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Town of Aurora

Committee of the Whole Report

No. PDS26-021

Subject: Request for Sign By-law Authorization for Third Party Digital Signage
– Jolt Charge Inc. – 14751 Yonge Street

Prepared by: William Jean, Manager – Building Division/CBO

Department: Planning and Development Services

Date: March 10, 2026

Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS26-021 be received; and
2. That the request for authorization of a third party digital sign on an EV charging station located at 14751 Yonge Street be denied.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to consider the request from Jolt Charge Inc. to erect Third Party signage on a proposed EV charging station at 14751 Yonge Street. Third Party advertising is prohibited under the Sign By-law. If approved, it would set a precedent for future such request.

- Proposed digital signage on the proposed EV charging station with Third Party advertising may not meet all the evaluation criteria of the Sign By-law.
- The requested variance would set a community precedent for permitting Third Party advertising in the Town if approved.

Background

The applicant is requesting permission to install a LED Digital signage on the proposed EV charging station at 14751 Yonge Street. This type of sign is deemed to be a

“Dynamic Sign” and a “Third Party Sign” as defined under the Sign By-law. The following are the definitions:

“Dynamic sign” shall mean a sign created, designed, manufactured or modified in such way that its display message can change from time to time manually, electronically or using other mechanism but does not include a mobile sign;

“Third Party Sign” shall mean a sign erected and maintained to advertise, market or promote a business, product, service or activity not conducted or produced, sold, stored or assembled within the building or upon the lot or premises on which the sign is erected and does not include off-site residential development sign or a sign advertising a special event.

Third Party signs are not permitted under the Sign By-law, unless authorized by Council.

Analysis

Proposed digital signage on the EV charging station with Third Party advertising may not meet all the evaluation criteria of the Sign By-law.

Section 5.2 of the Sign By-law, states that signs shall not be illuminated in such a way that either the sign or the method of illumination creates a hazard or a nuisance. Where a sign is permitted to be illuminated, the method of illumination shall comply with the provisions contained within section 6 of this by-law.

The Sign By-law sets out certain Evaluation Criteria that are to be taken into account when providing an authorization request to Council such as

1. **Physical difficulties:**
2. **Consistency with the architectural features of the building:**
3. **Consistency with the character of the neighbourhood:**
4. **No adverse impact to the adjacent property or general public:**
5. **Adherence to Corporate Branding:**
6. **Impact on safety, traffic, and accessibility:**
7. **Result in greater convenience to the public:**

The proposed EV charge consists of two sign faces on either side of the unit with an aggregated sign face of 4.04 square meters. The signage will be perpendicular to Yonge Street facing north and south. The height of the unit is 2.6 meters. The sign will display third party advertising. Each advertisement has a 10-second dwell time with instantaneous transitions. The displays are static and do not contain movement or animation. Attachment 1 submitted by the applicant states their position on the issue.

Prohibiting third-party signage on electric vehicle (EV) charging stations is generally rooted in concerns regarding urban aesthetics, safety, and operational clarity. Many municipalities restrict these advertisements to avoid visual clutter and reduce driver distraction.

Key rationales for prohibiting third-party signage include:

- **Minimizing Visual Clutter and Proliferation:** Municipalities often discourage the spread of electronic advertising to maintain the aesthetic character of surrounding areas, limiting the proliferation of digital and illuminated screens.
- **Preventing Driver Distraction:** The primary purpose of an EV charger is to provide service. Third-party advertising, particularly digital, animated, or flashing displays, can distract drivers in high-traffic or public areas, raising public safety concerns.

Full LED digital signs had started in large cities in and around 2007. The Sign By-law was approved by Council on March 21, 2017 which permits Dynamic Signs. The Sign By-law anticipated this form of digital signage and regulations regarding digital signs were introduced.

The applicant has provided a Planning Rational Report which is attached as Attachment 1. According to the proposal, several municipalities currently permit third-party digital signage on EV charging stations. Currently Jolt has three units operating in Toronto (with one under construction), two in Pickering, and two in Mississauga (with another underway). They have also received a permit in Hamilton and secured two approvals in Ottawa.

With regards to Jolt's Planning criteria report, staff are in concurrence with the proposal with respect to meeting the evaluation criteria with the exception of criteria 7, impact on safety, traffic and accessibility. Based on staff research, studies on whether digital billboards are a distraction to motorists yield conflicting results, with significant debate between research supported by the advertising industry and that cited by traffic safety advocacy groups. While some industry-funded studies suggest digital signs are "safety

neutral" or do not create unsafe levels of distraction, other studies indicate they do draw driver attention away from the road for potentially risky durations.

In the past Council has denied such a request, specifically, at 15820 Bayview Avenue where a proposed LED digital sign attached to a proposed telecommunication tower was to be used as Third party Advertising. This proposal was denied by Council on November 28, 2023.

Staff is of the opinion that the proposed LED Digital third party signage may not meet the Evaluation Criteria with regards to traffic safety. Based on this evaluation criteria, it is recommended the proposed third party sign request be denied.

The request would set a community precedent for permitting dynamic third party advertising if approved.

If the request is approved, it would set a precedent for the community to permit illuminated third party signs and would encourage other commercial properties to apply using the same process. Furthermore, it would encourage large third party signs, such as digital billboards.

Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable

Legal Considerations

Pursuant to Section 3.6 of the Sign By-law, signs are not permitted in Town unless they advertise or provide information with respect to a use that is permitted on such property. Subsection 3.6(c) sets out an exception for third party signs that are permitted by Council. As the applicant is proposing a sign that will provide dynamic third party advertisement, Council authorization is being requested. Council has the authority to approve or deny this request, and such a decision would be final without further right to appeal.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Communications Considerations

There are no communications considerations.

Climate Change Considerations

EV charging stations supports the transition towards sustainable options by providing comparable accessibility for electric vehicles uses instead of conventional refueling.

Link to Strategic Plan

This report supports the Strategic Plan goal of Support an Exceptional Quality of life for All by reviewing and identifying safety matters

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. That Council approve the request for the third-party sign as set out in the report and the provided proposal, subject to the applicant obtaining a Sign Permit and maintaining the sign in accordance with the proposal.

Conclusions

The applicant has proposed a third party advertisement sign on the subject property, which requires Council authorization. Staff is of the opinion that the proposed LED Digital third party signage may not meet the Evaluation Criteria with regards to safety and may pose a hazard. Therefore, it is recommended the proposed third party sign request be denied. If approved, it would set a precedent for the community to permit this type of dynamic third party signs and would encourage other commercial properties to apply using the same process. Furthermore, it would encourage large third party signs such as digital billboards.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Jolt Charge Inc. Planning Rationale Report
Attachment 2 – EVA 3.0 Technical Specifications

Previous Reports

None.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on February 19, 2026

Approvals

Approved by Marco Ramunno, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer