

Active Transportation Plan Implementation – October 2023 Update

ISSUE

The purpose of this report is to present an update on the Active Transportation Implementation Plan.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held on April 25, 2016, City Council approved the Growth Plan in principle. To meet the needs of the Growth Plan, a number of targets were established in the Growth Plan and the Active Transportation Plan (AT Plan) to mitigate future traffic congestion and infrastructure needs, including mode share as follows:

- Transit – increase from 4 per cent to 8 per cent of all trips, and from 10 per cent to 25 per cent for peak period to the Downtown and University areas.
- Cycling – increase from 4 per cent to 8 per cent of all trips and from 2 per cent to 4 per cent of commute trips.
- Walking – increase from 8 per cent to 16 per cent of all trips, and from 5.5 per cent to 11 per cent of commute trips.

City Council, at its meeting held on June 27, 2016, considered the Active Transportation Plan report, and resolved:

- “1. That City Council recognize and approve, in principle, the long-term benefits of the vision, goals, targets and key directions of the Active Transportation Plan;
2. That the Active Transportation Plan be implemented in a phased, incremental approach, requiring specific implementation plans in five-year increments; and
3. That the Administration report back with an implementation plan for the period of 2017 to 2021 with specific action items, funding and staffing resources identified.”

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

- “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.”

City Council, at its meeting held on August 30, 2021, considered the report Proposed Legislative Amendments to the Traffic Safety Act, and resolved:

“That City Council endorse and direct the Administration to lobby Saskatchewan Government Insurance to amend *The Traffic Safety Act* to incorporate the following:

- a. Require drivers to yield to pedestrians that are indicating an intention to cross the street at legal crossings;
- b. Permit cyclists to use their right arm to indicate a right turn; and
- c. Permit cyclists to ride their bicycle when a cross-ride is provided at legal crossings.”

The Standing Policy Committee on Transportation, at its meeting held on March 7, 2022, considered the Connecting Downtown – Project Roadmap report that outlined the next steps for public engagement and functional design of the downtown protected bike lanes, and resolved:

- “1. That the Connecting Downtown – Project Roadmap initiative be delayed, until such time as the City has further developed the extensive planning work related to the downtown entertainment district and Bus Rapid Transit integration; and,
2. That the Administration report back further once the planning work related to the downtown entertainment district and Bus Rapid Transit has advanced to a point where the Connecting Downtown – Project Roadmap initiative can be considered in the context of that work.”

As outlined in the Downtown Event and Entertainment District Plan report presented to the Governance and Planning Committee on February 14, 2023:

“Administration will commence with design for the 23rd Street portion of the Connecting Downtown initiative in parallel with the District Plan as it is required to provide suitable input into the District Plan and to address the BRT project’s planned replacement of the transit mall. Administration will provide a report, at the appropriate time, to identify when additional corridors of the Connecting Downtown initiative should be considered.”

City Council, at its Regular Business meeting held on March 29, 2023, approved the 2024-2035 Major Capital Project Prioritization. Several projects included on the AT Implementation Plan are also on the Major Capital Project Prioritization List, including Imagine Idylwyld, Active Transportation Plan – Sidewalk Network Expansion, and Active Transportation Corridors.

City Council, at its Regular Business meeting held on June 28, 2023, considered a motion of Councillor Block, and resolved, in part:

- “3. That Administration provide an update on the implementation of the Active Transportation Plan, including but not limited to the status of any planned connections in the area bound by College Drive, Preston Avenue, 12th Street, and Clarence Avenue”

CURRENT STATUS

The AT Plan contains 88 action items. Twelve action items are complete, 57 action items are part of the Administration's daily operations, 13 action items are currently underway, and 6 action items are not yet started. A complete list of the action items and their current progress can be found in Appendix 1. The AT Plan identifies key directions and action items to improve active transportation facilities, policies and standards, support programs and education and awareness initiatives over the next 30 to 40 years.

