

Neighbourhood Bikeways 30 km/h Speed Limit Policy

ISSUE

This report recommends a policy be adopted to reduce speed limits on streets with neighbourhood bikeways.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:

1. That Council Policy C0X-XXX, Reduced Speed Limits for Neighbourhood Bikeways, be approved; and
2. That the City Clerk be requested to adopt Council Policy C0X-XXX, Reduced Speed Limits for Neighbourhood Bikeways as outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

Official Community Plan, Transportation Master Plan, Strategic Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP), Transportation Master Plan (TMP), and Strategic Plan provide direction on the development of an active transportation network to provide safe facilities for people walking and cycling. Relevant sections from these plans are included in Appendix 1.

Active Transportation Plan

At its Regular Business Meeting held on June 27, 2016, City Council approved the Active Transportation Plan (AT Plan). As part of the AT Plan, the City committed to the following action item under the theme of connectivity: “Develop a complete and connected bicycle network for all ages and abilities.”

A key part of achieving this action item is the implementation of cycling facilities that are safe and comfortable for all people riding bicycles, regardless of their age or ability. These facility types typically include shared-use paths, protected bike lanes, raised cycle tracks, and neighbourhood bikeways.

Neighbourhood bikeways feature people riding their bicycles in mixed traffic and are best suited for streets with low traffic volumes and speeds. According to the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads, neighbourhood bikeways are suitable for streets where motor vehicle speeds are 30 km/h or less and where motor vehicle volumes are less than 2,500 vehicles per day. Neighbourhood bikeways are a cost-effective way to provide a cycling facility that complements the surrounding land uses and street function. Additional information about all ages and abilities (AAA) cycling facilities can be found in Appendix 2.

There are currently four City Council approved neighbourhood bikeways scheduled for construction, or in the process of being constructed:

- 23rd Street West Bikeway (Blairmore Bikeway) from Vancouver Avenue North to Avenue C North;

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- Dudley Street Bikeway from Avenue P South to Spadina Crescent West;
- 31st Street West Bikeway from Avenue W North to Idylwyld Drive North; and
- 14th Street East Bikeway from Saskatchewan Crescent East to Cumberland Avenue South.

The plans, approved in principle by City Council, for each of these corridors contain a range of design treatments tailored to existing conditions and desired outcomes. Design treatments include signs, pavement markings, traffic calming measures, and specialized crossing treatments to calm traffic and discourage through-trips by motor vehicles.

Implementing a 30 km/h speed limit is the final step for a street to be considered a neighbourhood bikeway. All design elements, including the reduced speed limit, must be in place for a neighbourhood bikeway to be considered as a cycling facility appropriate for people of all ages and abilities.

Additional information on the implementation status of the approved neighbourhood bikeways can be found in Appendix 3.

A portion of Saskatoon's current and approved active transportation network can be seen in Appendix 4.

Residential Speed Limit Review

At its meeting held on March 1, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received an information report for the Residential Speed Limit Review – Project Roadmap. The project roadmap identified that an approval report regarding the posted speed limit on streets designated as neighbourhood bikeways may be required depending on the outcome of the residential speed limit review. The roadmap for the reporting approach that would follow each of the possible speed limit options from the residential speed limit review can be found in Appendix 5. The roadmap shows that if the 50 km/h or 40 km/h option are selected, there may be adjustments to the existing reduced speed limit school zones and new reduced speed limits may be introduced for playground zones, senior zones, and bikeways. The roadmap shows that if the 30 km/h option is selected, no reduced speed limits are required for school zones, playground zones, senior zones, or bikeways.

At its meeting held on June 7, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received an information report regarding the Residential Speed Limit Review – Background Information and Feedback Summary. This report included a summary of two surveys that were completed to obtain opinions on revising speed limits in residential areas of Saskatoon. Although there was no survey question specifically about bikeways, the survey indicated that the majority of respondents generally preferred no change in speed limits on any street but generally supported reduced speed limits at locations adjacent to playgrounds intended for young children.

At its meeting held on September 7, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received a decision report for the Residential Speed Limit Review –

Speed Limit and Eligible Streets. The result of the meeting was no changes to the posted speed limits on residential streets.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Jurisdictional Scan

The Administration conducted a jurisdictional scan of nine Canadian municipalities on reduced speed limits for neighbourhood bikeways. Of the nine municipalities reviewed, seven had neighbourhood bikeways. Five of the municipalities with neighbourhood bikeways included reduced speed limits for their neighbourhood bikeways. The other two municipalities have residential speed limit reductions that can address the speed limits on their neighbourhood bikeways. A summary of the jurisdictional scan can be found in Appendix 6.

