



Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula
Council Report

Report Number: MLEO 25-10

Subject: Year-End Parking Report 2025

From: Carol Hopkins, Chief Bylaw Officer

Date: November 10, 2025

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives MLEO report No. 2025-10 Parking Report for 2025, as information, and

THAT the report be uploaded to Let's Talk NBP for a period of thirty (30) days for public comment.

Background:

The Municipality operates a seasonal paid parking program, which is actively monitored and documented for the 2025 season from May 15 to September 15 in Tobermory and Lion's Head, and October 15 at McCurdy Drive in Lion's Head. At the conclusion of each season, a Paid Parking Report is presented to Council, outlining key findings and offering recommendations to improve the program.

The primary objective of the program is to support an organized parking system at high-traffic locations, thereby enhancing pedestrian safety and alleviating congestion for residents. Below is a general overview of parking, paid parking and the reservation locations, along with staff recommendations for the upcoming 2026 parking season.

Attached are maps outlining the current parking/paid parking for Tobermory, Big Tub Road, The Gap, Grant Watson Drive, Dunks Bay, Little Cove, Dorcas Bay Road, Dyers Bay, Borchardt Road, Carter Road, Lion's Head and McCurdy Drive.

Staff recommend that this report should be posted on the platform Let's Talk NBP (bang the table) to reach the community and allow for their feedback to be considered for the 2026 parking/paid parking season.

Tobermory and Lions Head Paid Parking-Season Summary

Paid Parking came into effect in 2017 in Tobermory and in 2020 in Lions Head, with no changes to the program in the downtown core of Tobermory and minor changes to the village of Lion's Head.

As areas grew in popularity, contracted parking enforcement officers were brought on to help manage the high-traffic areas and parking lots. The contract enforcement plays a vital role in the program by providing visitors with information regarding parking fees and designated parking areas, as well as ensuring the efficient flow of traffic. These officers are also equipped with vehicle counters to track the number of vehicles turned away when parking areas reach capacity, providing valuable data for future planning and decision-making.

Public Concerns

On September 18, 2025 the Tobermory and Northern Bruce Peninsula Chamber of Commerce provided correspondence to the Municipality, and identified concerns about the 2025 Paid Parking season. The correspondence is attached to this report for reference. Staff have summarized the concerns below and provided suggestions for potential solutions moving into the 2026 season.

1. Parking Machine & App Failures

- Frequent malfunctions of the parking machines (before and after replacements).
- Machines reject cards, are confusing to use, and instructional videos don't match current options.
- Poor cell service in Lion's Head makes the app unreliable, leaving visitors unable to pay.
- Tourism staff have had to handle cash/change, which is outside their job scope and raises safety concerns.

Staff comments:

The parking machines were replaced in the spring of 2025. Following the rollout of the new machines in the spring, several technical challenges were identified in both Tobermory and Lion's Head, including intermittent service dropouts, non-responsive buttons, and malfunctioning MCB components. By-law staff worked closely with Precise Parking, the service provider, to address these issues, ensuring that affected machines were either replaced entirely or repaired with the appropriate components to restore full functionality, and an instructional video demonstrating how to operate the new machines

with a QR code linking to the video was placed on each machine, providing users with easy access to step-by-step instructions.

The new machines are equipped with the following coin, tap option for debit, and credit card options, so that this relieves the burden from shop owners and tourism staff of making change for the machines.

2. Inconsistencies in Rules, Maps & Enforcement

- Little Tub Harbour (south side) is shown as public 3-hour parking yet is gated and restricted.
- Conflicting messages from By-Law staff about who can access these spots and why.
- Signage contradicts published maps and causes confusion among visitors.
- Questions remain: Who authorized these restrictions, and under what guidelines?

Staff Comments:

Since 2020, vehicular access to the south side of Little Tub Harbour has been restricted following the installation of picnic tables to support increased outdoor use during the COVID-19 pandemic. These restrictions have remained in place due to a combination of ongoing factors, including elevated water levels with occasional flooding, and the introduction of permanent infrastructure, such as public washrooms and the Chamber of Commerce information booth, as well as the requirement for the Fire Department to access the location for water supply purposes.

In alignment with these changes, the Traffic and Parking By-law was amended in 2022 to formally prohibit parking on the south side of the lower dock. This area is now designated exclusively for the loading and unloading of commercial vessels, reserved parking for marine repair personnel, and winter boat storage.

Due to multiple overlays on existing signage, updated signage clearly reflecting current regulations and permitted uses within this area of Tobermory will be installed for the 2026 season.

3. Zone and Time Limit Discrepancies

- Machines and apps allow 2, 4, 6-hour options and all-day passes in 3-hour zones, contradicting public messaging.
- Lack of consistency undermines the intent of time-limited zones for traffic turnover.

Staff Comments:

After the Chamber of Commerce brought this to our attention, the machines in the downtown core of Tobermory were checked and found to be accurate. It is not uncommon for a resident to purchase an all-day pass from Hay Bay or Legion Street and park in the downtown core of Tobermory.

Moving forward for the 2026 season, the By-law Department will ensure that all payments for the machines and parking zones are in compliance with the Parking and Traffic Bylaw, as well as the Fees and Charges Bylaw. Updated signage will also be installed to reflect these changes for the 2026 season accurately.

4. Enforcement Issues

- Reports of a particularly aggressive By-Law Officer, including raised voices at visitors.
- Visitors receive tickets immediately, even while attempting to pay.
- Vehicles with resident passes are allowed to park for extended periods in limited zones—against the intended purpose of promoting turnover.
- Inconsistent enforcement is creating confusion and deterring visitors.

Staff Comment:

All Contract Enforcement Officers receive standardized training to ensure consistent enforcement of the Municipality's paid parking program across Tobermory and Lion's Head. Despite this, the program has experienced a high turnover rate among enforcement personnel and any issues regarding staff behaviour were noted and forwarded to the relevant staff of the contract enforcement company.

During training, the expectation is made clear that officers are expected to act as liaisons for the Municipality, providing clear guidance to visitors on the proper use of paid parking machines, QR code payment systems, and general parking regulations. A key challenge in enforcement arises when issuing violations, particularly in cases where it is unclear how long a vehicle has been parked without payment or activation through the QR code system. If an issue arises and the visitors are in the middle of or have paid within the prescribed timeframe within the Bylaw, staff direct them to contact the Bylaw Department directly to have the violation reviewed. All submitted violations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. From May 15 to September 15, 3098 tickets were issued within the Municipality, and 552 tickets were reviewed.

To support staff in maintaining effective enforcement and consistent communication, regular reminders are sent to all officers via municipal-issued phones. These reminders include information such as designated parking zones, enforcement times, and areas reserved for residents only. This structured approach aims to support officers in both their educational and enforcement roles, ensuring the program runs smoothly for residents and visitors alike.

5. Resident Parking Access Issues

- Residents are unable to access designated resident-only spots at Big Tub Lighthouse.

Staff Comments:

The By-law Department has reinforced the importance of adhering to parking and resident-only provisions not only on Big Tub Road, but also on Grant Watson, with all Contract Enforcement Officers. One of the most significant challenges during peak periods has been maintaining the availability of resident-only parking spaces, despite clear signage and direction from parking attendants. By-law enforcement was active throughout the season, issuing numerous tickets to non-residents who parked in spaces designated for residents. During peak times on weekends, By-law Staff would only permit vehicles with reservations on Big Tub Road, thereby reducing traffic congestion on the Road.

