

# Existing Sidewalk Programs and Options for Potential Injection of Municipal Economic Enhancement Program Funding

## ISSUE

This report provides a summary of the City of Saskatoon's (City) sidewalk programs as information for City Council as they consider allocating Municipal Economic Enhancement Program (MEEP) funding to sidewalk rehabilitation and maintenance.

## BACKGROUND

At its meeting on June 22, 2020, the Governance and Priorities Committee shortlisted a potential investment of \$5.0 million for sidewalk repair and maintenance (Item 1.12 on the shortlist of projects) funded through the Government of Saskatchewan's MEEP. This report has been prepared to provide information to assist Council in considering allocation of potential one-time funding from MEEP to sidewalk rehabilitation and maintenance.

## CURRENT STATUS

The City's sidewalk network is managed through four programs, each filling an important role in maintaining the City's sidewalk infrastructure. These programs are as follows:

- 1) Sidewalk Maintenance and Safety Program;
- 2) Sidewalk Preservation Program;
- 3) Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramp Program; and
- 4) Sidewalk Infill Program.

Coordinated together, these programs manage safety, preservation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and installation of new sidewalks for the City's entire sidewalk network. The goals of these programs are to focus on restoring and maintaining sidewalks to a safe and functional condition for users, as well as add sidewalks at the highest pedestrian potential locations.

- 1) The Sidewalk Maintenance and Safety Program is managed by the Roadways, Fleet and Support Division and is funded through annual operational budgets. This program is prioritized through operational inspections and citizen call-ins. The Sidewalk Maintenance and Safety Program prioritizes and maintains the City's sidewalks for safety until such time as the Sidewalk Preservation Program can be implemented in that area. This includes the replacement or repair of sidewalks due to underground utility work, as well as locations identified through the Customer Care Centre and regular inspections. Sidewalks that are scheduled on the three-year Road and Sidewalk Preservation Plan typically are not prioritized for repair under this program unless they are considered a safety concern. The Sidewalk Maintenance and Safety Program is funded through the operating budget and is budgeted at \$1.125 million in 2020.

- 2) The Sidewalk Preservation Program is managed by the Technical Services Division and is funded through the Paved Roadways Infrastructure Reserve. This program focuses on repairing or replacing sidewalks adjacent to roadways when they receive a preservation treatment. The annually programmed work areas for the Sidewalk Preservation Program are aligned to the three-year Roadway Preservation Program. The intention of these two programs is to provide funding for roadways and sidewalks to receive a complete repair and rehabilitation every 20 years on average. This means that on average, 5% of the roadways and sidewalks in Saskatoon will be treated each year, with the actual totals varying from year-to-year depending on treatment type and distribution. Capital Project #2270 – Paved Roads and Sidewalk Preservation, for the years 2020 and 2021 include budgets of \$25.4 million and \$25.7 million respectively for roadways and \$6.1 million and \$6.2 million respectively for sidewalks.
  
- 3) The Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramp Program is managed by the Transportation Division, and is an element of the Active Transportation Plan funded by the Transportation Infrastructure Expansion Reserve (TIER). This program prioritizes installation of accessibility curb ramps at specific locations based on pedestrian potential, transit routes, and requests from people with accessibility needs. Capital Project #2468 – Active Transportation Plan Implementation for the years 2020 and 2021 include \$100,000 per year to construct pedestrian accessible curb ramps. Currently underway in 2020 are the construction of 55 ramps for an average cost of approximately \$1,820 per ramp.
  
