

# DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

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**Title:** Transportation Changes in Response to COVID-19

**Date Prepared:** April 29, 2020

**Report To:** Regular Meeting of Council

**Councillor and Role:** Councillor Sandy Hickman, Transportation & Regulatory Services

**Ward:** N/A

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## **Decision/Direction Required:**

Direction is required on what type of transportation network changes to make, if any, and in what locations as part of the City's response to COVID-19.

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

Some municipalities are making changes to their street network to allow pedestrians to maintain increased physical distance during the COVID-19 response.

One major concern with these measures is that they will encourage people to exit the home and will increase social contact in a time when the prevailing public health advice is to stay at home as much as possible. There is a concern also that selective implementation might create areas that attract people who would have otherwise used their local amenities, concentrating those who do venture out.

That said, it has been recognised that walking and getting outside "is important to our health and mental health to get us through this."<sup>1</sup>

As of April 29<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Canada recommends:<sup>2</sup>

*You can go for a walk if you:*

- *have not been diagnosed with COVID-19*
- *do not have symptoms of COVID-19*
- *have not travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days*
- *are not in quarantine (self-isolating)*
- *are not isolating*

*If you go out for a walk, do not congregate and always practise physical (social) distancing by keeping at least 2 metres apart from others at all times.*

Staying isolated within your home can be disproportionately hard on those who share a home with roommates, have a small home, and/or have no garden or other outdoor space. These

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<sup>1</sup> <https://vancouver.sun.com/opinion/sandy-james-how-do-we-use-city-streets-in-the-time-of-physical-distancing/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html>

# ST. JOHN'S

characteristics are often typical for dense downtown areas and housing for people with a lower income.

Because of the factors above access to outdoor spaces is connected to issues of public health, mental health, social equity, and transportation. Some view it as inevitable that people will want to get outdoors and see a need to accommodate that, others consider any action to facilitate outdoor activity as inviting unnecessary physical contact.

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Province announced<sup>3</sup> a target of May 11<sup>th</sup> for a change to a “Level 4” response. This level includes allowance for “low-risk outdoor recreational activities”. On April 29<sup>th</sup> the Provincial Health Officer for British Columbia encouraged people to get outside stating “[the chance of catching COVID-19 from someone coughing as they walk past you in a park is] infinitesimally small”.<sup>4</sup> These developments are encouraging in that the risks of induced demand appear to be lower than previously assumed. However, at the same time the need for measures such as these is called into question.

Fundamentally, changing transportation networks in response to COVID-19 is more a question of these other priorities.

#### Implementation Factors

- a. Any time a general travel lane is modified to reallocate space the speed and capacity of that street may be reduced.
- b. In some cases, a left turn lane may be eliminated where there is insufficient space to provide both the auxiliary lane and the additional space for active users.
- c. If additional active space is provided on a street served by public transit, then a short discontinuity in the active space may be necessary to serve the transit stop.
- d. On street parking can be significantly affected by reallocation of parking lanes. This is particularly critical for those who rely on on-street parking at home. Even more so for those with limited mobility that rely on on-street parking close to an accessible door.
- e. In areas where one side of the street is reallocated and the other is not, it is possible that the roadway centerline will need to shift. In these cases, the normal repainting of centerline may need to be deferred for the duration of the temporary conditions.
- f. Persons with disabilities may not be able to take advantage of temporary conditions. It will be important for those who are able bodied to be courteous and give way where possible to those who are less able.
- g. Street sweeping will need to be completed ahead of implementation as access to the curb for maintenance activities will be eliminated in most options.
- h. Waste collection would be impacted, and a message would need to be developed about where is the proper location to place waste for collection on frontages affected by these changes.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nl-covid-april-30-1.5550638>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/please-go-outside-dr-bonnie-henry-says-covid-19-much-less-likely-to-spread-outdoors-1.5550191>

- i. Currently there is no formal method to evaluate the success of these projects or to make improvements where issues are identified. Ongoing decisions with respect to how any reallocations have been implemented will need to be made by staff to ensure a timely response.

#### Optional Implementation Details

- a. Warning tape could be used between delineators to reinforce the separation created. This would not be applicable in those location where property access conflicts. While an option for Council to consider it has not been included in any of the sample projects below.
- b. Traditional traffic calming measures, such as temporary speed cushions, could be added to streets to reduce speed and improve the environment for active modes. While an option for Council to consider it has not been included in any of the sample projects below.
- c. During consultation with the Inclusion Advisory Committee it was raised that if restrictions persist into next winter then sidewalk snow clearing will be an even greater issue. No allowance for this has been made in the sample projects below.
- d. Sample project extensions are mentioned in some cases but are for consideration only and are not included in the costs estimates provided.
- e. In some cases, the temporary traffic calming islands used as part of previous pilot projects may be substituted for Jersey Barriers. However, there is a limited supply of these, so they can not be relied on if a large set of projects is selected.

