

# ST. JOHN'S

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## Inclusion Advisory Committee Minutes

**March 5, 2020**

**12:00 p.m.**

**Kenmount Park Community Center**

**Present:**

- Taylor Stocks, Chair - LGBTQ
- Councillor Deanne Stapleton
- Debbie Ryan, CNIB
- Donna Power, Metrobus/GoBus, Accessible Transit
- Margaret Tibbo, Public Rep
- Megan McGie, NL Assoc for Deaf
- Joby Fleming, Empower NL
- Trevor Freeborn, Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
- Brittany Hiscock, Can Hard of Hearing Assoc

**Regrets:**

- Dave Saunders, Public Rep
- Heidi Dixon, First Light NL
- Kim Pratt Baker, Can Hard of Hearing Assoc
- Sarah White, Autism Society
- Grant Genova, NL Assoc of Architects, Universal Design
- Kimberly Yetman-Dawson, Empower NL
- Nancy Reid, Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
- Tilak Chawan, Association for New Canadians
- Hope Colbourne, NL Association for Community Living
- Tess Hemeon, Autism Society

**Staff:**

- Natalie Godden, Manager of Family & Leisure Services
- Trisha Rose, Fieldworker III, Inclusion Services
- Vanessa Bambrick, Acting Inclusive Services Coordinator
- Shanna Fitzgerald, Legislative Assistant

2020-03-05

Others:                      Garrett Donaher, Manager of Transportation Engineering - City of St. John's  
                                 Kelly Maguire, Communications & PR Officer - City of St. John's  
                                 Matthew Mills and Victoria Fitzgerald, Mills & Wright Landscape Architecture  
                                 Kellie Beck, Social Work Student - Empower NL

**2.     APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**2.1   Adoption of Agenda**

**Recommendation**

**Moved By** Margaret Tibbo

**Seconded By** Donna Power

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**3.     ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES**

**3.1   Adoption of the Minutes of October 30, 2019**

**Recommendation**

**Moved By** Joby Fleming

**Seconded By** Margaret Tibbo

That the minutes of October 30, 2019 be adopted as presented.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**5.     BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**5.1   Accessible Parking in Churchill Square - Verbal Update**

Matthew Mills and Victoria Fitzgerald of Mills & Wright Landscape Architecture Inc., consultants on the Reimagine Churchill Square Project, were in attendance to present to the Committee. The presentation is available as part of the agenda or via the Office of the City Clerk.

The Committee viewed slides that visually outlined Churchill Square. Mills & Wright have partnered with the City to take a critical look at redesigning

Churchill Square with the objective to find ways to improve and fix challenges. They requested feedback from the Committee to help develop a plan.

There is an upcoming Workshop for City Advisory Committees scheduled for March 10 in the Foran Greene Room at City Hall from 4:00 - 5:30 pm as well as a Community Workshop and Open House on April 1st at the Lion's Club from 6-8 pm. There is also an online option to engage using [www.engagestjohns.ca](http://www.engagestjohns.ca). There will be a public service announcement when this is available within the next week.

After the envisioning meetings and workshops, a draft plan will be developed and that plan will be brought back to the Committee for review and input.

## **5.2 Rawlins Cross Update - Presentation & Discussion**

Garrett Donaher, Manager of Transportation Engineering for the City of St. John's, was in attendance to present. The Committee viewed a rendering of the Military Road re-alignment on screen. He referenced the 2018 Traffic Pilot Projects Final Report which documents the evaluation of the pilot projects.

The project aimed to:

- Improve safety in the area through shorter pedestrian crossings, better visibility, and reducing the possibility of severe right-angle vehicle collisions;
- Reduce delay and time spent waiting at traffic lights for all modes of transportation; and,
- Simplify circulation and possible conflicts with consistent rules for all vehicles entering the area.