Since being endorsed by City Council in June 2016, the AT Plan has made significant strides in implementation including, but not limited to:

- Nine key regulatory documents have been updated or adopted;
- 27 kilometres of cycling facilities have been constructed;
- 5.5 kilometres of sidewalk have been installed;
- 400 pedestrian accessible curb ramps have been installed through Transportation's Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramp Program and 1,500 pedestrian accessible curb ramps have been installed through the Asset Preservation's Paved Roads and Sidewalk Preservation Program;
- 65 Audible Pedestrian Signal upgrades;
- Four active transportation corridor designs were planned and approved in principle by City Council;
- 29.6 kilometres of conceptual design and feasibility analysis for sidewalk infill have been completed;
- Received \$5.5 million in federal and provincial government funding for six projects;
- 15,000 children participated in the Learn to Ride Safe Program;
- 36,000 cycling guides distributed;
- \$40,000 in grant funding awarded for community-led active transportation projects;
- Formation of the Active Transportation Advisory Group and ongoing meetings with the group;
- Delivery of annual year-round active transportation educational campaigns;
- Participation in annual city-wide cycling celebrations such as BYXE Week and Bike to Work Day (winter and spring); and
- Development and implementation of the Active Transportation Data Collection Program.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Implementation Strategy

In the 2019 Active Transportation Implementation Plan report, the Administration presented five key components of the implementation strategy; these components continue to form the basis of the AT Plan implementation. Appendix 2 includes a discussion of how these key components were applied in the past four years.

Cycling Program

The Cycling Program addresses 12 of the 88 action items within the AT Plan. Providing a complete and connected network of bicycle facilities throughout Saskatoon is critical to supporting and encouraging more cycling. The Cycling Program addresses both the expansion of the cycling network and improvements to the existing cycling network.

In 2019, Transportation presented a 10-year cycling network plan that included 12 kilometres of new cycling infrastructure. At the time of writing this report:

- More than half of the routes included in the 10-year cycling network plan have completed planning studies and functional designs have been approved in principle;
- Permanent installation of traffic calming along the Blairmore Bikeway was completed in 2023;
- Permanent installation of most of the traffic calming measures along the 14th Street Bikeway was completed in 2022. Full construction is anticipated to be complete in 2025;
- Continued construction for several phases of the West Central Multi-Use Corridor;
- Detailed design of the Dudley Street Walking and Cycling Improvements to be completed in 2023 with construction planned for 2024; and
- One-third of the projects in the 10-year plan are on hold due to the Connecting Downtown project roadmap being paused, until such time as the City has further developed the extensive planning work related to the downtown entertainment district and Bus Rapid Transit integration.

Additional discussion on the status of the cycling network expansion and a map is included in Appendix 3.

Continuing to make improvements to existing infrastructure is a key component of the AT Implementation Plan. Since 2019, the Administration has completed the following:

- Reviewed shared-use pathway routes and installed signs to improve clarity and provide consistent signing;
- Completed an audit of all pedestrian overpass and underpass structures resulting in over 500 action items;
- Installed bicycle crossings at key intersections to improve cyclists' ability to safely cross busy streets;
- Established a bike detection warrant to assess where bicycle signal installations may be needed;
- Installed extra bicycle parking at civic facilities that required more spaces; and
- Piloted an on-street bicycle corral in partnership with the Urban Design section and local businesses.

Next steps for the Cycling Program include:

- Continue developing functional plans for network expansion;
- Complete construction of the 14th Street Neighbourhood Bikeway;
- Construct the Dudley Street Walking and Cycling Improvements;
- Explore rapid deployment options for identified active transportation routes where planning is not yet underway;
- Develop an implementation plan for action items contained within the overpass and underpass audit; and
- Construct new cycling facilities to address gaps and barriers.

Status of any planned connections in the area bound by College Drive, Preston Avenue, 12th Street, and Clarence Avenue

Status update includes:

- 14th Street from Cumberland Avenue to Saskatchewan Crescent is planned to be a neighbourhood bikeway. A conceptual design and planning level cost estimate is complete, construction is complete except for the last phase planned for 2025 in alignment with the storm water retention pond project and revising the posted speed limit to 30 km/h is not complete.
- Connecting Campus, a functional planning study to select and design one north-south active transportation corridor between College Drive and Wilson Crescent, is planned for 2026–2027.

Sidewalk Program

The Sidewalk Program addresses 5 of the 88 action items and includes the Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramp program. Expanding and enhancing the sidewalk network supports the goals of creating more places for walking, safer walking, and making walking a more convenient and attractive choice for moving around.