#### Sample Projects

- a. Portugal Cove Road - Empire Avenue to New Cove Road:  
Street space on the western side of the street reallocated to widen sidewalk. Shown as a yellow line in Figure 1. Also shown in this figure is Baird's Lane in green which permits a connection to Kenny's Pond via Tiffany Lane. This project connects neighbourhoods to the Elizabeth Avenue commercial area and recreational opportunities.
- b. Elizabeth Avenue - Portugal Cove Road to Torbay Road:  
The curb lane on both sides of the street is reallocated to active space. Shown as a purple line in Figure 1. This improves the connection from the previous project to the commercial area including the grocery store at Torbay Road and Elizabeth. An extension of this project further west along Elizabeth Avenue would further improve this connection but has increased impacts on vehicle travel.
- c. Lemarchant Road - Campbell Avenue / Pleasant Street to Cookstown Road:  
The parking lane on the south side of Lemarchant would be reallocated to active space. Shown as a yellow line on Figure 2. This parking lane is currently underused due to business closures. Two pharmacies are in close proximity of the western end of this sample project. It also allows connection into the downtown at several places and serves St. Clare Hospital. An extension of this project further east along Military Road would further improve this connection but has increased impacts on vehicle travel.
- d. Parade Street - Lemarchant Road to Merrymeeting Road:  
Street space on the eastern side of the street would be reallocated for active use.

Shown as a red line on Figure 2 this is a short connection between sample projects c and e.

e. Newtown Road - Merrymeeting Road to Elizabeth Avenue:

Street space on the eastern side of the street would be reallocated for active use. Shown as a purple line on Figure 2. The space allocated for this project would be narrower than others given the constraints imposed by existing infrastructure. However, this sample project provides a good connection to recreational opportunities and a grocery store for the surrounding community.

f. Harbour Drive:

The parking lane on the south side of Harbour Drive would be reallocated to active space. Shown as a yellow line on Figure 3. Demand for parking along Harbour Drive is currently very low. Connecting Harbour Drive through downtown to Lemarchant Road or Military Road is desirable but no individual route was identified that makes this connection with a good balance of benefit and impact.

### Sample Project Costs Estimates

Estimates have been prepared for each of the six sample projects listed above based on the following assumptions:

- Typical application would see the use of a concrete Jersey Barrier at the ends of a block and flexible delineators, “candlesticks”, along the linear area to be reserved
- Include a 20% contingency given the uncertainty involved in these projects
- Include the non-refundable portion of the HST
- Some existing stock of delineators is available but is limited so all projects are priced with new candlesticks purchased for ease of comparison.

These estimates are shown in the table below. Recognizing the high cost associated with Jersey Barriers an alternative approach is shown that replaces Jersey Barriers with additional candlesticks. The safety performance of this approach would be significantly lower than using Jersey Barriers.

	<b>Sample Project Budgets</b>	
	<b>with barriers</b>	<b>no barriers</b>
Portugal Cove Road - Empire Avenue to New Cove Road	\$ 56,400.00	\$ 18,900.00
Elizabeth Avenue - Portugal Cove Road to Torbay Road	\$ 21,000.00	\$ 7,400.00
Lemarchant Road - Campbell Avenue / Pleasant Street to Cookstown Road	\$ 33,100.00	\$ 11,300.00
Parade Street - Lemarchant Road to Merrymeeting Road	\$ 6,200.00	\$ 2,800.00
Newtown Road - Merrymeeting Road to Elizabeth Avenue	\$ 35,900.00	\$ 14,100.00
Harbour Drive	\$ 8,200.00	\$ 8,200.00
<i>Six Project Total</i>	<i>\$ 160,800.00</i>	<i>\$ 62,700.00</i>



