

# DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

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**Title:** Canada Drive Active Transportation and Safety Improvements

**Date Prepared:** December 7, 2022

**Report To:** Committee of the Whole

**Councillor and Role:** Councillor Jamie Korab, Development

**Ward:** Ward 3

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## **Decision/Direction Required:**

Decision is required about which type of active transportation route to design and build on Canada Drive.

## **Discussion – Background and Current Status:**

In 2019, the Bike St John's Master Plan was adopted by council. The vision of the plan is to build “a safe, inclusive, and convenient cycling network that is well-connected, attractive and reflective of the City’s unique topography and climate. As part of an integrated mobility network, this is supported by policies and programs that promote a cycling friendly culture.”

Canada Drive is identified as one of the corridors in the “backbone cycling network.”

An active transportation route along Canada Drive will connect the existing shared-use path on Columbus Drive to the shared-use path under the Team Gushue extension in Mount Pearl. It will ultimately connect with Kelly’s Brook trail via Columbus Drive to create an important east-west route at the core of the cycling backbone network.

## **Preliminary Facility Type Evaluation**

A preliminary evaluation was completed to determine which facility types were appropriate options for the Canada Drive corridor. A shared roadway (sharrows), painted bike lanes, unidirectional protected bike lanes on each side of the street, bidirectional bike path on one side of the street, and shared-use path were evaluated at this stage. All options included on-street parking on at least one side of the street and widened sidewalks. Based on the preliminary assessment, two facility types were determined to be appropriate and were then brought forward for public and stakeholder engagement.

## **Public and Stakeholder Engagement**

Active transportation facility options presented for public and stakeholder feedback were:

- A bi-directional bike path on one side of the street, sidewalks on both sides of the street, with parking on one side only; or

The logo for St. John's features the words "ST. JOHN'S" in a bold, serif font. The letter "O" in "JOHN'S" is replaced by a stylized icon of a signal tower or antenna.

- A shared-use path (SUP) on one of the street, sidewalk on the other side, with parking allowed on both sides.

The following is a summary of what we heard from the general public through engagement.

- Most people are generally happy to hear about streetscape changes to improve active transportation. Some people suggest the city is not going far enough to implement safe and comfortable active transportation infrastructure. Others suggest bike lanes are not needed and are not a good use of taxpayer money.
- There is no definitive agreement on which option is preferred.
- Sidewalk snow clearing is a major concern regarding the project. Among people who want to use the new active transportation route, there are questions about its usefulness if it is not adequately maintained in the winter.
- There are concerns about sightlines and sidewalk snow clearing priority on the north side of the street and some concerns about connectivity and safety throughout the street.

The following is a summary of what we heard from residents on Canada Drive.

- Parking is reported as very important among the people who live on Canada Drive. This is an important factor in their preference for the shared-use-path option. In a typical day, half of the participants from Canada Drive would use one on-street parking space; half would use none.
- Sidewalk snow clearing is a major concern regarding the project. Among people living on Canada Drive, the extra width of SUP/sidewalk/bike lanes in front of their homes puts an additional strain on those clearing their driveways.
- Concerns about sightlines on the north side of the street with front lawn embankments adjacent to driveways

The following is what we heard from Metrobus.

- There are 5 bus stops within the project scope. Most of these are on the south side of the street.
- Bus stops must be upgraded to improve accessibility by providing accessible bus stop pads.

The following is a summary of what we heard from the two primary & elementary schools on Canada Drive.

- Active transportation is important to the schools. Many students walk or bike to school. Most students live close enough to school that they do not qualify for bussing.
- Prompt sidewalk and pathway snow clearing is critical because otherwise families can't rely on pathways to walk & bike to school.

- There are a lot more vehicles during drop-off on bad weather days which indicates that a lot of students are walking or biking to school.
- There are concerns about vehicle congestion and left-turns at school access and Cowan Avenue intersection.
- Some students take Metrobus afterschool and use the bus stop in front of Cowan Heights School.

### **Sustainable Active Mobility Advisory Committee (SAMAC) Input**

Following the public engagement and the release of the What We Heard Report, the Sustainable Active Mobility Advisory Committee had their first meetings as a new committee. This Canada Drive project and the summary of what we heard from engagement were brought to this committee for discussion on September 22, 2022. What was heard through public and stakeholder engagement, and the discussions with SAMAC that ensued, contributed to staff's evaluation of the facility type and route alignment options. A recommendation for a shared-use path on the south side of Canada Drive was presented to Council's Committee of the Whole on November 14, 2022. Council requested to see a recommendation from SAMAC to help inform their decision about active transportation facility type and route alignment. This project was brought back to SAMAC on December 1, 2022 for the committee to vote on the recommendation.

Members of the Sustainable and Active Mobility Advisory Committee support the recommendations of Staff regarding the Shared Use Path for Canada Drive and ask that Council consider the concerns raised regarding snow-clearing, accessibility, and safety.

The following is a summary of what we heard from SAMAC.