2025 Big Tub Road Reservation System

The 2025 season marked the first year of implementing a reservation system for access to Big Tub Road. The system aimed to manage vehicle turnover, reduce congestion, and improve overall visitor experience. While initial adoption varied, the system showed promise and highlighted key areas for improvement moving forward.

Many visitors made their reservations upon arrival, while relatively few had secured reservations in advance. However, once informed of the requirement, most visitors were cooperative and made prompt reservations. There were minimal complaints regarding the pricing structure or the one-hour time limitations. Between July 3rd and September 15th, active reservations totalled 6,233, admissions reached 20,180, and the number of vehicles redirected was 5,747.

The one-hour reservation window, staggered in 15-minute intervals, functioned effectively in maintaining a steady turnover of vehicles. Despite this, the area continued to experience high levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity. Observed issues included:

- Vehicles turning around near the entrance
- Visitors setting up inflatables along the roadside
- Significant foot traffic throughout the roadway

Staffing challenges were notable during peak times. A single officer was often insufficient to manage both enforcement and visitor interaction duties. It was determined that a minimum of two officers was necessary during high-traffic periods. During these times, enforcement staff were stationed at the intersection of Big Tub Road and Highway 6 to restrict access to those with confirmed reservations.

To improve efficiency and compliance for the upcoming season, the following measures are recommended:

- Increase public education and awareness campaigns about the reservation requirement
- Enhance signage and on-site communication materials
- Expand promotional efforts, particularly targeting pre-arrival reservations
- Ensure a minimum of two enforcement officers are scheduled during peak periods
- Provide additional outreach to residents regarding reservation requirements

McCurdy Drive Reservation System

The McCurdy Drive reservation system has continued to operate successfully since its initial implementation in August 2020. The system plays a key role in managing parking demand and ensuring orderly vehicle access during peak periods. The addition of parking at the arena and the Shuttle service on weekends and holidays has contributed significantly to the success of the McCurdy parking lot.

During high-traffic times, the site requires one full-time officer on location to:

- Validate parking reservations
- Direct vehicles to available parking spaces

This presence ensures the lot operates at optimal capacity and minimizes congestion.

Extension of Paid Parking at McCurdy Parking Lot

On September 8, 2025 Council passed a resolution to extend Paid Parking at the McCurdy Parking lot until October 15, 2025. Although Paid Parking and the Parking Enforcement contract concluded on September 15, the McCurdy Drive reservation system remained active through October 15. During this extended period, By-law Enforcement staff conducted regular site visits to confirm compliance and ensure that visitors had secured reservations.

To date, no public feedback has been received regarding the extension of the reservation system to October 15 at McCurdy Parking Lot. Compliance levels remained consistent, and the continuation of the system was implemented smoothly between May 15 and October 15. Active reservations between May 15 and September 15 totalled 8,187, with admissions reaching 25,577. Active reservations between September 15 and October 15 were 1,236, with admissions at 3,299. The total number of vehicles redirected for the season was 6,821.

Little Cove Reservation System

Little Cove has operated efficiently under the Reservation System since 2022, offering a 4-hour time slot. Very few complaints have been logged in this location. One full-time officer is stationed in this location to verify reservations and redirect vehicles to other

places. Between May 15 and September 15, active reservations totalled 4,771, admissions reached 16,367, and the number of cars redirected was 4,570.

Dyers Bay and Borchardt Rd- Reservation System

Due to an oversight, Dyers Bay and Borchardt Road were not uploaded into the ParkPass reservation system for the 2025 season and continued to operate with the existing pay machine in place. The Bylaw Department has proactively contacted ParkPass to ensure both locations are incorporated into the reservation system for the 2026 season. Additionally, signage for both areas is currently under review to support a smooth and effective implementation in 2026.

After the 30-day public comment period, staff will be bringing back a report to Council that includes the public feedback received and staff recommendations for the 2026 Paid Parking season.

Attachments:

- Paid parking and reservation maps
- Letter from the Chamber of Commerce

Budget Implications:

A Treasurer's report regarding the 2025 Parking Meter operational will be presented to Council once all the allocations have been processed.

Municipal Strategic Commitment:

1. Creating a strong & resilient economy
2. Maintaining a transparent & responsible government

Respectfully submitted:

Carol Hopkins,
Chief Bylaw Officer

Reviewed by:

Alexandra Croce,
Municipal Clerk

Approved by:

Peggy Van Mierlo-West,
Chief Administrative Officer

September 18, 2025

Dear By-Law Enforcement, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors:

RE Paid Parking Program Concerns 2025

I am writing today to again express concerns regarding the Municipal Paid Parking Program. There have been a number of issues brought to our attention throughout the duration of the busy season in both Lion's Head and Tobermory. We have brought many of these issues to the attention of Municipal Council, Staff, and/or By-Law Enforcement previously and we are concerned some items have not been addressed and/or are ongoing.

We have heard numerous complaints regarding the machines themselves, before and after the machine replacements. They have often not worked for our visitors – rejecting user cards, confusing user experiences, instructional videos that do not match the options available – and attempts to use the app have been problematic. Particularly in the Lion's Head area, there is little to no cell phone reception to allow users to pay online/via the app, so if the machine itself is not working for them, visitors are often left with no way to pay and they either risk getting a ticket or they leave the area. Our tourism staff have had to keep change handy in the Lion's Head kiosk for those unable to use their cards and/or the app. While this has proven essential to help our visitors, it is not their job and creates unnecessary risk for our staff.

There have also been many inconsistencies with the rules, the maps, and the enforcement. For instance, the Municipal parking maps all show the south side of Little Tub Harbour in Tobermory is available for 3-hour parking, yet a gate was erected again this year to keep the general public out. When the Acting Chief By-Law Officer was contacted regarding that section of the downtown, we were told that no special passes had been given out for that area and that he would look into the matter. Since then, the area has remained gated and available only to those with these special permissions, with signs along the parking spaces stating "No Parking authorized commercial vehicles only". This is in direct opposition to what we were told. We've also been told in the past that having no vehicles parking in this space was to maintain pedestrian safety, however, there is still a constant flow of vehicles and trailers. Who has been granted special permissions to park in this area, when and why was this decision made, and who made this decision? Consistency between published directives and what is enforced is needed.

After discussion with visitors, we have learned that the machines and/or app have allowed for 2, 4, and 6-hour options no matter which zone they were in, and that passes for all-day parking are also available in the 3-hour zones. This is again completely contradictory to any of the messaging regarding the paid parking program.

Also mentioned in communication with the Acting Chief By-Law Officer was the issue of leniency (or lack thereof) with handing out tickets; allowing our visitors adequate time to find a parking machine and/or operate the app while not allowing people to park unreasonably longer than permitted by the prescribed zones. We have received troublesome reports recently regarding a

particularly aggressive By-Law Enforcement Officer yet there have still been reports of vehicles parking all day in 3-hour zones, sometimes overnight and for days at a time. A number of visitors have been ticketed again while they attempt to figure out the machines and/or app (even after Labour Day), giving no grace period as previously mentioned, and this particular Officer has not only dismissed these complaints but has also raised his voice at visitors. Conversation with another Officer about one of the vehicles who stays for extended periods of time revealed they may have a resident pass, and therefore will not be ticketed no matter how long they have stayed. The different zones were outlined with time limits to promote turnover in busier areas and allow all-day parking in lower traffic areas; allowing anyone to stay well beyond the limits of the prescribed zone negates the purpose of this part of the program completely, and aggressive ticketing chases away our visitors.