Figure 1: Sample projects a and b

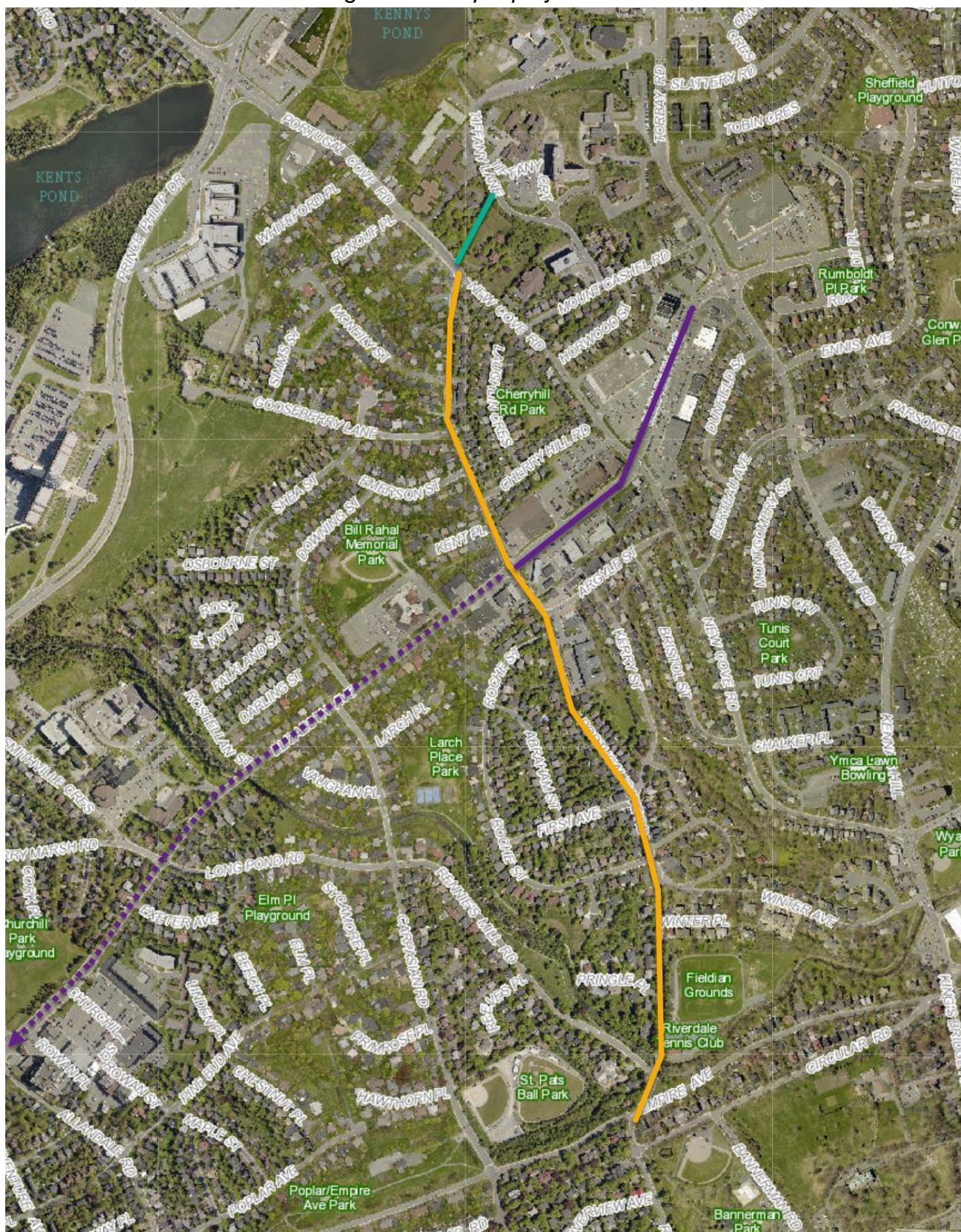
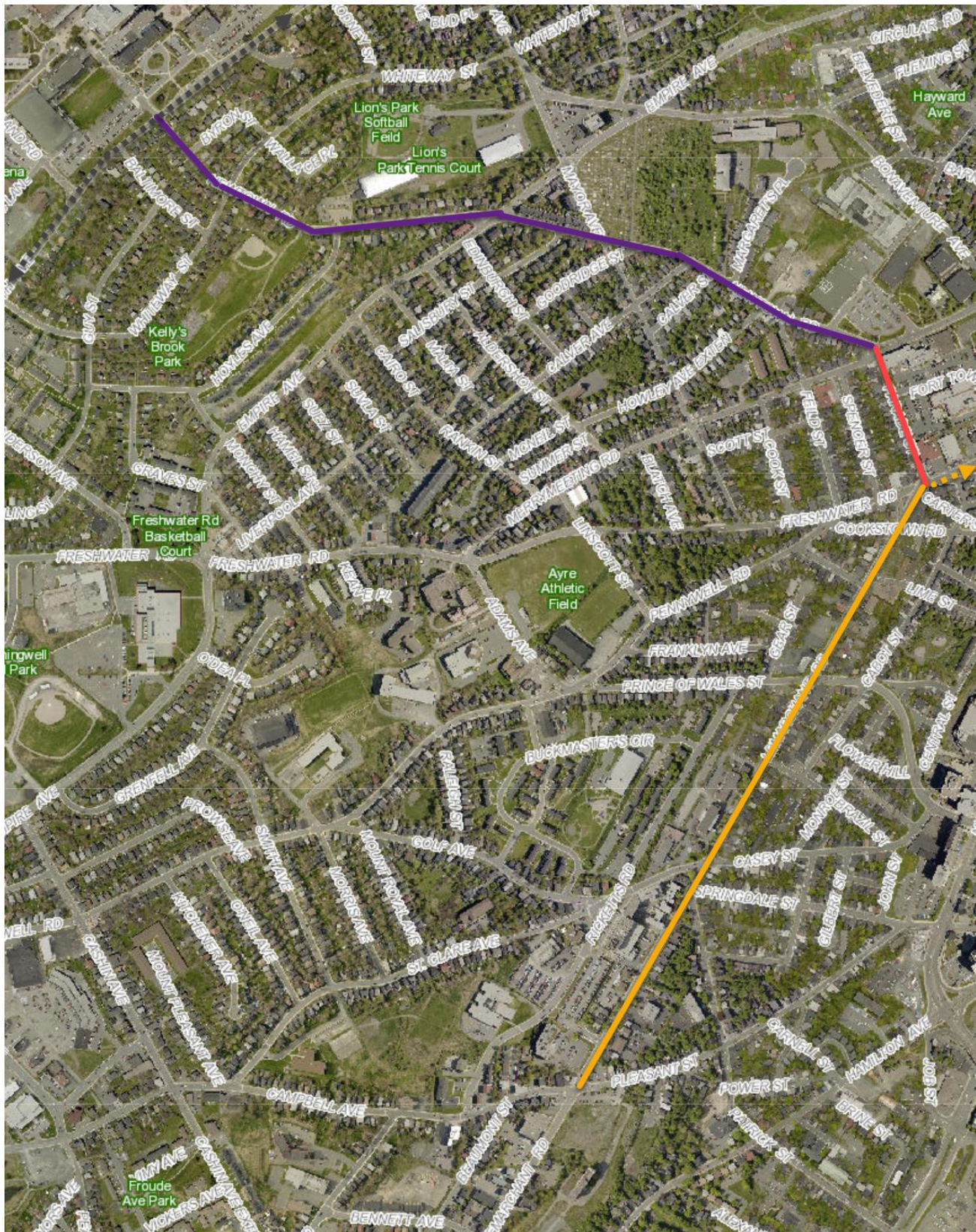