General public feedback received by the City following the pilot project installation identified concern for pedestrian safety in the area, particularly at the crosswalks on Monkstown Road and King's Road that cross into the centre of the area (along Military Road). A permanent design, if approved, would include Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFB) enhancements at these crosswalks in addition to other geometric and landscape improvements. The equipment was purchased early, and installation of the beacons at Rawlins Cross was completed on December 23, 2019.

## **Before and After Data Evaluation**

There were several objective measures that were used to evaluate the project from a technical perspective. Key indicators for this pilot project were the impact of the reconfiguration on the number of collisions in the area as well as the measured traffic speeds in the area post-conversion. These metrics provide insight into the potential overall impact of the reconfiguration on road safety in the area. Other important data included traffic and pedestrian volumes as well as Metrobus travel time data as a surrogate for traffic delays.

### Traffic and Pedestrian Volumes

Vehicle traffic and pedestrian volumes were counted at the intersections of Rawlins Cross before the reconfiguration was implemented on March 21, 2018 and after implementation on September 20, 2018 and again on May 14, 2019. Morning and evening peak hour volumes of vehicles entering and exiting the area from the primary streets and pedestrian crossing volumes were compared. The traffic data collected shows that total traffic volumes entering/exiting the area decreased after the implementation of the pilot project by a bit less than 10%. This magnitude of variation can be typical of daily traffic fluctuations. Some of this decrease, particularly during September of 2018, could be related to construction interruptions in the area while some drivers may have changed their travel patterns to avoid the construction area. It was noted that pedestrians were using the middle closed portion of Military Road to cross Military which resulted in less use of the crosswalks. There was not a noted change in pedestrian traffic overall.

### Metrobus GPS Data

In order to measure the change in delay for vehicles travelling through Rawlins Cross, GPS data from Metrobus was used as a surrogate. Time stamps from buses that stopped on either side of Rawlins Cross were paired and compared for before and after periods. The difference in travel time before and after was then adjusted to account for the slightly longer travel path that is taken going around the traffic circle as opposed to through. The final result was an increase (or decrease) in the time taken to travel through the Rawlins Cross area that can be attributed to the change from traffic signals to the yield on entry traffic circle. Westbound generally experienced less delay during the pilot than before the change. Eastbound experienced a small reduction in travel time during the less busy times of day but saw an increase during the busiest times of day. This supports the

observation of longer queues eastbound on Military Road during the evening commute, and to a lesser extent other times of day.

### Traffic Speeds

Speed data was collected on Wednesday, May 1, 2019 after pilot project implementation to determine the operating speeds of vehicles travelling within the traffic circle. Locations on Monkstown Road and Rennie's Mill Road were selected as the road alignment is relatively straight and vehicles can accelerate to near their maximum speed while in Rawlins Cross at these points. The speed data collected indicates that typical operating speeds in these areas where vehicles are approaching the crosswalks along Military Road are in the low 30 km/hr range.

Vehicle speeds play a critical role in the safety of our streets. Reduced vehicle speed increases safety for all road users: drivers, pedestrians and cyclists alike. When drivers are moving more slowly there are several benefits:

- objects at 40m distant appear to be four times larger within the visual field than objects at 80m.
- breaking distances are shorter giving driver more time to see and react to their surroundings and avoid potential collisions.
- drivers are perceptive to a larger visual field.
- in the event of a collision, the slower the vehicle is travelling the greater the chance of survival and reduced injury severity for those involved, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians who are vulnerable road users.

### Collision Data

Collision data was assessed over an 8-year period from January 2012 to December 2019. Data from January 2012 to August 2018 falls into the before category (a total of 80 months). Data from September 2018 to December 2019 falls into the after category (a total of 16 months). Ideally, 3 to 5 years' worth of "after" data would be assessed in order to provide as robust an evaluation as possible. The nature of a short term pilot project precludes such a long data collection period. In the 8 years assessed there were 1.850 per month and 0.875 per month after. The severity of collisions is recorded in one of three ways "Property Damage Only" (PDO), "Non-fatal Injury" (INJ), and "Fatal". Thankfully there were no fatalities at Rawlins Cross in this data set. With the traffic circle configuration, the injury rate fell by 25%.