We have heard from residents as well who have tried to visit Big Tub Lighthouse and utilize the spaces that were to be dedicated for resident use. On one such occasion, they were told by the By-Law Enforcement Officer present at the time that they had been given permission to “rent out” those spaces, and the resident was told they could park on the road and walk up. Having spaces dedicated to resident use only was meant to ensure the area remained accessible to residents, having the spaces taken away at the discretion of whoever may be working the area is again contradictory to the purpose of the program.

This paid parking program has so much potential to regulate the high-traffic areas, promote turnover, and provide revenue for needs within the community if implemented properly. The mismanagement and lack of consistency create an incredibly confusing experience for our visitors and is embarrassing for a highly sought after tourism destination. We respectfully request that Council, Staff, and By-Law Enforcement take the time to organize and implement this program in a way that will be easy for visitors to understand and use, be consistent across the board, and that will ultimately benefit the community. Should you wish to discuss further, please contact the Tobermory and Northern Bruce Peninsula Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you,

Lindsey Griffith, President
Tobermory and Northern Bruce Peninsula Chamber of Commerce

Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula

MLEO 25-10 - Parking Report 2025

Location Map - Big Tub Road - Reservation



Legend

— \$5/hr

--- No Parking



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Date: October 2025
Source: Bruce County, Municipality
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Projection: NAD83 UTM Zone 17N
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.2.2



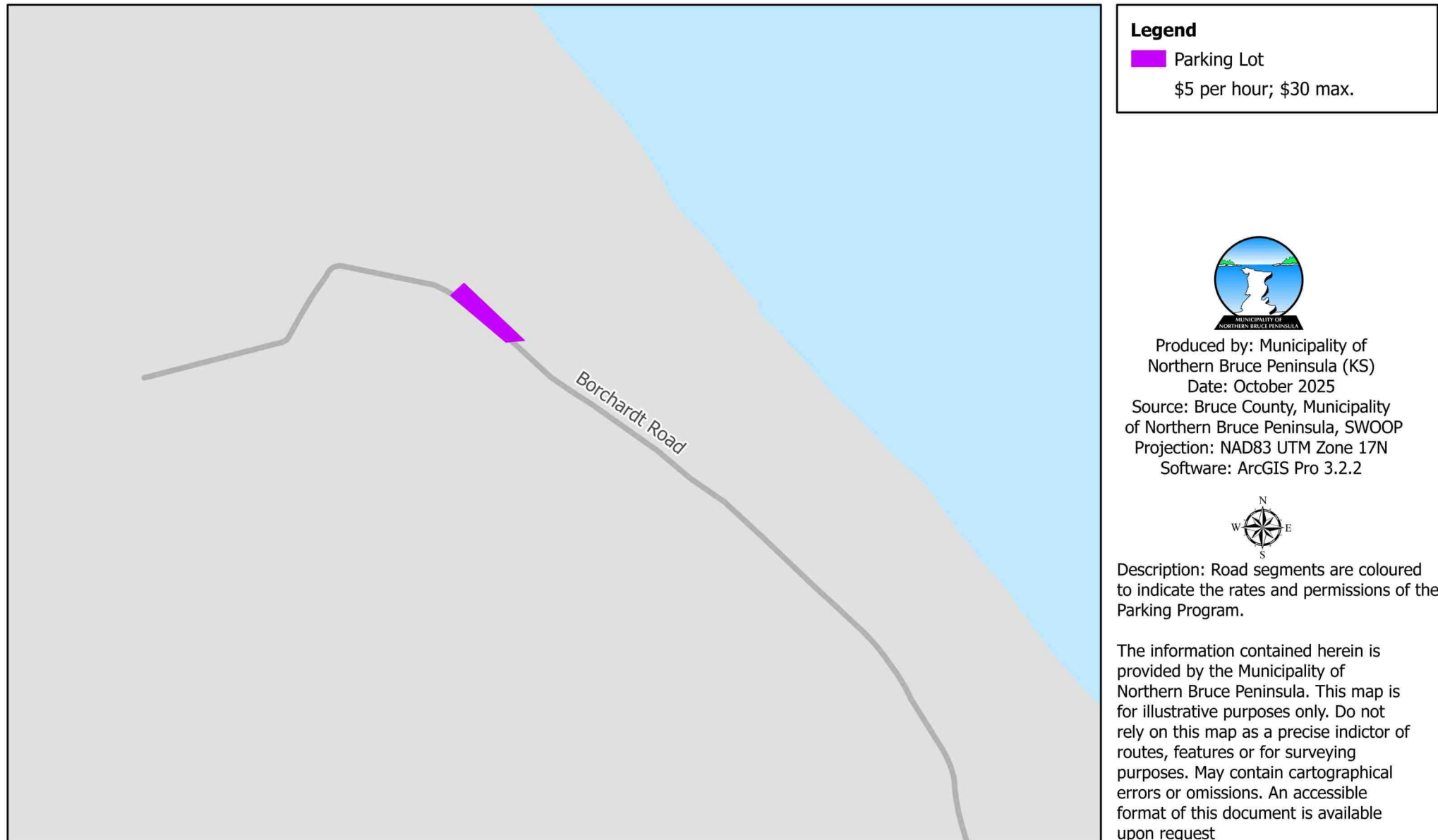
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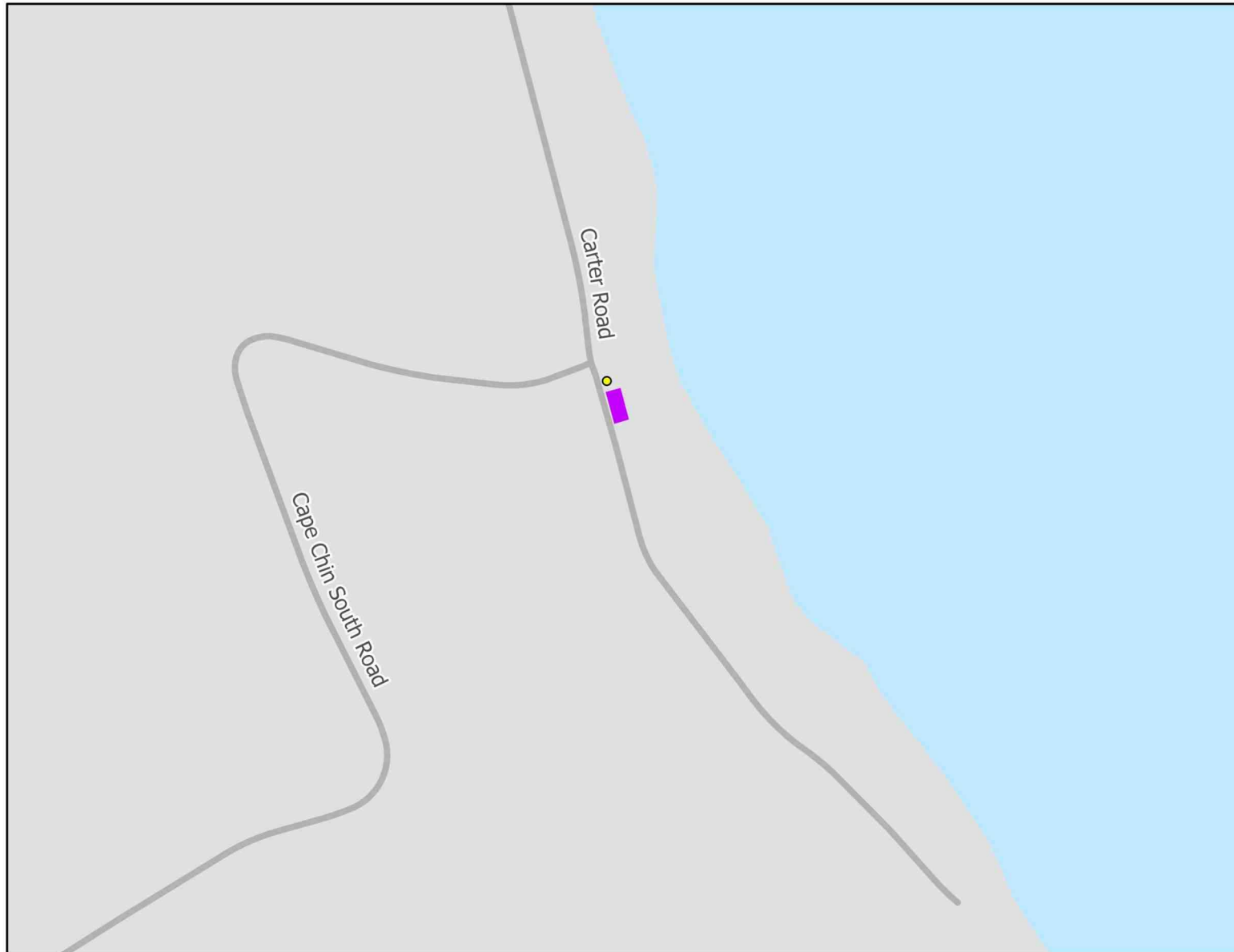
Location Map - Borchardt Road - Reservation



