**
- **In May 2024, the Accessibility Office applied to the Government of Ontario Inclusive Community Grant (ICG) Program to receive funding for a pilot project to implement hearing loops at service counters throughout the City.**
- **The original application was unsuccessful; however, in January 2025, the Accessibility Office was informed that additional funding was made available for the ICG Program, and that the City's application had been approved.**

- **The funding will enable the installation of hearing loops at approximately 12 service desks at City facilities.**
- **The cost of the hearing loops installation at the City Clerk's Office is estimated at \$5,000. Sufficient funding for this initiative is available in the Public Works and Engineering department's capital budget.**
- **A budget amendment is required and a new capital project will need to be established in the amount of \$60,000 for the implementation of hearing loops at the remaining service counters with funds from the ICG, which has already been awarded to the City.**

BACKGROUND:

Hearing Loss and How Hearing Loops Can Help

Hearing loss is the fastest growing, and one of the most prevalent, chronic conditions facing Canadians today. According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, the rate of disability in Ontario is 28%, with hearing loss accounting for 5.6% of disabilities in Canada. The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association suggests 65% of Canadians over the age of 40 have measured hearing loss.

In noisy environments it can be difficult for individuals living with hearing loss to distinguish the speech, music, or conversation they are trying to hear. It makes it challenging to fully participate in activities, understand directions, or participate in conversations.

Hearing loops improve communication by enabling users to hear sound sources directly by cutting out background noise.

Hearing loops are a type of assistive listening system that transmits sound directly to a user's telecoil-enabled hearing aid or cochlear implant. Hearing loops contain an amplifier and a copper wire that transmits sound through a magnetic field. Hearing devices with a telecoil become a wireless receiver in the hearing loop. Hearing loops can be installed in many locations, including service counters, meeting rooms, and large event spaces. Hearing loops are a user-friendly and discrete solution to providing assistive listening for people with hearing loss.

Accessibility Updates to the Ontario Building Code (OBC)

A new 2024 Ontario Building Code (OBC) came into effect on January 1, 2025. The 2024 OBC has eliminated at least 1,730 technical variations between the provincial and national requirements and includes a number of updates to accessibility requirements.

Article 3.8.3.7 of the 2024 OBC requires that at least one service counter be equipped with an assistive listening system – this applies to new builds or renovations of existing service counters.

Inclusive Community Grant Program

The Accessibility Office applied for the Government of Ontario's Inclusive Community Grant (ICG) in May 2024. The ICG Program provides funding to local governments, not-for-profit organizations, and indigenous communities and organizations. The goal of the program is to encourage local governments and community organizations to consider Ontarians of all ages and abilities at every stage of community planning and development.

The grant application identified the need for hearing loops at service counters/desks at various locations throughout the City. Currently no hearing loops are installed at any City facilities.

Installing hearing loops at service counters throughout the City provides residents greater accessibility to local government. Obtaining services, including purchasing transit passes and marriage licences, commissioning documents, paying taxes, and attending events at the Rose Theatre, will be more accessible for individuals experiencing hearing loss. Hearing loops may enhance the way that Brampton residents stay connected and are able to meaningfully participate in their community. This project aims to further strengthen the City's commitment towards accessibility.

The objectives for the pilot project are identified below:

- Enhance customer service quality and recreation program experiences for individuals with hearing loss for more inclusive customer service;
- Facilitate and support independent travel throughout the City using Brampton Transit to participate in social and community activities and events;
- Allow for inclusive, seamless, and professional customer service;
- Demonstrate leadership and a commitment to creating a more inclusive, accessible, and age-friendly city that will inspire local business, industry, education, and other sectors of the community to follow and make positive changes; and
- Implement specific actions in Brampton's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan related to the installation of hearing loops in City facilities.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Outcome of the Grant Application

The City's grant application was unsuccessful in 2024, and as such no capital project was presented for inclusion in the 2025 budget. In January 2025, the Accessibility Office was informed that additional funding was made available for the province's ICG

Program, and the City's funding application for the Hearing Loops Pilot Project had been approved.

The City was awarded up to \$60,000 to complete the pilot project.

Based on the objectives for the pilot project, Accessibility Office staff has identified 12 service desk/counter locations for hearing loop installations:

1. Service Brampton (City Hall) – cashier
2. Service Brampton (City Hall) – Information booth
3. POA Courthouse
4. Transit: Gateway terminal, Bramalea terminal, and Downtown terminal
5. Rose Theatre: box office
6. Bob Callahan Flower City Seniors Centre
7. Knightsbridge Senior Centre
8. Gore Meadows Community Centre
9. Cassie Campbell Community Centre
10. Susan Fennell Sportsplex
11. Paul Palleschi Recreation Centre
12. Century Gardens Recreation Centre

An additional location for the pilot project includes the City Clerk's Office service counter. The Clerk's counter renovation project is currently underway, and the installation of hearing loop(s) has been included in the scope of the project, in order to meet the new OBC requirement for assistive listening systems at service counters.

Request to Establish Capital Project

In order to receive the funding for the hearing loops pilot project implementation, staff is recommending that a capital project be established.

The funding for the Clerk's counter hearing loop(s) is budgeted through the existing approved construction project.

Procurement Process

Upon establishing a capital project, staff will finalize an invitational procurement process for the hearing loop pilot project. Depending on the successful vendor's quote for hearing loop installation, staff will add or remove service desk locations, so that the total cost of the project does not exceed \$60,000.

Next Steps

The installations are expected to be completed by November 30, 2025, as required by the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility.

Accessibility Office staff will report to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the implementation of the pilot project and will seek user feedback to help inform future specifications and installations of assistive listening systems.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications: The cost of the hearing loops installation at the City Clerk's Office is estimated at \$5,000. Sufficient funding for this initiative is available in the Public Works and Engineering department's capital budget.

A budget amendment is required and a new capital project will need to be established in the amount of \$60,000 for the implementation of hearing loops at the remaining service counters identified in this report with funds from the Inclusive Community Grant (ICG), which has already been awarded to the City.

Purchasing Implications: Accessibility Office staff is working with Purchasing staff to finalize the RFP for an invitational procurement for this work.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA:

This report achieves the Government & Leadership strategic focus area by ensuring that the City is committed to recognizing and removing existing barriers and enhancing and improving accessibility. Equitable access to City services, facilities, and goods is essential in providing increased opportunities for all residents of Brampton.

CONCLUSION:

This project will benefit many people of all ages that have a hearing device, fostering a sense of inclusion, and improving accessibility. The installation of hearing loops will allow residents to participate in community events as well as obtain information and services from the City of Brampton. This is an important step in the City's vision to create a more inclusive and accessible community where all individuals can participate more fully and actively in community life.

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