Implications

Reduced speed limits on neighbourhood bikeways are expected to have minimal to no impact on drivers:

- These streets are local streets with very low traffic volumes. As local streets, drivers from the surrounding area would experience the reduced speed limit for short distances only. The traffic volumes for the four neighbourhood bikeways identified in this report are available in the table in Appendix 4.
- There are currently 1,445 kilometres of roads in Saskatoon. The total length of the neighbourhood bikeways approved in principle on 23rd Street West, Dudley Street, 31st Street West, and 14th Street East is 7.5 kilometres. This results in speed limit revisions to 0.52% of the streets in Saskatoon. The lengths of the four individual bikeways are included in Appendix 4.
- The approved neighbourhood bikeway routes are in close proximity to arterial or collector streets, which are better suited for drivers destined beyond the neighbourhood.

Without a 30 km/h speed limit, the routes that have been approved as neighbourhood bikeways would not be considered an AAA facility and will not meet the criteria to be considered a neighbourhood bikeway. Should Council Policy C0X-XXX, Neighbourhood Bikeways Speed Limit not be approved, the Administration has identified two possible alternative outcomes:

- Change the facility type on the existing streets approved as neighbourhood bikeways to a protected bike lane to continue to provide an AAA facility; or
- Neighbourhood bikeway routes are no longer part of the AAA network and would be considered a non-AAA route.

Only the first outcome supports the direction of the OCP, TMP, Strategic Plan, and AT Plan. A discussion of these alternative outcomes is included in Appendix 7.

Engagement

As part of the Residential Speed Limit Review, two surveys were completed to obtain opinions on revising speed limits in residential areas of Saskatoon: 1) a representative

survey was completed; and 2) an open public survey was available online. Key findings of the surveys were:

- Open public survey respondents are less in favour of speed limit reductions compared to statistically representative survey respondents (34% for public survey and 52% for representative survey).
- Majority of representative survey respondents (60%) and about a third of open public survey respondents (31%) are concerned about the speed of the vehicles in their neighbourhoods.
- Respondents of both surveys prefer 30 km/h or 40 km/h speed limits more for local streets (34% for public survey and 52% for representative survey) compared to collector streets (15% for public survey and 36% for representative survey) or arterial streets (5% for public survey and 25% for representative survey), though no change in speed limits on any streets is the most preferred.
- In both datasets, those who prefer the speed limits to be decreased to 30 km/h – 40 km/h are more likely to walk/jog or bike daily than to walk/jog or bike less frequently.

The traffic volumes and speeds required for neighbourhood bikeways including the recommended traffic speeds of 30 km/h was discussed during engagement events for the 23rd Street, Dudley Street, 31st Street, and 14th Street projects. There was some desire from meeting attendees for a 30 km/h speed limit to make the street more comfortable for cyclists. A flyer with a project implementation update was sent to residents near the neighbourhood bikeway corridors. The flyers included information on the Administration's recommendation for 30 km/h posted speeds on neighbourhood bikeways. A total of 51 responses were received. Participants had mixed support for a speed limit change on neighbourhood bikeways. The distribution of feedback was as follows:

- 35% of respondents supported 30 km/h speed limits on neighbourhood bikeways;
- 31% were opposed to 30 km/h speed limits on neighbourhood bikeways;
- 18% did not provide comments on the proposed speed limit change, but were opposed to the neighbourhood bikeway or cycling projects in general;
- 6% were opposed to 30 km/h speed limits on neighbourhood bikeways but supported cycling projects in general; and
- 10% did not provide clear indication of their views on the proposed speed limit change or cycling projects.

Appendix 8 includes a summary of the feedback received.

The proposed reduced speed limit for neighbourhood bikeways was presented to the Active Transportation Advisory Group (ATAG) on October 19, 2023. The proposed policy received positive feedback at the meeting. ATAG members opted to provide formal feedback in the form of a letter which can be seen in Appendix 9. A vote of ATAG members was conducted electronically to determine ATAG's support of a policy for reduced speed limits of 30 km/h on neighbourhood bikeways. There are 18 voting

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members of ATAG. 14 members voted in support of the policy and 4 members abstained from voting. A membership list of ATAG members is provided in Appendix 10.