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Location Map - Carter Road



Legend

- Parking Machine
 - Parking Lot
- \$5 per hour; \$30 max.



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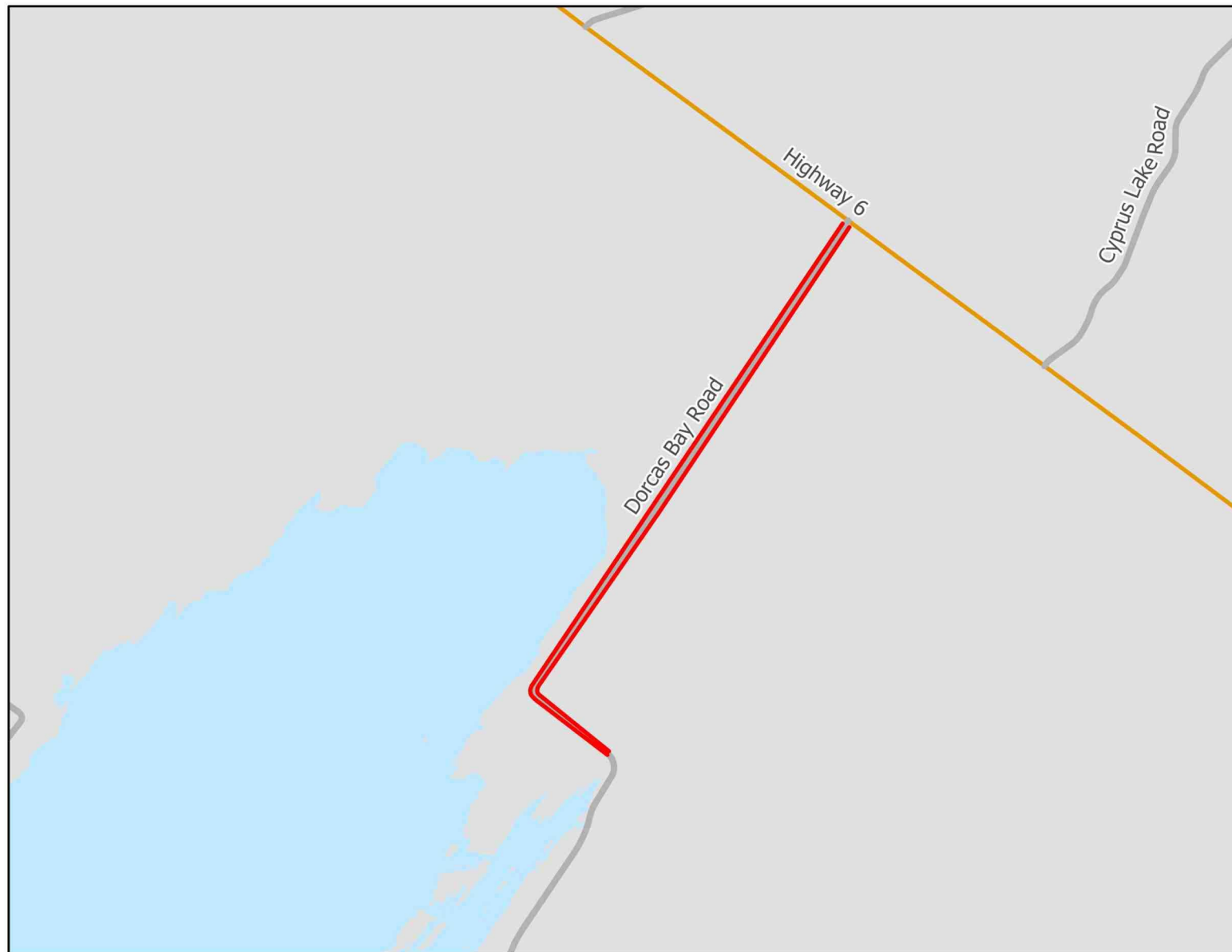
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Location Map - Dorcas Bay Road