The traffic circle configuration of Rawlins Cross was successful in achieving low speeds and reducing collisions. Vehicle delays were slightly higher on some approaches at peak times but otherwise delay through the area was also lower. Pedestrian volumes did not appear to be affected and pedestrian delay was reduced.

## **Public and Stakeholder Feedback**

### Public Opinion Survey

The online pilot project feedback survey included questions for folks who have experienced the Rawlins Cross 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. The survey was structured so that people would see questions relevant to the different travel modes they had experienced. All respondents were given an open-ended opportunity to provide more information in their own words on their experience. Overall, the result showed that 64% indicated they would like to see the pilot project in place long term.

Approximately 2,150 survey participants indicated they wished to provide feedback on the Rawlins Cross pilot project through the online survey. Of these participants, 95% had traveled through the project area as a driver, 44% as a pedestrian, and 5% riding a bike. Participants were asked questions about their travel patterns, when they typically make trips through the area, and if their feeling of safety and travel time has changed. Overall, cyclists were 78% in favour of the pilot configuration becoming permanent. Pedestrian Feedback was gathered and survey respondents who identified as travelling through the area as a pedestrian were asked about their experience in terms of both safety and travel time at each of 13 different crossing locations. Overall, 54% of responses indicated a feeling of being less safe. This was strongly correlated with overall opinion on the project with only 34% of responses indicating feeling less safe among those who ultimately were in favour of the project and 87% of responses indicating feeling less safe among those who ultimately were opposed to the project. The crosswalks along Military Road at Monkstown and at Kings were consistently reported as feeling the least safe among all crosswalks. These two locations were provided with rapid flashing beacons in December 2019. Survey respondents who identified as travelling through the area as a driver were asked about their experience

in terms of both safety and travel time for up to three typical trips entering Rawlins Cross at one of 7 locations. Overall, most people (54%) indicated that they felt as safe or safer travelling through the area. This varied based on location. Those locations where drivers would be expected to yield more often (Military Road or northbound on Prescott) generally indicated feeling less safe while those with less yielding expected (Rennie's Mill or Queen's) indicated feeling safer. Drivers felt that overall, they were able to navigate through the area with less delay than with the traffic signals in place. Drivers reported about the same or less delay for 73% of their trips through Rawlins Cross. This also varied as low as 65% at Military Road eastbound which matches the results of the Metrobus GPS data analysis.

Metrobus was also asked to provide feedback on the Rawlins Cross pilot project reconfiguration. Metrobus staff did not have any issues with the new configuration or the further addition of the flashing crosswalk beacons. Bus operators said that they felt the new configuration is working better than the previous signalized intersections. They expressed that in off-peak times the flow of traffic through the area is much smoother and takes less time to get through.

Emergency Services were consulted and while feedback from emergency services has been positive, no official statement has been provided.

The City met with concerned parents of students who attend the Bishop Feild Elementary school as well as representatives of the School Council to discuss the project. Concerns regarding pedestrian safety, particularly once school is back in session on Bond Street, were raised by some of the parents. City staff and Councillors met with the school council to answer questions and listen to feedback. The primary concerns remain the safety of school children as they travel between home and school. Discussion of next steps, the types of improvements that would be made if the traffic circle became permanent, and preliminary findings of the before and after evaluation were well received.

This report is available via the Office of the City Clerk. The 2018 Traffic Pilot Projects Report can also be found as part of the Committee of the Whole Agenda for March 11, 2020 at <https://pub-stjohns.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=5472>

If Council goes ahead with this process, this project will go to a design phase. The closed section of Military Road may become a public space incorporating the parking lot and green space. The crosswalk at King's Road near Moo Moos will be reevaluated because the visibility there is

poor. The island will be made larger and extended further down King's Road to encourage drivers to decide on the lane earlier.

