

<b>Title:</b>	Rawlins Cross – Bishop Feild Elementary Considerations
<b>Date Prepared:</b>	December 4, 2019
<b>Report To:</b>	Committee of the Whole
<b>Councillor and Role:</b>	Councillor Sandy Hickman - Transportation
<b>Ward:</b>	Ward 2

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## **Issue:**

An update on the Rawlins Cross pilot project is provided including discussion on concerns raised by parents of children who attend Bishop Feild Elementary.

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

The Rawlins Cross pilot project was implemented in August of 2018 and will be in place until a final report on the project is presented to Council and a decision is made as to if it will be made permanent or removed (as per Council Directives R2018-02-19/13 and R2018-03-05/11).

Since the project's implementation, the City has conducted a public engagement survey about driver, pedestrian, and cyclist's experience at the project site during the spring of 2019 and has collected traffic and pedestrian data in the area. Collision data for the past year during the pilot's implementation has not been received. The final report to Council will be made once collision data for the area is received and analyzed and a complete picture of the project's level of success can be presented.

Flashing pedestrian activated beacons will be installed at crossings on Monkstown Road and King's Road in response to pedestrian concerns raised at these locations to improve driver awareness and yield compliance. The decision to implement these interim improvements was made by Council last month based on consideration given at the October 2 COTW meeting (CD R2019-10-15/4).

In late September of this year, some parents of children who attend Bishop Feild Elementary reached out to Council regarding the Rawlins Cross pilot project and requested more information on the status of the pilot project and evaluation and an opportunity to discuss questions and concerns they had regarding the project. Staff and Councillors met with two parents from the school council in early October to provide an update and discuss the matter further.

The parents voiced strong concerns about the safety of pedestrians and students crossing streets in the area. These concerns were discussed and an update was provided on Council's recent decision to install flashing beacons at crosswalks on Monkstown Road and King's Road. Staff and Council committed to having this equipment installed as soon as possible with



the goal of it being installed before the new year. Possibilities for additional improvements were discussed and the parents suggested that the City consider assigning a crossing guard to the area. Staff noted challenges with hiring and retaining enough crossing guard staff to meet the current needs of schools in the City. Staff and Councillors welcomed any ongoing feedback on the pilot project from the parents.

The parent representative reached back out to Councillors three weeks later in follow up to the meeting to reiterate concerns of pedestrian safety and requested that Council make commitments to address their concerns. Councillors and staff responded to the concerned parent and staff reviewed the requests.

In recent weeks, a representative of the NL English School District passed along concerns raised by the Bishop Feild School Council and the parent representative. Below is a general summary of the concerns raised and the responses provided.

- *It was requested that the Rawlins Cross pilot project does not conclude until after Bishop Feild Elementary has re-opened in its Bond Street location and the school community has had time to experience the reconfiguration, particularly as pedestrians.*

The pilot project will stay in place until its evaluation, including the review of collision data, has been completed and presented to Council for their consideration.

At the time this request was made it was expected that Bishop Field would return to the Bond Street location in January 2020. Since then, the expected return date has been extended to April 2020 to complete additional repair work.

Timelines for both the school move-in and the receipt of the required collision data are somewhat uncertain. It is expected that the collision data may be available for inclusion in the final report before April 2020.

- *It was requested that the City conduct more community engagement on the pedestrian experience at the project location after Bishop Feild reopens on Bond Street.*

The City has welcomed all feedback on peoples' experience with the pilot reconfiguration. In discussions with the parent representatives of the School Council in October it was expressed that the City is monitoring all feedback received and that pending the outcome of the pilot project, there would be opportunity for more stakeholder engagement on changes to the area.

The City has contacted a representative of the School Council and the NL English School District to request a follow up meeting with the school community in the new year and the NL English School District has agreed to help coordinate

a meeting. Given the recent announcement of the delayed school move, the timing of this meeting will need to be considered. The City will work with the NL English School District to determine how to successfully engage with the school community given the timelines for both the school repairs and the pilot project. Bishop Feild students and parents who plan to travel to/from school as pedestrians once class returns to the Bond Street location live relatively close to the school and already have some experience with the pilot configuration in their neighbourhood.

It is noted that the engagement survey conducted in the spring included questions for folks who have experienced the pilot project as pedestrians, as cyclists, and as drivers. The survey asked up to a total of 67 questions to participants regarding Rawlins Cross, depending on how they said they had experienced the project. Of these questions, 20 were specific to cyclist experience, 26 were specific to pedestrian experience, and 16 were specific to driver experience. All respondents were given an open-ended opportunity to provide more information in their own words on their experience.