Legend

— No Parking, No Stopping



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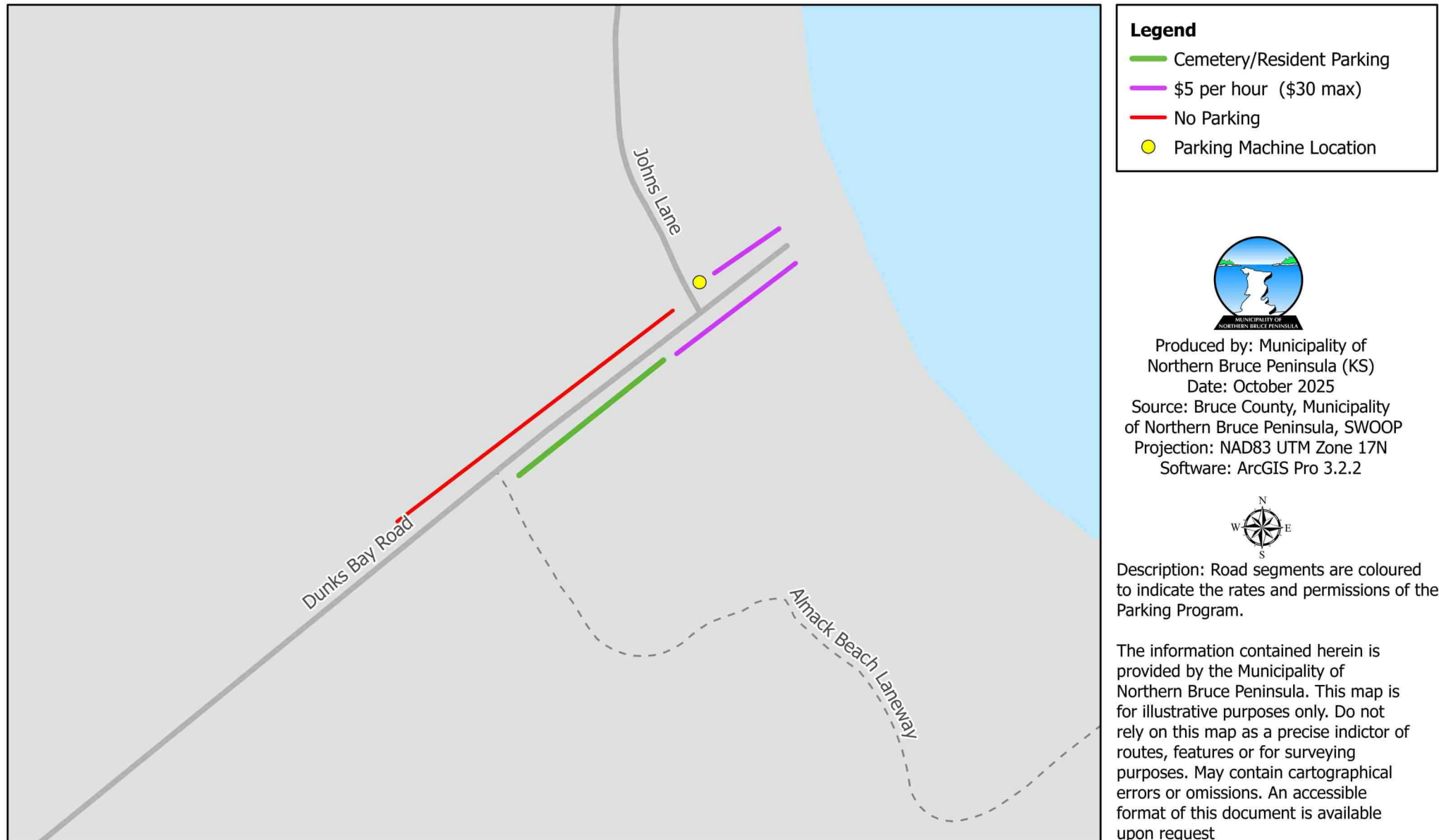
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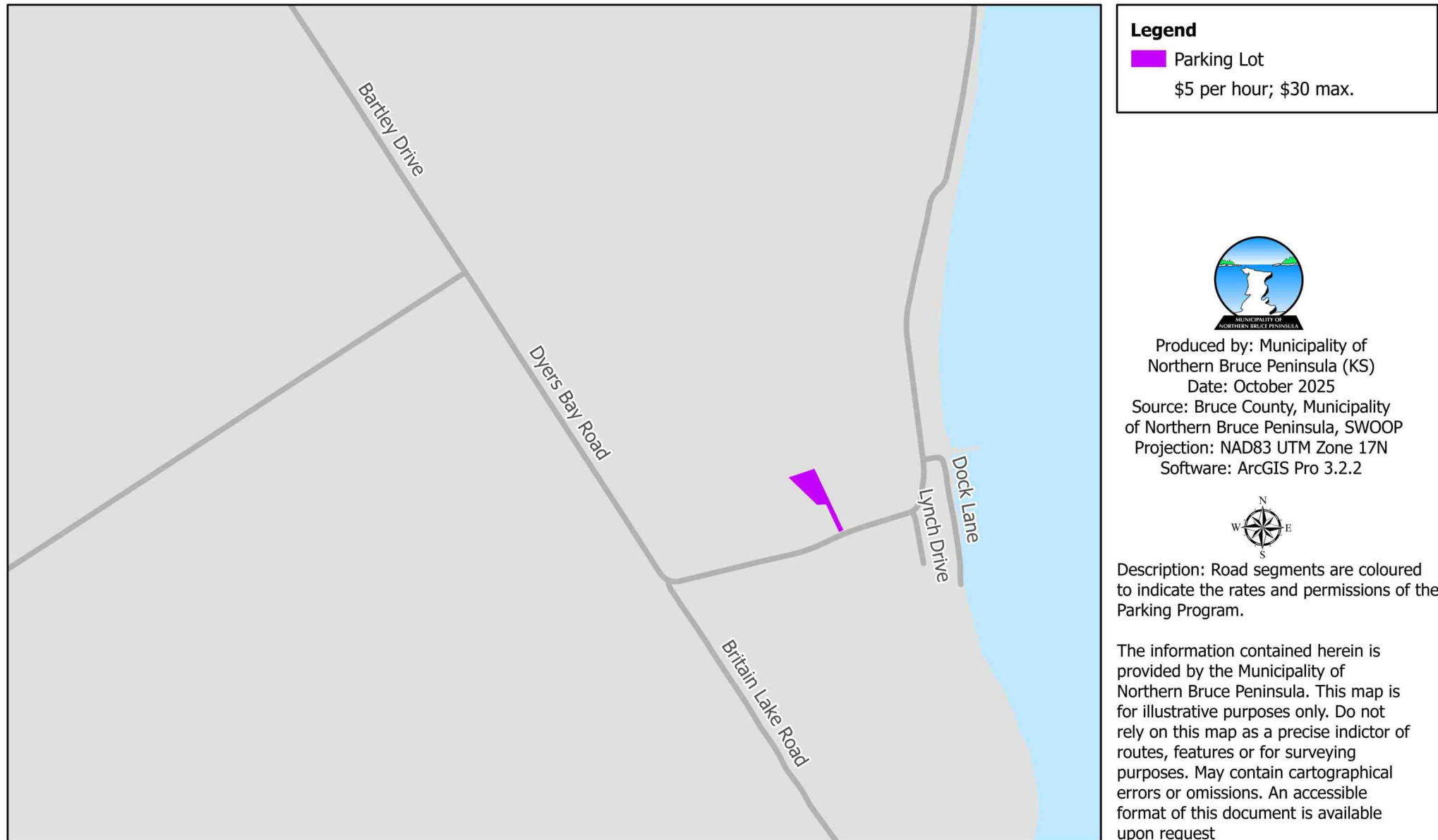
Location Map - Big Tub Road - Reservation