In 2019, a map was prepared showing the five-year plan for sidewalk infrastructure expansion. Since then, the following components have been completed:

- Prepared functional designs and developed cost estimates for 29.6 kilometres of sidewalk;
- Obtained \$3.0 million in reallocation pool funding to construct sidewalks;
- Obtained \$3.67 million in funding through Investing in Canada Infrastructure (ICIP) to construct 8.0 kilometres of sidewalk; and
- Constructed 5.5 kilometres of new sidewalk (see Appendix 4 for locations).

As of January 2023, there are approximately 440 kilometres of known missing sidewalks in Saskatoon. Upon completion of the ICIP and reallocation pool funded sidewalk locations, the City will have installed over 13 kilometres of sidewalk since the AT Plan was approved. Additional discussion on the status of the sidewalk network expansion and a map is included in Appendix 4.

Additionally, the following work was conducted:

- Completed and implemented recommendations from the 22nd Street Pedestrian Safety Study;
- Developed prioritization criteria for determining priority locations for sidewalk installations;
- Prioritized all known missing sidewalk locations;
- Developed a comprehensive database of prioritized missing sidewalks in ArcGIS; and
- Developed a procedure for balancing sidewalk infill and tree retention.

Since 2018, Transportation has installed 400 pedestrian accessible curb ramps. In 2019, Asset Preservation began the practice of replacing all missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps adjacent to roadway resurfacing projects; through this program Asset Preservation has installed over 1,500 pedestrian accessible curb ramps. In 2020, \$1 million in reallocation pool funding was allocated to the Pedestrian Curb Ramp Program.

Next steps for the Sidewalk Program include:

- Construct the remaining 775 metres of new sidewalk using the remaining reallocation pool funding;
- Begin feasibility studies for missing sidewalks along approved neighbourhood bikeway corridors;
- Continue to install missing sidewalk annually, in line with the base funding provided through Capital Project P.02468 (approximately 300 metres of sidewalk/year);
- Review and update the curb ramp inventory to improve data accuracy and functionality; and
- Continue to install curb ramps annually, in line with the base funding provided through Capital Project P.02468 (approximately 20 curb ramps/year).

Education and Promotion Program

The Education and Promotion Program addresses 17 of the 88 action items within the AT Plan. Encouraging and promoting walking and cycling is an important companion to building infrastructure. Since 2019, the Administration has:

- Conducted annual education campaigns to make traveling on Saskatoon streets feel safer and more comfortable for all road users by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all road users and encouraging safe traveling behaviours;
- Developed the #BYXE theme and #StreetSmarts theme for cycling- and pedestrian-related educational and promotional materials;
- Delivered the Learn to Ride Safe Program annually (except for 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions);
- Supported annual winter and spring BYXE week celebrations (except for 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions).
- Developed the Active Transportation Wayfinding Guidelines;
- Delivered the annual cycling guide and developed an online version;

- Supported community active transportation initiatives through the Active Transportation Grant; and
- Re-established the Active Transportation Advisory Group (ATAG) in 2022.

Next steps for the Education and Promotion Program include:

- Continue to develop and deliver annual education campaigns, Learn to Ride Safe Program, support cycling and walking events, celebrations, and initiatives, and meet with ATAG;
- Reach out to Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) about its driver handbook and report back to City Council on SGI's plans, if any, to include education about cycling; and
- With the support of federal funding, develop and deliver the BYXE Education Street Team, which will offer in-person, on-site education on the rules of the road and the existing bike network, as well as build support for cycling.

Operational Program

The Operational Program addresses 54 of 88 action items in the AT Plan. This program consists of bylaws, policies, standards, and guidelines that govern everyday administrative operations. Additionally, many of the action items are considered standard operations and may be implemented through other programs or portfolios of work currently underway. Since 2018, the following have been adopted:

- Traffic Control at Pedestrian Crossings Updates (2018);
- Bicycle Bylaw (2020);
- Updates to the Official Community Plan related to Active Transportation (2020);
- Transportation Master Plan (2021);
- Zoning Bylaw – Bike Parking Updates (2021);
- City of Saskatoon Design and Development Standards Manual (2021);
- Pedestrian and Cyclist Accommodation in Work Zones and Detours Policy (2021); and
- Active Transportation Wayfinding Manual (2022).