Figure 2: Sample projects c, d, and e





*Figure 3: Sample project f***Key Considerations/Implications:****1. Budget/Financial Implications:**

The budgets for these sample projects range from \$2,800 for a short segment using candlesticks only to \$56,400 for the longest segment using Jersey Barriers at block ends. The total budget for this initiative will be dependant on the segments selected by Council.

**2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:**

n/a

3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:  
n/a
4. Legal or Policy Implications:  
Enforcement of no parking in any areas designated will be required. Depending on how many areas are implemented the City may exhaust our supply of temporary no parking stanchions and need to construct more to ensure adequate coverage.
5. Privacy Implications:  
n/a
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:  
Changes made to the transportation network will need to be communicated clearly and consistently to the public. This communication should cover where the projects are, what is expected from drivers and active users, and a reminder to be courteous to others who may not be as able when out using these facilities.  
The communication effort should also include a message that can be posted in areas that are affected that explains what is occurring and lets people know they can contact 311 if they have questions or comments.
7. Human Resource Implications:  
n/a
8. Procurement Implications:  
Flexible delineators and Jersey Barriers would need to be procured through proper channels.
9. Information Technology Implications:  
n/a
10. Other Implications:  
n/a

**Recommendation:**

That Council

1. Determine if the City will make changes to the transportation network in response to COVID-19.
2. If changes are to be made, provide direction on which network segments are to be included in this initiative by selecting from the sample projects above or identifying other streets.
3. Direct staff to implement the necessary changes on the street segments selected.



**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:

**Scott Winsor - May 4, 2020 - 9:48 AM**

**Jason Sinyard - May 4, 2020 - 1:10 PM**