- 4) The Sidewalk Infill Program is managed by the Transportation Division. This program focuses on installing new sidewalks where they do not exist. The Sidewalk Infill Program, which is an element of the Active Transportation Plan, is funded by TIER. Sidewalk infill locations are prioritized according to scoring based on pedestrian potential and risk reduction potential, as presented in [the Sidewalk Infill Prioritization Criteria](#) report to City Council in January 2020. For more information on this program please see the reports submitted to City Council in [March 2019](#) and [August 2019](#). The Sidewalk Infill Program is currently on the shortlist for MEEP funding (Item 1.3, Active Transportation – Sidewalk expansion, in the July 20, 2020 Governance and Priorities Committee report, Municipal Economic Enhancement Program – Reallocation Prioritization List) and \$3.0 million is being proposed for this program.

The average cost per metre of infill sidewalk construction is \$650. This is a high level estimate as each project is different in terms of site-specific conditions.

Details of the City's Sidewalk Preservation Program, treatment overviews, how to report sidewalk safety concerns, the current scheduled sidewalk repairs, and frequently asked questions are available at [Saskatoon.ca/sidewalks](https://saskatoon.ca/sidewalks).

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

In order to provide safe and maintained sidewalks, both the Sidewalk Maintenance and Safety Program and the Sidewalk Preservation Program use sidewalk condition evaluation and treatment criteria to establish panels being replaced versus panels receiving a maintenance or repair treatment.

Recently the City changed its approach to the coordinated Sidewalk Preservation Program and Roadway Preservation Program. Starting in July 2019 the City began installing pedestrian accessibility curb ramps at all locations being treated by the program, and since 2017 replaces sidewalks which previously received asphalt overlays. The total backlog to install sidewalk accessibility curb ramps at all remaining locations in the city is estimated at \$13.2 million, of which approximately \$3.8 million is associated with projects completed under the Roadways and Preservation Programs from 2014 to 2019 prior to the criteria adjustment for pedestrian accessibility ramps.

Should City Council wish to allocate additional funding to accelerate the rehabilitation of sidewalks, primarily through replacement, the Administration's understanding is that the funding would be separated from the roadway-tied Sidewalk Preservation Program funding. The funding would instead be dedicated to sidewalk rehabilitation and maintenance at the locations most in need. Locations could be selected considering pedestrian potential, and poorest condition sidewalks. This strategy would provide funding to accelerate sidewalk rehabilitation and maintenance at locations that are not scheduled in the three-year preservation program in conjunction with a roadway rehabilitation project. If funding is directed to a program of this nature, Administration would develop a prioritized list of locations based on full city blocks that in most cases (sidewalk segments) would be treated based on the sidewalk repair and replacement criteria, and would include installation of pedestrian accessibility curb ramps.

Should City Council wish to allocate funding to accelerate the installation of Pedestrian Accessibility Curb Ramps, the Administration believes the best approach would be to add funding to the existing Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramp Program. The program is well established and would address pedestrian accessible curb ramps on a city-wide basis based on pedestrian potential, transit routes, and requests from people with accessibility needs. Locations already treated by the Roadway and Sidewalk Preservation Programs since 2014 would be prioritized along with all other locations throughout the City, resulting in a retrofit program focused on the highest need locations first.

Should City Council wish to allocate funding to the installation of Pedestrian Accessibility Curb Ramps at locations already treated by the Roadway and Sidewalk Preservation Programs since 2014, a specific allocation could be made. Although there is a principle of equity associated with this strategy, the Administration's perspective is now that the opportunity to conduct that work in conjunction with the roadway preservation treatment is no longer available, the locations should be prioritized along with all locations in the city. This will result in funding being focused on those locations where there is the most positive impact for citizens. Should City Council wish to

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allocate funding to this approach, but less than the \$3.8 million estimated to be required to complete all locations already treated by the preservation programs, criteria will need to be established to determine which locations to complete and which to leave for future funding opportunities.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

All options have the same financial implications as they will be based on a one-time allocation of MEEP funding.

**OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no privacy, legal, social, policy, or environmental implications identified.

**NEXT STEPS**

If City Council approves one-time MEEP funding for enhanced sidewalk rehabilitation and maintenance, Administration will deliver the program as directed and approved by Council.

Report Approval

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