Proposed Council Policy C0X-XXX, Reduced Speed Limits for Neighbourhood Bikeways

Since a 30 km/h residential speed limit reduction did not go forward for residential streets city-wide, a policy for reduced speed limits on streets with neighbourhood bikeways is proposed to provide AAA neighbourhood bikeway cycling facilities. This approach is consistent with the policies that were created or amended for schools and playgrounds as a result of the Residential Speed Limit Review (C07-033 Reduced Speed Zones for Playgrounds, C07-015 Reduced Speed Zones for Schools).

The purpose of this policy is to establish a reduced speed limit of 30 km/h on neighbourhood bikeways to provide a safe, comfortable cycling environment for people of all ages and abilities to ride their bicycles in mixed traffic.

For a street to be considered a neighbourhood bikeway, it must go through identification, design, engagement, and construction before it can be signed with a 30 km/h speed limit. This policy will establish that streets identified as neighbourhood bikeways will meet the required criteria to be considered an AAA cycling facility when construction is complete.

The key objectives of the proposed policy are to:

- Set the operating speed and traffic volume goals for neighbourhood bikeways in Saskatoon to provide a more comfortable cycling environment.
- Guide the Administration on the process for installing neighbourhood bikeways.

The Administration has drafted Council Policy C0X-XXX, Reduced Speed Limits for Neighbourhood Bikeways. This policy would allow the Administration to implement reduced speed limits of 30 km/h for existing and future neighbourhood bikeways once the design elements have been constructed and the Traffic Bylaw revisions have been approved. The proposed policy is outlined in Appendix 11.

If approved, the policy would come into effect immediately, and Bylaw 7200 – The Traffic Bylaw would be revised to align with the policy. As calming measures have been installed on the 23rd Street Bikeway (Blairmore Bikeway) and the 14th Street Bikeway, when the bylaw changes have been approved, the speed limits would be revised to 30 km/h and the streets would be designated as an AAA neighbourhood bikeway.

Speed limits would not be revised to 30 km/h and streets designated an AAA neighbourhood bikeway on other routes until bylaw changes are made and any required traffic calming is complete.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The signage costs associated with the speed limit revisions will be funded by the capital projects for the construction of future neighbourhood bikeways.

The cost implications for signage associated with the speed limit revisions for the 23rd Street Bikeway are estimated to be \$32,000 and funding is available in Capital Project P.02468 – Active Transportation Plan Implementation.

The cost implications for signage associated with the speed limit revisions for the 14th Street West Bikeway are estimated to be \$13,000 and funding is available in Capital Project P.02468 – Active Transportation Plan Implementation.

There are indirect cost implications associated with not approving the policy. Without a reduction in speed limits, neighbourhood bikeways would no longer be a cycling facility option for Saskatoon streets. As a result, protected bike lanes, raised cycle tracks, and shared-use paths would be the remaining AAA facility types that could be installed. These facility types are typically more expensive than neighbourhood bikeways as they require significant geometric changes to the street. If this policy is not approved, all future AAA cycling routes proposed would be protected bike lanes, raised cycle tracks or shared-use paths.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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

Supporting active transportation is a key initiative in the Low Emissions Community Plan. This policy will support the lowering of harmful emissions by providing a safe alternative mode of transportation.

Creating AAA cycling facilities was identified in the AT Plan as the main way to increase the number of trips made by bicycle. This policy will help to encourage more cycling trips by creating more AAA cycling facilities in Saskatoon.

NEXT STEPS

Should City Council approve the proposed policy, the Administration will:

1. Proceed with the required Traffic Bylaw revisions.
2. Install 30 km/h speed limit signs for the 23rd Street and 14th Street neighbourhood bikeway(s) and designate these routes as an AAA neighbourhood bikeway.

The above steps would be undertaken for any neighbourhood bikeway once construction is complete.

APPENDICES

1. City Council Approved Plans Supporting Cycling Infrastructure
2. All Ages and Abilities Cycling Facilities
3. Neighbourhood Bikeways in Saskatoon
4. Active Transportation Network Showing Approved Neighbourhood Bikeways
5. Speed Limit Review Reporting Map Figure
6. Jurisdictional Scan
7. Alternative Outcomes to Establishing a Neighbourhood Bikeway
8. Neighbourhood Bikeways Proposed Speed Limit Change Feedback
9. Active Transportation Advisory Group Feedback Letter
10. Active Transportation Advisory Group Membership List
11. Proposed Council Policy C0X-XXX Reduced Speed Limits for Neighbourhood Bikeways

Report Approval

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