

# Downtown Active Transportation Network

## ISSUE

The City of Saskatoon is exploring potential policies and programs that focus on developing a city-wide active transportation network that is safe, comfortable and attractive for people of all ages and abilities. Given its unique users and functions, the Downtown requires focused consideration for the development of its active transportation network. In what ways could the City of Saskatoon develop a potential active transportation network in the Downtown?

## BACKGROUND

### History

At its meeting held on November 20, 2017, City Council considered a report on the evaluation results of the Downtown Protected Bike Lane Demonstration Project and an outline of recommended next steps for the provision of an All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Cycling Network in the Downtown and resolved, in part:

- “1. That a provision for protected bike lanes be included in the Downtown All Ages and Abilities Cycling Network; and
2. That the Administration develop a Downtown All Ages and Abilities Cycling Network (including protected bike lanes) in concert with other downtown policy and planning initiatives in 2018.”

At the June 20, 2018 Special Meeting of the Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC), Administration provided a series of reports to address the November 2017 resolutions. In its deliberations, the Committee raised various concerns about the operations and design features of the cycling facilities for which Administration committed to provide a response prior to the decision report confirming the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Downtown AT Networks.

At its October 15, 2018 meeting, GPC received a report and presentation that addressed the concerns raised during its June 20, 2018 Special GPC Meeting, including a technical review of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue as an option for the Downtown AT Network. It was noted that the Administration would respond in early 2019 with a recommended network configuration.

At its meeting held on March 25, 2019, City Council considered a report on the Active Transportation Implementation Plan and resolved, in part:

- “1. That the Active Transportation Implementation Plan be endorsed with the exception of the elements pertaining to the Downtown AAA Network, which is the subject of a future report to City Council; and
2. That the Administration report back on the timing of implementation with a funding strategy.”

### **Current Status**

Historically, the operation of Downtown streets has prioritized vehicles as the primary mode of transportation. While improvements have been made over the years to enhance infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, it has been done primarily in an ad-hoc manner and with the exception of the established sidewalk network, has typically not included dedicated facilities for other modes active transportation.

Prior to March 2015, the majority of Downtown streets did not have cycling-specific infrastructure. Painted bike lanes were in place on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Spadina Crescent, and all other streets facilitate people riding bikes in the traffic lane.

Through the Protected Bike Lane Demonstration Project approved by City Council in March 2015, four blocks of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue were converted from a painted bike lane to a protected bike lane, and a protected bike lane was added to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The Demonstration Project concluded in 2017, and was immediately followed by the Downtown Active Transportation Network Study.

The Downtown Active Transportation Network Study is currently in the network planning and concept design stage. As an input to this stage, the Administration studied the suitability of transforming Downtown streets to provide active transportation corridors, including AAA cycling facilities. A decision by City Council on the Downtown Active Transportation Network is required for the Administration to proceed with functional planning and detailed design.

### **OPTIONS**

This section provides three potential network options for active transportation corridors in the Downtown. Two of the three network options are very similar in that they propose a formal Downtown network, while the third option proposes no dedicated network. Prior to analyzing the options, some context is required to provide additional perspective.

In developing potential network options, Downtown streets were assessed using several factors:

- Connectivity;
- Safety of the active transportation facilities;
- Potential conflicts between all street users including pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles;
- Potential impacts to motor vehicle level of service and travel time; and
- Potential impacts to other street uses such as transit stops and parking spaces.

Details of the potential impacts on various Downtown street users were analyzed and are provided in Appendix 1.

Given that context, each of the subsequent options have been evaluated primarily by using the technical criteria outlined above. In addition to technical criteria, stakeholder

and community input was used to inform the process. A summary of the engagement can be found in Appendix 2. Where possible, each option is also evaluated on how well it supports the City's strategic objectives, Growth Plan principles, and sustainability principles.

### **Option 1 - Establish Network on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, 19<sup>th</sup> Street, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street**

This option proposes that City Council endorse the Downtown Active Transportation Network of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, 19<sup>th</sup> Street, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. According to public engagement results, this network configuration was preferred by 78 of the 100 people who chose to indicate a preference for a north-south Downtown active transportation corridor.

The estimated cost to proceed with detailed design work of the Downtown network is \$350,000. The capital investment for construction of the Downtown Active Transportation Network is estimated at \$3.7 million, which includes enhanced pedestrian facilities, improvements to the public realm and dedicated cycling facilities.

#### **Advantages:**

- Supports the recommendations in the Growth Plan, the Active Transportation Plan and the Street Design Policy.
- Builds upon previous streetscaping investments to improve pedestrian infrastructure along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.
- Potential to maximize investments in existing cycling infrastructure.
- Addresses connections for the active transportation network beyond Downtown with excellent connectivity and smooth transitions north and south of the study area.
- Provides cyclists with a continuous network of dedicated cycling facilities on busy, high-traffic Downtown streets.
- Improves the level of safety for vulnerable road users.
- Cyclists, pedestrians and drivers are familiar with the cycling facility on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue has a consistent right-of-way width, allowing for a single configuration, design and operation through the length of the facility.
- The presence of a centre median on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue between 20<sup>th</sup> Street and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street reduces the number of conflict points improving the safety of the street.
- Existing land use and built form along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue produces a pedestrian-oriented development pattern that supports all modes of transportation.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue has a significant amount of street-level activity due to more storefronts, which can be more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue has lower Annual Average Daily Traffic than 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- Parking is not impacted on 19<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Vehicle level of service is not impacted on 19<sup>th</sup> Street or 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### **Disadvantages:**

- Cyclists, pedestrians and drivers are not familiar with a cycling facility on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue or 19<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Parking is impacted on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (loss of approximately 13 spaces and 54 spaces respectively).
- At peak hour, vehicle level of service at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street is reduced from Level of Service B to Level of Service C.
- Prior investment in cycling facilities on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue is lost due to relocation to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.