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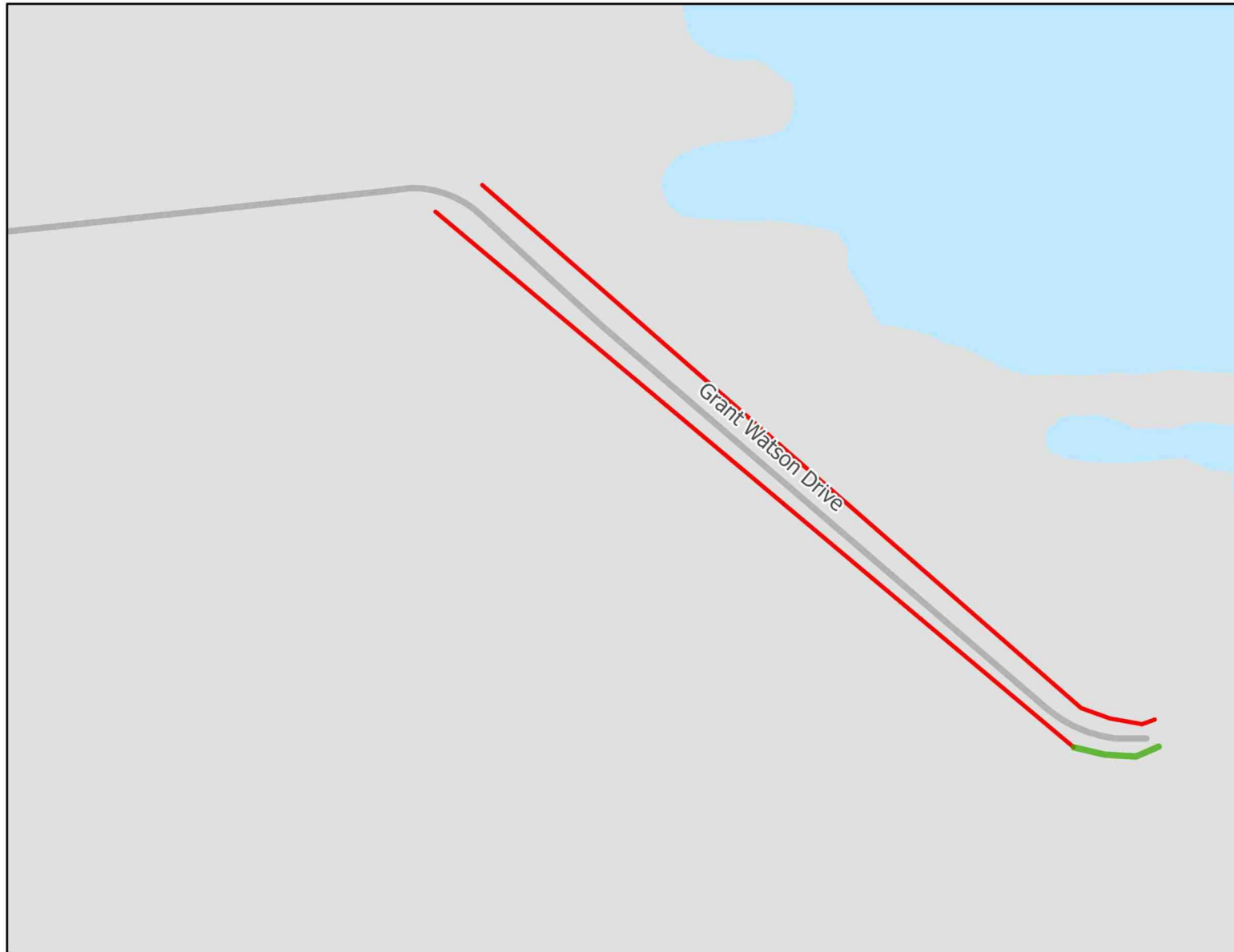
Location Map - Dyers Bay Road - Reservation



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Location Map - Grant Watson Drive



Legend

- Resident Parking
- No Parking



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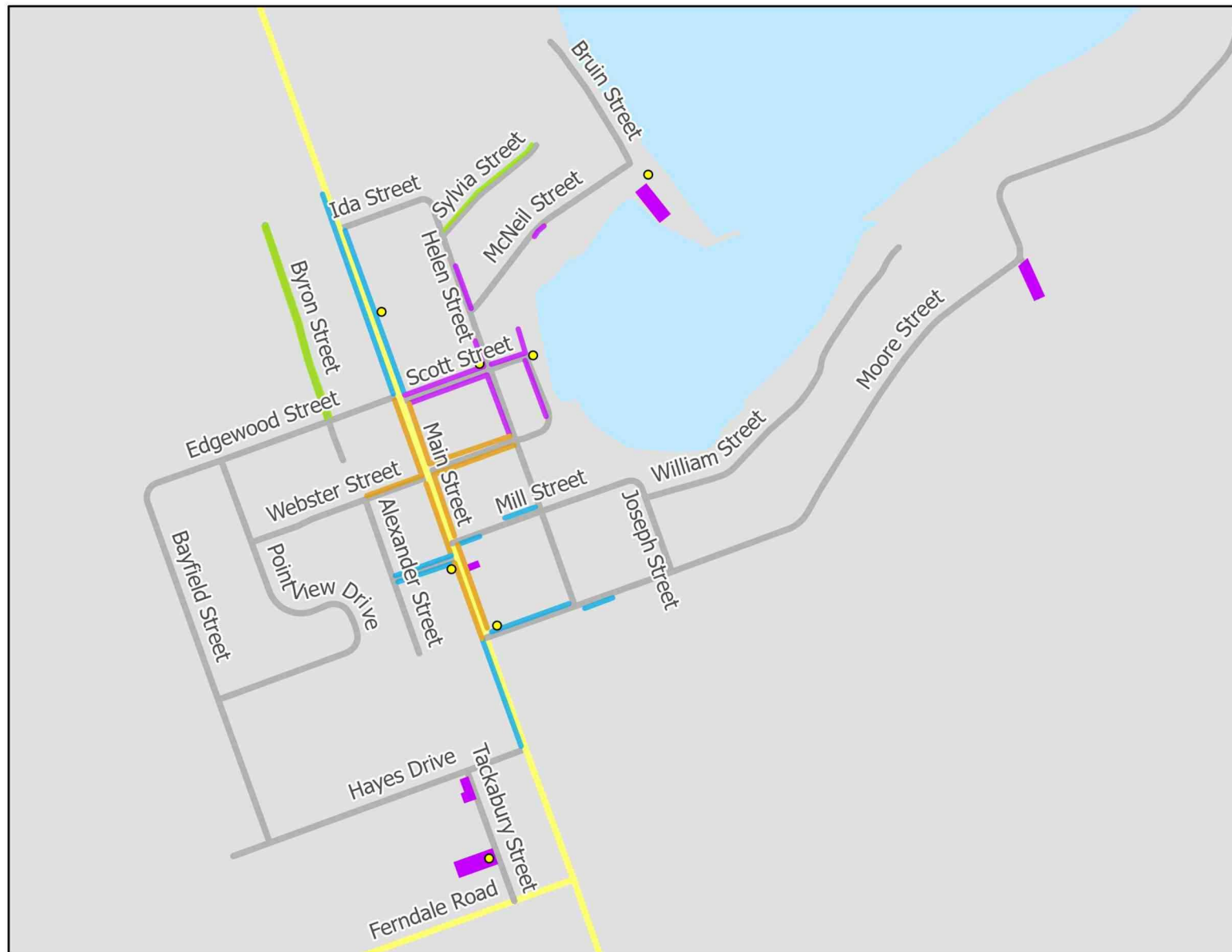
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Location Map - Lion's Head



Legend

- \$3/hr or \$15/day
- \$5/hr to Max \$30/day
- 2 Hour Free Parking
- Resident Parking
- Parking Lots
- Parking Machine Locations



