

Obstructed Number Plate as a Parking Violation

To Members of the Safety and Facilities Service Committee,

Obstructed number plates are an issue. An obstructed number plate can prevent automated enforcement cameras for speeding, red lights, or school bus stop signs from capturing the number plate to issue a penalty to the vehicle owner. They can also prevent police from effectively completing their work and citizens from reporting impaired or dangerous drivers.

I decided to write this after seeing a CTV News Ottawa report titled “Thousands of ‘obstructed’ licence plates captured by Ottawa’s red light, photo radar cameras”. Statistics from Ottawa show that 71,238 speeders in 2024 were not issued a ticket due to unreadable plates. In total vehicles with damaged, obstructed, or missing plates made up about 13% of incidents captured by automated enforcement per year (not all incidents could be offences though). While unreadable plates could also be due to weather conditions, some drivers deliberately obscure or alter plates to avoid automated enforcement cameras.

In Oshawa, the Region of Durham already operates automated speed and red-light cameras with the City of Oshawa moving ahead with an automated speed enforcement program. Oshawa uses “pay-by-plate” for downtown parking, with licence plate readers on by-law enforcement vehicles. Obstructed number plates could be an issue for these plate readers as well.

While having an obstructed number plate is an offence under section 13 of the *Highway Traffic Act*, police enforcement requires stopping a vehicle. The police also have many other priorities for traffic enforcement such as distracted or aggressive driving.

The City of Oshawa should explore adding to the Traffic By-Law a prohibition on parking on a roadway or in a municipal parking facility with an obstructed number plate. This would also cover vehicles without a number plate, which is currently not prohibited in the Traffic By-Law. This would allow by-law enforcement officers to assist Durham Regional Police Service with enforcement of this in a much easier manner when the vehicle is parked. I could imagine this only enforced through targeted enforcement, not public complaints. While this would not cover vehicles parked on private property, it could still make a difference in reducing the number of obstructed number plates. Less obstructed number plates mean safer roads for everyone by preventing some from being exempt from automated enforcement cameras.

I hope this issue can be referred to staff to report back on the feasibility of this.

Thank you for your consideration,

Noah Edwards

Ward 4, Oshawa