- Winter maintenance is critical. The route must be cleared and usable all year round for people to feasibly rely on walking, biking, or transit. Design should support efficient winter maintenance.
- Ensure that inclusion and accessibility is considered in the development of any transportation infrastructure. Consider the importance of curb cuts, tactile plates, transit stops, traffic signals and the safety of those with disabilities.
- Ensure the surface of the path maintains a continuous elevation when crossing driveways. Consider keeping driveway ramps outside of the shared-use path. Where sidewalks meet driveways, the cross-slope and repetitive lowering and raising of the sidewalk is challenging for people of varied ages and abilities to use.
- When choosing a surface material, whether asphalt or concrete, keep the comfort of a variety of users in mind.
- Continue to monitor the volume of different types of users on the path over time.
- Consider including raised crosswalks for comfort and safety of people using the shared-use path.
- Consider the addition of bus shelters or space for future bus shelters.

### **Active Transportation Facility Type Evaluation**

The following is a summary of the rationale supporting staff's recommendation for a shared-use path on the south side of Canada Drive.

Safety Enhancements: A shared-use path with parking on both sides of the street provides greater flexibility to use curb extensions and add road safety enhancements including pedestrian crossing improvements.

Transit: A shared-use path with parking on both sides of the street provides greater flexibility in roadway space to improve transit stops. Bus stops can be placed on curb extensions, increasing comfort, safety and transit efficiency.

Expected active transportation volumes: As a general guideline, a shared-use path is expected to be a comfortable facility for up to 100 users per hour. Given the measured active transportation volumes in other areas of the city and the context of the Canada Drive corridor, a shared-use path is expected to be an appropriate facility type for people of all ages and abilities long term.

Resident impact: A shared-use path is the preferred option of Canada Drive residents. This option would maintain parking on both sides of the street and reduce resident snow clearing, both of which were important to residents.

Inclusion and Accessibility: A shared-use path on the south side of the street is being recommended in consideration of accessibility. The additional right of way space to improve transit access and pedestrian crossings, the expected number of shared-use path users, and the winter maintenance considerations support this facility type recommendation.

Cost: Based on high-level preliminary estimates, a shared-use path would cost less than the bidirectional bike lane option.

Snow clearing: A shared-use path can be more efficiently maintained in the winter compared to separated bike and pedestrian facilities. This has impacts to active transportation users, city operations, Canada Drive residents, students going to school and people using transit. Having a snow-cleared facility that can be used by people walking, wheeling, running, and biking was noted as very important to all stakeholders.

### **Active Transportation Route Alignment Evaluation**

Sightlines: Embankments on private property lawns present sightline issues along the north side of Canada Drive. There are relatively few sightline issues to address on the south side of the street.

Winter maintenance: The south side is currently ranked higher priority for sidewalk snow clearing. Given the topography of the street, an active transportation facility on the south side of the street is relatively easier for winter maintenance.

Transit: Four of the five bus stops within the project area are located on the south side of the street. Convenient integration of active modes and transit are best supported by an active transportation route on the south side of Canada Drive.

### **Key Considerations/Implications:**

#### 1. Budget/Financial Implications:

- The shared-use path will require improved snow clearing and seasonal maintenance. The costs associated with ongoing maintenance will be brought forward for council's consideration in the future.
- Since sections of Canada Drive are identified for street rehabilitation in 2023 and future years, any changes to the use of the street are best made during the design and construction phase. Piggybacking on rehabilitation work, will help reduce overall cost and avoid extra construction along the corridor.
- The City of St. John's has applied for funding for this project under a cost-shared program with the federal and provincial governments.

#### 2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:

- Residents of the City of St John's
- Schools on Canada Drive (St Matthews and Cowan Heights Elementary)
- Residents of Canada Drive and Cowan Heights
- SAMAC
- Metrobus

#### 3. Alignment with Strategic Directions:

A City that Moves: Expand and maintain a safe and accessible active transportation network.

A City that Moves: Improve safety for all users on a well-maintained street network.

#### 4. Alignment with Adopted Plans:

In the 2019 Bike St John's Master Plan, Canada Drive is identified as one of the corridors in the "backbone cycling network."

Council has committed to working towards a sustainable mode share target of 16% to be achieved by 2030 and 22% by 2050 (Decision Note November 2022). To achieve this target the City must continue to invest more in transit, pedestrian, and bike facilities

#### 5. Accessibility and Inclusion: Accessibility and inclusion is a critical consideration for all transportation infrastructure design and construction. The city's Accessibility and Inclusion Facilitator may be consulted as needed.

6. Legal or Policy Implications: n/a
7. Privacy Implications: n/a
8. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Council's decision about the facility type and route alignment will be communicated to the residents and stakeholders who participated in the the engagement process.
9. Human Resource Implications: n/a
10. Procurement Implications: Procurement for the engineering design of Canada Drive will follow council's decision about the facility type and route alignment for this corridor.
11. Information Technology Implications: n/a
12. Other Implications: n/a

**Recommendation:**

That Council approve the design and construction of a shared-use path on the south side of Canada Drive.

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**Approved by:** Amer Afridi, Manager Transportation Engineering

**Report Approval Details**

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Attachments:	
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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**No Signature found**

**Amer Afridi - Dec 7, 2022 - 4:38 PM**

**No Signature - Task assigned to Scott Winsor was completed by workflow administrator Karen Chafe**

**Scott Winsor - Dec 8, 2022 - 11:17 AM**

**Jason Sinyard - Dec 8, 2022 - 12:22 PM**