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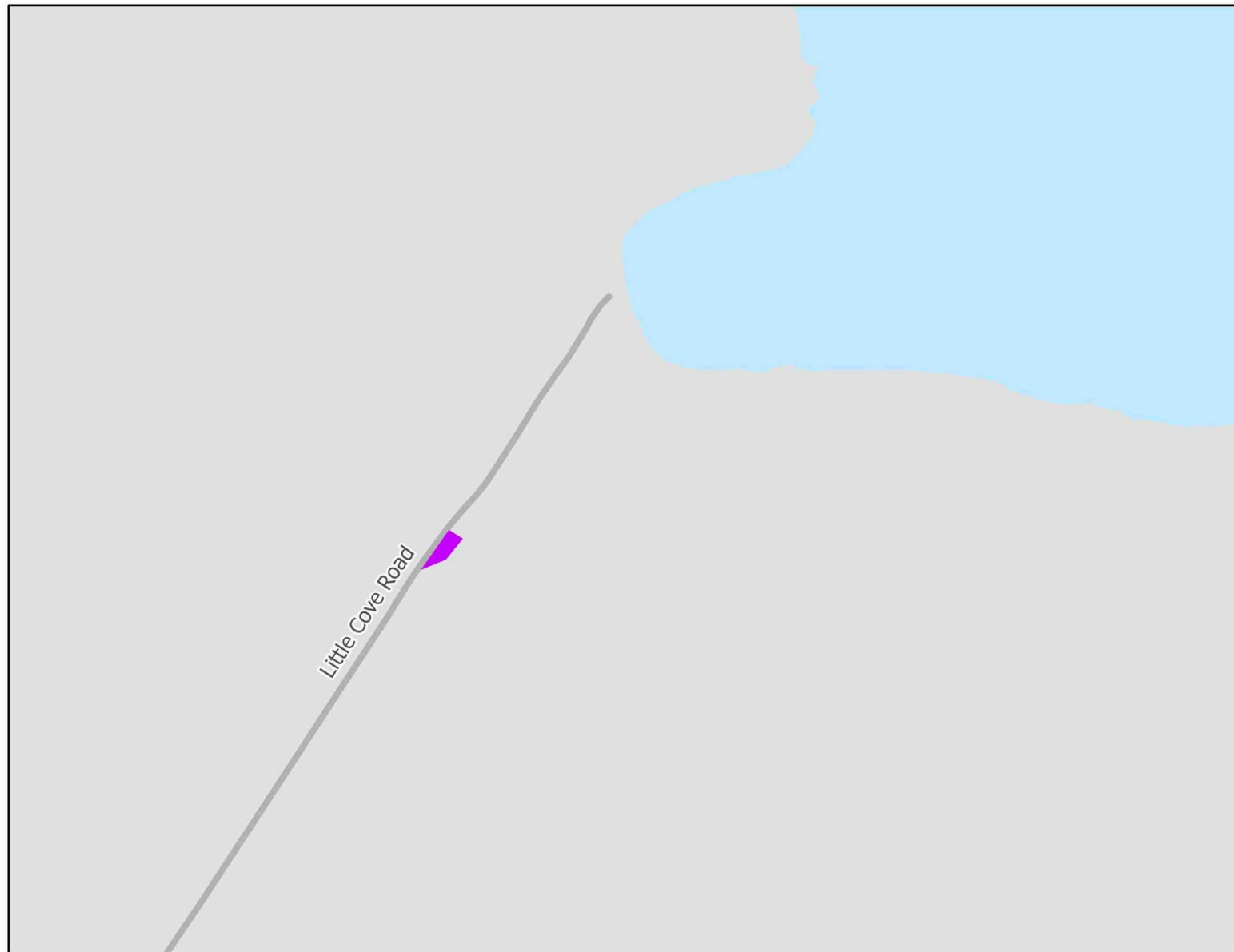
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Location Map - Little Cove Road - Reservation



Legend

-  Parking Lot
- 4 hours \$20



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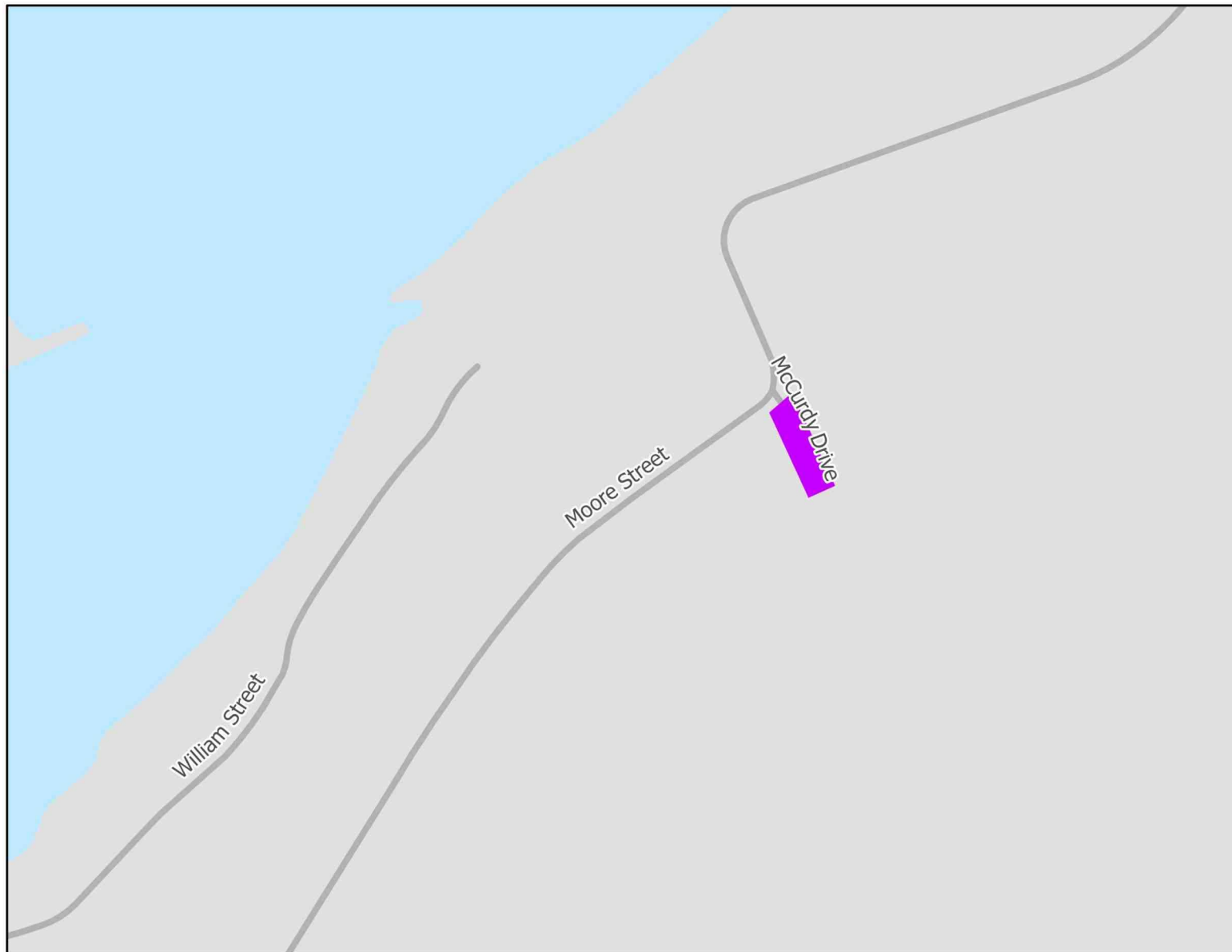
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Location Map - McCurdy Drive - Reservation