Key 2 Access technology is currently being piloted at enhanced crosswalks in the City. The opportunity to expand this pilot to the crosswalks in Rawlins Cross where flashing beacons were installed in December of 2019 has been explored. If the reconfiguration is approved for permanent installation, Key 2 Access could be added at these two crosswalks. This improvement could be made in the short term in advance of the detailed design for a permanent reconfiguration. It was noted that the City is currently testing an audible signal at Freshwater Road and Elizabeth Avenue.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that members approve of the measures presented to change the configuration, such as the extension of the island. A member of the Committee questioned how traffic would be slowed on Prescott Street to aid pedestrians, specifically people with vision loss. Curb extensions would be implemented to reduce exposure and shorten crossings and slow traffic. This would improve the visibility of pedestrians by drivers.

It was noted that Rawlins Cross has been an issue for GoBus and door to door service is limited. The Stella's Circle building on Prescott Street does have some challenges. They have been using taxi services and doing pickups in the parking lot across from Stella's Circle or at Moo Moos.

The Committee was informed that the Social Justice Coop is having an accessible Town Hall on March 15 from 2 - 4:30 at the Lantern on Barnes Road. They are encouraging neighborhood engagement in reviewing maps of the City. The purpose of which is reviewing neighborhood sidewalks and snow clearing.

If the pilot reconfiguration is approved for permanent installation, the City will engage with the Inclusion Advisory Committee as part of the detailed design process. The City will continue to look for opportunities to improve accessibility in the Rawlins Cross area regardless of the outcome of the pilot project.

The Committee was reminded to submit any major projects or concerns for placement in the agenda for review and discussion. It was the consensus of the Panel that snow clearing should be reviewed on pedestrian routes as part of this project. The following motion was moved:



**Recommendation**

**Moved By** Taylor Stocks

**Seconded By** Joby Fleming

That the Inclusion Advisory Committee supports the continued development of the pilot project of Rawlins Cross with the understanding that further consultation with the committee and accessibility enhancements will occur. Further, that specific resources are allocated toward improving pedestrian safety including sidewalk snow clearing above current city standards.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**5.3 Drive Through - Discussion**

Drive throughs have been reviewed by Council and healthy neighborhoods. A decision note is currently being prepared and a request was put forward for input from the Inclusion Advisory Committee. A document pertaining to the hard of hearing and accessibility to drive throughs is also available.

Considerations brought forward from the Committee were:

- Drive throughs are a convenience for many young families as they provide easier access to food services.
- Accessibility is an issue for individuals with disabilities who have young families.
- Home support workers who are driving individuals will need to use the drive through.
- Children or adults with sensory issues can still access services in an independent way.
- Crowding is an accessibility concern in waiting areas for takeout.
- There needs to be environmental considerations. Vehicles are being developed that automatically turn off which is a benefit for drive throughs.
- Dedicated lanes for drive throughs that are away from pedestrian traffic are safer.
- App ordering with designated spaces have helped with idling and accessibility.

## **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **6.1 New Mews Centre - Verbal Update**

The Manager of Family & Leisure Services provided an update on the new Mews Centre. The project is moving forward and recommendations from the Committee will be brought back to assist with the new build. The feedback that committee members provided as part of the Paul Reynolds' and Kenmount Terrace Community Centre post build analysis will be given to the Steering Committee for the new Mews Centre. The Committee will be consulted on an ongoing basis.

### **6.2 State of Emergency - Debrief & Discussion**

The Committee discussed the response to the State of Emergency in January of 2020. The Committee was asked to identify what types of things need to be addressed and what lessons were learned during the snow event.