- *It was requested that a crossing guard be assigned to Rawlins Cross.*

The City's crossing guard program has been implemented to help as many children as possible safely cross the street in the immediate vicinity of the schools in the program. A crossing guard has been hired under this program for Bishop Field Elementary School and will be positioned at the cross walk located in front of the school on Bond Street once classes have relocated. At present, the City's current budget for the program has been reached. Funding and crossing guard staff resources are not available to accommodate an additional position and add a second crossing guard for the Bishop Field area.

To successfully deliver the crossing guard program, set hiring and training procedures must be followed for reasons of liability and fair staffing process. Recruitment and hiring for crossing guard positions follows internal City of St. John's hiring practices.

- *It was requested that School Area signage be added at Military Road in the area of Carew Street.*

This area of Military Road (between Knight Street and Colonial Street next to Bannerman Park) is already signed as a playground area to alert drivers to the presence of children and pedestrians in the area.

School and Playground Areas and Zones are designated based on engineering guidelines that take into consideration a number of factors including proximity to the school, type of school, and the layout of the school yard. The importance of using the signage sparingly is a key tenant in deciding when and when not to use the signs. Similar to playground signs, school area signs are intended to warn motorists of a potential higher chance of a child entering a street unexpectedly or unintentionally and are not intended to be used to alert drivers to crosswalks. For this reason, school zone/area signs are not recommended along streets where there is limited frontage of the school itself and when the school is set back more than 50m from the street.

- *Concerns were expressed regarding the number of crosswalks in the area of Rawlins Cross and the potential to cause confusion to pedestrian and vehicle users and negatively impact their safety, particularly for students crossing in the area.*

There are many crossing points in the area of Rawlin's Cross by nature of the number of streets intersecting in the area. Part of the pilot project review was considering these crossings with respect to their safety and the priority of pedestrians using these crossings. The pilot configuration has changed the control of the crossings at the intersections of Military Road/Monkstown Road (Prescott St) and Military Road/King's Road (Rennie's Mill Road), but many of the crossings (including those at Prescott Street/Queen's Road and Rennie's Mill Road) have not been changed or have been made shorter. The pilot also added a crossing on the Monkstown Road approach in response to pedestrian demand.

Flashing beacons will be added to the crossing at Military Road/Monkstown Road and at the Military Road/King's Road crossing in response to pedestrian concerns raised to improve driver awareness and yield compliance. These improvements will benefit the safety of all pedestrians in the area using these crossings. The City will continue to work to find more opportunities for design improvements that could potentially be implemented.

- *Concern was expressed that the installation of the flashing beacons on the Military Road/Monkstown Road and the Military Road/King's Road crosswalks would direct children to use the longer and busier crosswalks in the area. It was also noted that the crosswalk most frequently used by the school community was the crossing on Military Road from Kings Road to Rennie's Mill Road.*

In general people tend to choose a route that has the best combination of directness and comfort for them personally. It is not expected that beacons will redirect students unless they feel safer doing so. As mentioned, most of the school community tends to use routes that includes crossing Military Road from Kings Road to Rennie's Mill Road. Observations have shown this crosswalk benefits from better driver yielding than the locations where beacons will be installed. The locations chosen for the beacons were selected to have the best impact for pedestrian safety overall and will help improve safety for folks who do use those crosswalks.

**1. Budget/Financial Implications**

n/a

**2. Partners or Other Stakeholders**

n/a

**3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans**

n/a

**4. Legal or Policy Implications**

As stated above The City's crossing guard program has been implemented to help as many children as possible safely cross the street in the immediate vicinity of the schools in the program. Going outside this scope could set a precedent for a significant expansion of this program.

**5. Privacy Implications**

n/a

**6. Engagement and Communications Considerations**

The City's communications department will inform the public about the improvements to the crosswalks, prior to installation of the flashing beacon equipment.

**7. Human Resource Implications**

n/a

**8. Procurement Implications**

n/a

**9. Information Technology Implications**

n/a

**10. Other Implications**

n/a

**Conclusion/Next Steps:**

Flashing pedestrian activated beacons will be installed at the Monkstown Road and King's Road crossings into the centre of Rawlins Cross in the upcoming weeks.

The final report to Council on the pilot project will be made once collision data for the area is received and analyzed and a complete picture of the project's level of success can be presented.

The City will coordinate a meeting with the help of the NL English School District to consult with the Bishop Feild school council.

**Prepared by/Date:**

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