Legend

 Parking Lot

4 hours \$20; 8 hours \$30



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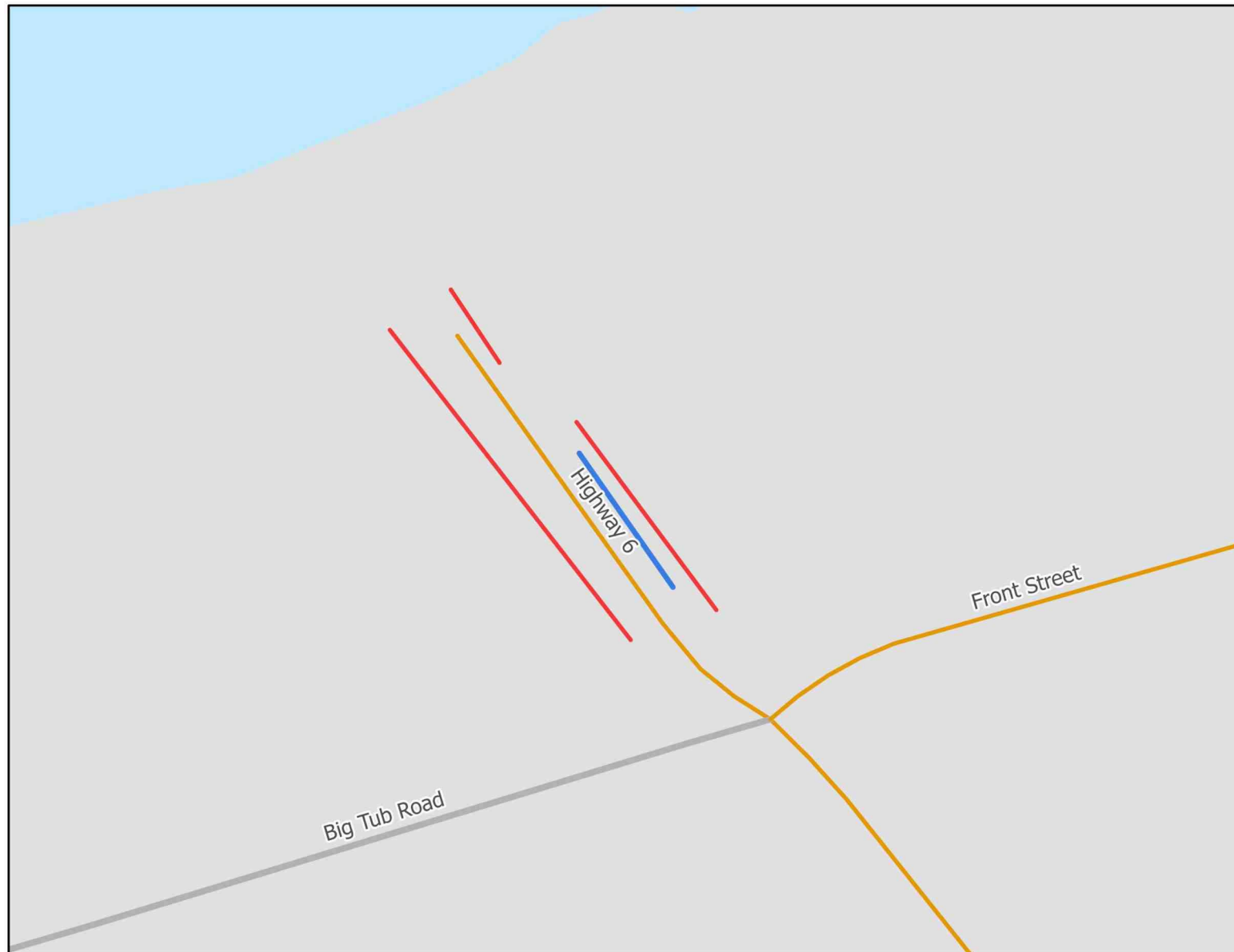
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Location Map - The Gap



Legend

- Shuttle Bus Loading Area
- No Parking



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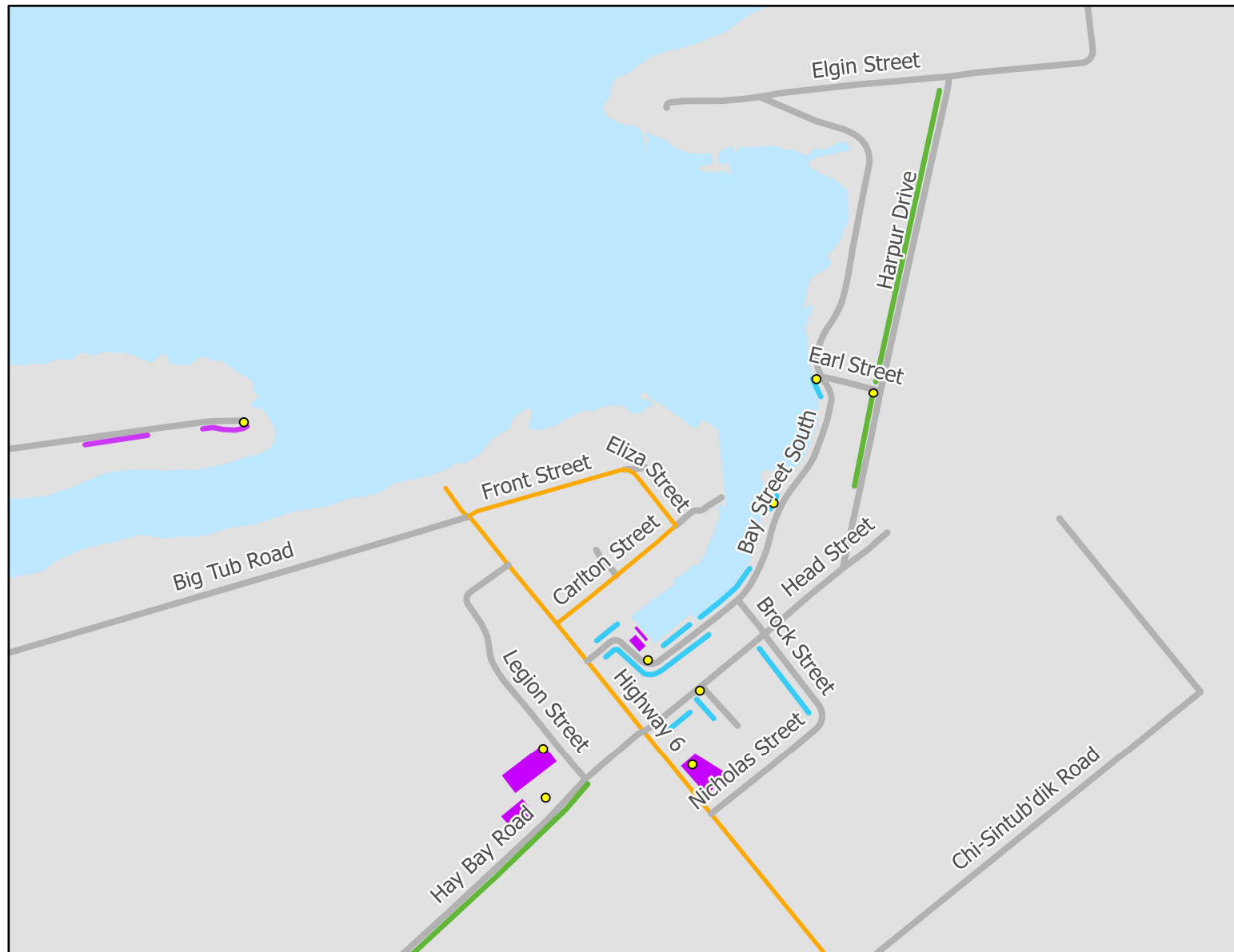
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Location Map - Tobermory



Legend

- \$3/hr (3hr Max)
- \$5/hr
- \$3/hr or \$15/day
- Parking Lots
- Parking Machine Locations



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