

Connecting Downtown – Project Roadmap

ISSUE

This report outlines the project roadmap for upcoming public engagement activities and functional design for the Connecting Downtown Project, the next steps in developing the active transportation network in the Downtown.

BACKGROUND

At its Regular Business Meeting held on April 29, 2019, City Council received the Downtown Active Transportation Network report, and resolved, in part:

- “2. That Option 1 (3rd Avenue, 23rd Street and 19th Street) be endorsed as the future active transportation network in the Downtown, but that implementation decisions (including capital or detailed design expenses) be deferred until the administration has completed engagement based on the following criteria:
- That the active transportation network be designed for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and those with accessibility needs.
 - That design and configuration options for the network should be drawn from collaborative engagement with all affected stakeholders (including Downtown Saskatoon), and that these options be focused on enhancing the public realm for all users.
 - That engagement include outstanding concerns, including parking, design standards, streetscaping and construction.
 - In 2021 after engagement, that Administration report back with opportunities to reduce costs by completing active transportation work in conjunction with future streetscaping improvements; and”

At its meeting held on June 7, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received the Downtown Active Transportation Network – June 2021 Update as information. The report outlined the previous reporting and City Council resolutions regarding the Downtown Active Transportation Network and outlined that the Administration would undertake an audit of past work to prepare for the next round of engagement for the project.

A summary of the past reports and key City Council resolutions beginning with the evaluation report of the Protected Bike Lane Pilot Project are listed in Appendix 1.

CURRENT STATUS

Through a competitive procurement process, the Administration has retained a consulting firm, WSP Canada Inc., to lead the engagement and functional design for the Connecting Downtown project.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The next phase of the project will build on the previous decisions to achieve the following goals:

- Create a downtown all ages and abilities active transportation network that will best address the transportation, economic, and social needs of Saskatoon residents;
- Enhance the public realm and overall downtown experience;
- Improve safety and comfort across all user groups, including people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving;
- Support social and mobility equity for groups that currently face distinct barriers to accessing and enjoying active transportation in the Downtown; and
- Communicate about the project in clear and compelling ways.

The upcoming engagement will be focussed on the following topics:

- Priorities regarding public realm enhancement and streetscaping elements;
- Specific stakeholder concerns and mitigation strategies regarding the active transportation network design including parking, accessibility, and operations-related needs, streetscaping and construction; and
- Feedback that will help inform strategies for increasing social and mobility equity.

The selection and design of an all ages and abilities active transportation facility for 3rd Avenue between 25th Street and 2nd Avenue has been added to the scope of this project. This segment was originally included as part of the Neighbourhood Bikeways project bundle in 2020. During the first round of open houses for the project, it became clear that the facility selection for this stretch was directly linked to the future facilities on 3rd Avenue in the Downtown.

The roadmap for engagement is shown in Appendix 2. Two rounds of engagement are planned: the first to present the conceptual design of active transportation facilities and public realm opportunities, and the second to present the functional design, phasing plan, and cost estimates.

The engagement strategy includes a combination of one-on-one business outreach, stakeholder workshops, community sessions, focus groups, and online engagement. Given the current climate related to COVID-19, both online and in-person engagement options will be carefully considered and will be responsive to emerging needs. The complete engagement strategy is included in Appendix 3.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Downtown Active Transportation project is the second highest priority for future infrastructure in the City's Transportation Master Plan and will be positioned as an important step in addressing some gaps in the active transportation network and creating complete streets in the Plan for Growth.

The project has been renamed to Connecting Downtown to focus on the broader benefits of having a safe space for people to get downtown whether they choose to bike, skateboard, in-line skate, or use a mobility aid, and for contributing to a vibrant downtown where people want to live, work and play.

Stakeholders will be contacted through existing channels, such as subscriber email lists, the DTNYXE member newsletter, community associations, door-to-door outreach, and site-specific signage. Frequently Asked Questions will have clear responses to address anticipated questions, available on the project's Engage Page and for customer care agents to help people understand the project.

Communication messages will be clear to ensure that feedback is received regarding the focussed topics listed above (i.e., public realm and streetscaping elements, concerns with design elements and mitigation strategies, and increasing social and mobility equity).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This project is funded through Capital Project P.02468 – Active Transportation Plan Implementation.

Implementation costs, including further design and construction, will be identified at the appropriate time.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The privacy, legal, social, and environmental implications have not been assessed at this time.

NEXT STEPS

1. In conjunction with the consulting firm and internal stakeholders, undertake engagement.
2. After engagement, report back with opportunities to complete the implementation of the Downtown AT Network in conjunction with future streetscaping improvements.

APPENDICES

1. Summary of Previous Reports and City Council Resolutions on the Downtown Active Transportation Network
2. Engagement Roadmap
3. Connecting Downtown Engagement Strategy

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