### **Option 2 - Establish Network on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 19<sup>th</sup> Street, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street**

This option is very similar to Option 1, but with one important difference. It uses 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue as the north-south corridor of the network but keeps 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and 19<sup>th</sup> Street as the east-west corridors. According to public engagement results, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue was preferred by 22 of the 100 people who chose to indicate a preference for a north-south Downtown active transportation corridor.

Like Option 1, the estimated cost to proceed with detailed design work of the Downtown network is \$350,000. The capital investment for construction of the Downtown Active Transportation Network is estimated at \$3.7 million which includes enhanced pedestrian facilities, improvements to the public realm and dedicated cycling facilities.

### **Advantages:**

- Supports the recommendations in the Growth Plan, the Active Transportation Plan and the Street Design Policy.
- Improves the level of safety for vulnerable road users.
- Provides cyclists with a network of dedicated cycling facilities on busy, high-traffic Downtown streets.
- Cyclists, pedestrians and drivers are familiar with the cycling facilities on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue is fairly central to Downtown providing decent network coverage.
- Parking is not impacted on 19<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Vehicle level of service is not impacted on 19<sup>th</sup> Street or 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### **Disadvantages:**

- Cyclists, pedestrians and drivers are not familiar with a cycling facility on 19<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue has an inconsistent right-of-way width, requiring the design and operation of the street to change through the length of the corridor.
- On 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, there are challenges connecting beyond Downtown at key intersections such as at 25<sup>th</sup> Street and at the Broadway Bridge.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue does not have a centre median to restrict turning movements from driveways increasing the opportunity for conflicts.

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- Parking is impacted on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue (loss of approximately 13 spaces and 58 spaces respectively).
- 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue has a higher Annual Average Daily Traffic than 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.
- At peak hour, vehicle level of service along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 20<sup>th</sup> Street, 21<sup>st</sup> Street, and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street is reduced from Level of Service B to Level of Service C.

### Option 3 - No Formal Downtown Network

This option proposes no formal Downtown Active Transportation Network and thus, the removal of the existing protected bike lanes on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Specifically, this option eliminates dedicated facilities for cyclists through Downtown and would require cyclists to share the travel lane with vehicles. Furthermore, this option does not include enhancements to pedestrian facilities or improvements to the public realm along the corridors.

Although there are no future financial implications to the City under this option, there are costs associated with the removal of the existing facilities and the restoration of the roadway. The estimated cost to remove the existing cycling facilities and restore the roadways is approximately \$35,000.

#### Advantages:

- Restores previous parking volumes along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (increase of approximately 42 spaces).
- Facilitates slight improvements to vehicle level of service.
- Lowers demand on driver attention at conflict points.

#### Disadvantages:

- Does not support the recommendations in the Growth Plan, the Active Transportation Plan or the Street Design Policy.
- Does not provide cyclists with a network of dedicated cycling facilities on busy, high-traffic Downtown streets.
- Does not provide enhanced facilities for active transportation users through the Downtown.
- Lowers the level of safety for vulnerable road users.
- Loss of prior investments made in 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

### RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that City Council adopt Option 1, and establish the Downtown Active Transportation Network along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, 19<sup>th</sup> Street, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### RATIONALE

The options evaluation conducted in Section 3 illustrates that Option 1 tends to generate the most advantages for a Downtown Active Transportation Network. More

specifically, and considering the technical network analysis that was conducted, a Downtown Active Transportation Network of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, and 19<sup>th</sup> Street is intended to maximize investments in existing active transportation infrastructure, and provide a continuous network of facilities on busy, high-traffic Downtown streets.

Moreover, the proposed recommendation minimizes the various trade-offs that emerge between the variety of users and functions that these Downtown streets serve. For example, the recommended network integrates the active transportation plan into other Downtown initiatives including BRT. As a result, its design provides the most optimal approach in achieving a balance for all users (motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians) in the Downtown.

### **ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS**

The options in this report are specifically contained to determining a Downtown Active Transportation Network. With the exception of the description in Option 3, the recommendation does not in any detail, address what to do with the existing protected bike lanes nor how to implement the network.

Both Options 1 and 2 could be fully implemented in the short-term (e.g., 3 to 4 years) or at some future date subject to the direction of City Council.

If the implementation of the network occurs in the short term, the estimated timelines could be as follows:

- 2020: Completion of detailed design for all corridors
- 2021: Construction of north-south route corridor
- 2022: Construction of 19th Street corridor
- 2023: Construction of 23rd Street corridor

If implementation is deferred to a subsequent date, only network design would proceed in the short term.

The City is working with federal and provincial governments on potential funding for various infrastructure projects under the 10-year Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan (ICIP). Active transportation infrastructure is an eligible funding category under the ICIP. The proposed Downtown Active Transportation Network is a project that has potential to receive federal and provincial funding under the ICIP. If submitted and successful, the City would be required to cover approximately 27% of total eligible costs, while the balance would be covered by the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan.

### **COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

Pending City Council endorsement of the recommended network plan, stakeholders and the public will continue to be informed of the project as it moves into the detailed design and implementation stages. Discussions with stakeholders along the selected corridors will occur as the detailed designs progress. A variety of communication tools will be

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used to ensure that effective and consistent messages are integrated into each phase once the project enters construction.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Downtown Active Transportation Network – Technical Report
2. Downtown Active Transportation Network – Engagement Summary

### **REPORT APPROVAL**

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Department

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