The Official Community Plan (OCP) was updated to reflect the current vision for Saskatoon based on current bylaws, policies, strategies, plans, procedures and guidelines, including the Active Transportation Plan. Through the OCP review process, updates to numerous sections incorporated the action items and vision outlined in the AT Plan, most notably the Moving Around section of the OCP, and many other sections (Quality of Life, Environmental Leadership, Urban Form and Structure, Sustainable Growth, and Economic Diversity and Prosperity) also include objectives related to active transportation.

Additional work completed in this area includes:

- Reviewed snow clearing level of service for bicycle facilities, sweeping levels of service for shared-use pathways and bridge structures, and presented options for varying levels of service to City Council;
- Reviewed Walkway Evaluation and Closure Policy; and
- Developed and implemented an Active Transportation Data Collection Program.

Next steps:

- Continue to update administrative policies, guidelines and standards to support active modes; and
- Continue to pursue amendments to *The Traffic Safety Act* and driver handbook with the Province.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Implementing the AT Plan has financial implications. The AT Plan is currently funded through Capital Project P.02468 – Active Transportation Plan Implementation. Historically, this project has received \$1.125 million in funding from the Active Transportation Reserve (ATR) and Transportation Infrastructure Expansion Reserve (TIER). An outline of the typical program delivery is noted below:

Component Name	Reserve	Funding	Typical Projects Delivered at Current Funding Levels
01 - AT Plan Implementation	ATR	\$575,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT Education Campaign • Learn to Ride Safe Program • Support Community Events • Cycling Guide • AT Community Grant • ATAG • Review, update and develop policy, planning, administrative guidelines • Staffing costs to deliver programs and projects
02 - Audible Pedestrian Signal Program	TSR	\$50,000	APS installations or upgrades
03 - Curb Ramp Program	TIER	\$100,000	Approximately 20 curb ramp installs, depending on industry pricing
04 - Sidewalk Infill Program	TIER	\$200,000	Approximately 300 metres of new sidewalk, depending on industry pricing
05 - Cycling Network	TIER	\$200,000	Approximately 2 functional design plans <u>OR</u> minor traffic calming installations (curb extensions, pinch points, traffic circles, bicycle signal poles, etc.)
TOTAL		\$1,125,000	

At current funding levels, the Administration will begin to have to reduce services and/or the level of service of the programs provided to reflect the impact of inflation. In 2014 the ATR began and provided \$500,000 per year in funding. This was increased to \$575,000 per year in 2019. To account for inflation impacts, the funding would need to be \$715,000 for 2024, or an increase of \$140,000. This is a risk to the delivery of the active transportation program. The delivery of construction projects is more difficult to assess due to the fluctuations in industry pricing.

Federal and provincial government funding have supplemented existing budgets providing opportunities for the Administration to construct small portions of the sidewalk and cycling networks. At current funding levels, however, minimal progress can be made at physically expanding either network. The Saskatoon Transportation Master Plan contains the list of prioritized transportation projects, including active transportation projects, and is currently unfunded. Appendix 5 provides a preliminary estimate of the funding needed to make substantial progress on constructing and implementing components of the AT Plan.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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

Supporting active transportation is a key initiative in the Low Emissions Community Plan. Implementing the action items in the AT Plan will assist with the lowering of harmful emissions by providing a safe alternative mode of transportation.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps for each area of the AT Implementation Plan have been outlined in the discussion portion of the report.

Updating the Active Transportation Plan

The current AT Plan was developed from 2014-2016 and adopted by City Council in June 2016. While many of the action items are still valid and underway, the Administration intends to refresh the current AT Plan in 2024-2025. This update will review the status and relevancy of the implementation of the action items contained with the 2016 plan, provide an update on industry best practices and standards that have changed since 2016 and provide updated direction on the next steps for Saskatoon's AT investments. This process will include targeted stakeholder and community-wide engagement efforts.

APPENDICES

1. Active Transportation Plan Action Items – Status Update
2. Active Transportation Implementation Strategy Components
3. Status of Cycling Network Expansion, 2018-2029
4. Status of Sidewalk Network Expansion, 2017-2029
5. Overview of Active Transportation Implementation Plan Financial Requirements, 2024-2029

Report Approval

Written by: Danae Balogun, Active Transportation Program Manager

Reviewed by: Nathalie Baudais, Engineering Manager, Transportation
Jay Magus, Director of Transportation

Approved by: Terry Schmidt, General Manager, Transportation and Construction

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