

Assiniboine Drive CN Rail Pedestrian Crossing – November 2023 Update

ISSUE

An updated project cost estimate for the CN rail crossing near the intersection of Assiniboine Drive and Warman Road has been completed based on additional information provided by CN. The project cost has increased significantly and exceeds available funding. This report discusses potential next steps.

BACKGROUND

History

At its Regular Business Meeting held on January 29, 2018, City Council considered the following inquiry put forth by Councillor Donauer:

“Would the Administration please report back concerning a proper, legal and safe method for pedestrians and cyclists to get from the residential areas of River Heights and Lawson Heights to the North Industrial employment area. Currently, there is no legal way for pedestrians or cyclists to move between these residential neighbourhoods and the North Industrial. Specifically, comment on the ability to get from Warman/Assiniboine intersection area to the North Industrial. Currently, residents are crossing the railway tracks illegally, which is becoming more of a problem with the Railway Police and the Saskatoon Police Service. This leaves no safe option for pedestrians and cyclists.”

At its meeting held on June 1, 2020, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received an information report on whistle cessation and railway crossing projects. With regards to the CN rail crossing near the intersection of Assiniboine Drive and Warman Road, this report noted:

- A functional plan for the pedestrian and cyclist crossing at Warman Road and Assiniboine Drive has been completed and provided to CN for comment and review.
- The Administration was waiting on comment back from CN before proceeding with detailed design and cost estimates.
- The project was included on the prioritized transportation infrastructure project list, and funding requests will occur with the next multi-year budget cycle.
- The preliminary high-level cost estimate of the crossing is \$500,000.

At its meeting held on June 22, 2020, the Governance and Priorities Committee considered the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program 2020, and resolved, in part: “That an amount of \$0.50M for ‘Pedestrian/Cyclist Rail Crossing near Warman/Assiniboine be recommended for consideration under the Reallocation Prioritization List.”

At its Regular Business Meeting held on July 27, 2020, City Council considered the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program – Reallocation Prioritization List and resolved:

“That the budget allocations as shown in the attached Final Allocation List be approved; and that the Administration be directed to take appropriate action to deliver the initiatives.”

The final list referred to in the resolution included \$0.5M of funding for the Pedestrian/Cyclist Rail Crossing near Warman Road/Assiniboine Drive.

In May 2021, the Administration provided an update of rail-related transportation projects, which included a progress update for the CN rail crossing near the intersection of Assiniboine Drive and Warman Road. Transportation had completed a preliminary functional design for the pedestrian and cyclist crossing at Warman Road and Assiniboine Drive. An engineering consultant was retained to finalize the functional design details and complete an independent safety audit for the project in anticipation of required application for whistle cessation, and address CN’s requirements for the safety of the crossing. The detailed design was submitted to CN in July 2021 for their review and endorsement.

On June 8, 2022, the Administration received review comments from CN and were summarized as follows:

- Whistle cessation would require a fencing plan to support mitigating trespassing.
- The crossing would require flashing lights, bells and gates (FLBG) to support whistle cessation.
- There are issues with the sidewalk design (zig-zag design).
- Concerns with the retaining wall.
- Operational concerns remain.

The Administration completed additional work in response to CN’s comments and provided this information to CN on November 21, 2022.

Current Status

The Administration has been working with CN to finalize the design details, cost estimates and next steps. CN has indicated their acceptance of the design by providing a firm cost estimate for the FLGB portion of the project and asking for ‘acceptance’ of the costs. Once the City of Saskatoon (City) indicates ‘acceptance’, CN will provide the City a draft agreement to address the project and order the FLGB materials.

With a finalized detailed design and firm costs for the FLGB portion of the project, an updated cost estimate was prepared. The updated cost estimate totals \$1,650,000. This is an increase of \$1,150,000 from the original cost estimate prepared in 2019.

The main factors contributing to the significant increase in costs include:

- Retaining wall costs - \$300,000 (original estimate did not account for the amount of retaining wall required).
- Tamper proof fencing - \$150,000 (length and type of wall required by CN higher than original estimate of \$35,000).
- Rail Crossing Surface and Warning System with Gates (FLGB) - \$690,000 (original estimate was \$150,000).
- Inflation is a contributing factor to the increased prices for equipment and contractor unit costs.

OPTIONS

Four potential options are discussed below.

Option	Implications
1. Delay project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the \$500,000 re-allocation funding in place and attempt to fund the shortfall through the next budget cycle. • Project remains viable. • Lack of a formal pedestrian crossing remains for a minimum of two more years. • Ability to fund through the next budget cycle is unknown. • Expected that costs would rise due to inflation.
2. Cancel project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancel the project and return the remaining re-allocation funding. • The remaining funding could be provided for another need. • The lack of a formal pedestrian crossing and the safety issues would remain.
3. Forward to 2024/2025 budget deliberations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward the report to 2024/2025 budget deliberations for consideration within in the Capital Business Plan Options. • Project remains viable. • Limited RCE funding is available.
4. Re-allocate 2024/2025 transportation funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes re-allocating 2024/2025 Transportation department funding approved through the upcoming budget deliberations. • If this option is approved, a follow-up report could be provided in January outlining options for cancelling or deferring other Transportation projects in favour of funding the CN rail pedestrian crossing. • Cancelling or deferring other transportation projects may not be feasible due to the significant amount of the shortfall. The transportation budget is relatively small, and it is expected that an accumulation of various projects would be impacted to enable funding of \$1,150,000 for the pedestrian crossing.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Assiniboine Drive CN Rail Pedestrian Crossing project be forwarded to the 2024/2025 budget deliberations for funding consideration within the Capital Business Plan Options.

RATIONALE

The following was considered in developing the recommendations:

- It allows the project to remain viable, thus potentially addressing the safety issue of not having a formal pedestrian crossing of the CN rail near the intersection of Assiniboine Drive and Warman Road.
- If funded for 2024/2025, the project can be completed for the updated budget amount, whereas if it is deferred, further inflationary increases would likely occur.
- A comparison with, and discussion about, other City initiatives and needs is enabled.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

There are no privacy, social or environmental implications identified.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

If the project is funded and construction planned for 2024, an engagement plan focused on 'informing' will be developed and implemented.

APPENDICES

None.

Report Approval

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