**The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities created an Inclusive Emergency Planning Guide resource document and the link can be found here: <https://codnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/FINAL-Guide-to-Emergency-Planning-March-9.pdf>**

The Committee was asked to identify categories and issues that may be brought forward in the way of recommendations. The following was discussed:

- The response was community and volunteer driven
- The momentum of neighbors helping neighbors should be continued
- The City could work with community groups to create a network of emergency centers (churches) to create satellite warming/emergency stations; food distribution/pharmacy
- Snow clearing
- Parking
- Food security
- Access to care
- Warming centers

- Transportation issues
- Communication/Information Sharing: Communications for persons who do not speak English; can't hear or can't read (literacy)
- ASL Interpreters - texting does not work for those whose first language is not English (ASL)
- There should be a video option for communicating information for those who cannot read
- Communications through text and other languages
- Emergency Planning - Organizations
- Emergency Planning - Individuals
- System should be implemented for people who cannot clear their own snow
- There are struggles with poverty and the ability to prepare for an emergency
- Neighborhood based centers such as Gathering Place and Food Banks need to be accessible in times of crisis
- There should be a registry where people who need support can register
- The deaf community missed communication because they relied on what they could see - interpreters cannot be so far off to the side. Texting for the state of emergency was English based and some of the deaf community required other languages. Face to face interface or a lip-read video of people talking with captions would be helpful as some people cannot read.
- Access to mental health support during a state of emergency (CHANNAL) including volunteers that can provide support. These people should have essential service status so they can provide the needed support.
- Clearance for essential services needs to be clearly outlined
- Concern of lack of access to Home Care Support
- Snow clearing must be done to allow for GoBus to run

- There needs to be a policy and expectations around being unable to communicate with employers. There is an information gap for the deaf community.

Neighborhood based centers that will provide access to necessities were discussed. A list of organizations that can provide input on providing the help to people with barriers in times of need was compiled:

- CNIB
- Salvation Army
- Taxi Association
- Home Support Agencies
- Pharmacies
- Churches
- Seniors NL
- Seniors Advisory Committee
- Snow Busters
- Bridges to Hope
- CHANNAL
- Food Sharing Association

It was noted that Empower and CNIB as a cross disability association would like to sit on a working group. Megan McGie, Community Support Worker with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf, requested that NLAD meet with COD and create a visual version of the Inclusive Emergency Planning Guide.

The Manager of Family & Leisure Services is creating a summary document in consultation with the Manager of Emergency Preparedness. She invited the organizations represented by members of the Committee to take part in preparing the documentation.

### **6.3 GoBus Update**

Donna Power of MetroBus provided an update to the Committee on GoBus. It was noted that eligibility assessments have progressed since beginning in December. There have been no denials from existing customers. Things are going smoothly with feedback received from

customers and Joby Fleming. Metrobus changes come into effect March 1 and children under 12 years old can ride free. Also Route 6 will provide service to the Galway area. The Provincial Government has introduced a low income pass for clients on income support and details are pending. Work has begun to identify how to make a better sustainable service and this will come forward to the group.

#### **6.4 American Sign Language Training for Lifeguards**

Lifeguards observed patrons at the H.G.R. Mew Community Centre swimming pool, who appeared not to hear the pool whistle at the end of the swim. The lifeguards did communicate through writing and hand gestures that it was time to vacate the pool; patrons were pleased and thankful.

The City of St. John's Inclusive Services team connected with Megan McGie, Community Support Worker with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf to determine if a resource existed to teach aquatics staff how to communicate common phrases used in pool settings. Megan agreed to provide the following sign language training options:

- Manuals with photos
- Video

A completion date is yet to be determined, however; once the manuals and videos have been received, they will be distributed to the appropriate facilities. Should staff require additional training, same will be arranged with the NLAD. It was noted that this could be shared across Municipalities.

#### **7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next three meetings of the Inclusion Advisory Committee have been scheduled for:

Wednesday, May 13, 2020 - 12:00 noon

Thursday, September 17, 2020 - 12:00 noon

Thursday, December 10, 2020 - 12:00 noon

Meeting invitations will be sent out to the Committee members.

#### **8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:10 pm.

2020-03-05

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CHAIRPERSON, TAYLOR STOCKS