

PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASS – VANCOUVER AVENUE

Meeting Minutes – Mount Royal Community Association

Date: June 14th 2023

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Howard Coad School

Attendees

Name	Organization
Jay Magus	City of Saskatoon
Lisa Thibodeau	City of Saskatoon
Julian Petras	City of Saskatoon
Mount Royal Community Association Members (13 Members Present)	Mount Royal Community Association

Minutes

City of Saskatoon Presentation

- Introduction
 - There have been 4-5 reports investigating this issue have been presented to City Council in the past. This includes a report from the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) providing statistics on incident occurrences at the different pedestrian underpasses that pass through Circle Drive
 - The most recent report was an information report provided to City Council in 2021. This report covered the different options on how to improve the pedestrian tunnels. Council asked Administration to conduct further engagement with the community and report back with specific strategies and recommendations to address the issues.
 - The purpose of this presentation is to provide the community association (CA) with background on the project, have a discussion on potential improvements to the Vancouver Avenue pedestrian underpass, and to request feedback on the improvements. The feedback from the CA will be combined with other City groups such as the SPS, planning departments, and others.
- Improvement Options
 - There are four categories of improvements that we will go over today: cameras, lighting, geometric changes, and a pedestrian overpass.
- Cameras
 - Either actively or passively monitored. Active monitoring would allow police to be notified as an incident is occurring. Passive monitoring would allow SPS to access a recording of an incident.
 - Would increase surveillance of secluded areas and provide a record of incidents for police.

- Is not an immediate physical deterrent and active monitoring would require long-term staff and funding requirements.
- Lighting
 - Improving the existing lighting within the tunnels as well as improving the lighting in the areas leading up to the underpass.
 - Would improve sight lines and visibility but is not an immediate physical deterrent.
- Geometric Changes
 - Involves leveling out the approach area to improve sight lines and visibility. Will also reduce shortcutting and make movements more predictable.
- Pedestrian Overpass
 - The recent Circle Drive West study recommended the removal of some of these underpasses and building pedestrian overpasses in their place.
 - There are some issues with the rail lines and the overhead high-capacity power lines.
 - This would be a good long term solution.
- Improvements that are not recommended
 - There are a few options that City Staff are not recommending, but if the CA feels strongly that they want it they should indicate that in the feedback.
 - Reconstructing the tunnel to improve visibility and usability. This would not eliminate the secluded areas and may not be feasible due to the rail line.
 - Closing the underpass is not recommended as it would increase walking time and would be a non-equitable, vehicle focused solution.
- Next Steps
 - City staff will continue to gather feedback from the community and internal work groups.
 - The current plan is to provide a report to the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation this fall.
 - Staff cannot share the report ahead of time, but can notify the CA as soon as it is publicly available.

Q&A Period

- When was this project initiated and why is it focused on this one pedestrian underpass?
 - *The police provided statistics a few years ago at each of the underpasses. City Council directed Administration to focus on this underpass as it had the most issues.*
- They had cameras up at a couple of the underpasses a few years ago. Stayed up for a couple months. This occurred in 2019
 - *There has been no official monitoring program for these locations, so those may have been traffic counting cameras.*
- The chain link fencing in the middle of the underpass seems unsafe as people are trapped in. Why was it installed? There are usually holes cut in them, so people are getting in from the outside anyway.
 - *The chain link fencing was installed as a result of a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) review.*
- I don't want to close the underpass as it provides access to Confederation

- Was there any statistical analysis done of the time of day for when incidents are occurring.
 - *The analysis that SPS completed did include some analysis of the time of day, but we don't have the numbers with us.*
- One of the residents had an incident in the tunnel, but on the crime map it was report as occurring on an adjacent street.
 - Another resident had a similar experience. When asking police about it, they said they need to assign it to the nearest intersection.
- Can the police do some analysis of crime reports at the raised overpasses to see how effective they are.
 - *We could look into completing this type of analysis. Anecdotally, we do not hear many, if any, complaints about safety at the existing pedestrian overpasses.*
 - *We can also provide copies of the previous reports to the CA.*
- Will the circle drive improvements include pedestrian overpasses at all underpass locations?
 - *No, not every pedestrian underpass will be converted to an overpass. It will only be a few select locations.*
- Thanks for clearing out the underbrush and addressing issues behind sound wall
- Berm is another area of concern and leads to these underpasses
- Why doesn't the city regularly patrol the areas with underbrush and investigate issues
 - *Lots of our programs are complaint driven and we have limited resources.*
 - *We need to assign money to a program like that - for example we now have annual money for underbrush clearing*
 - *Big thing we learned is things don't go away. Need to plan for continuing maintenance.*
- Does anyone (Other CA members) use the tunnels and what do they think is the best solution?
 - One member responded that Lighting is always good. Prompt graffiti removal would be beneficial. If they could be made wider it would make a difference.
 - Another member responded that an overpass would be nice, but they can be difficult to use for people in wheelchairs or people that have trouble going up stairs.
- Some people avoid the tunnels and detour the long way around.
- Going by yourself through the tunnels is worse. Some students use them constantly in larger groups and do not have issues.
- One resident would be more likely to use an overpass when she is walking with her children.
- This has been going for 10 years, with lots of money spent on research. When will we actually be doing something?
 - *The previous reports are comprehensive so more research will not be needed. We may need to update cost estimates and there is currently a budget deficit to consider. Safety is usually a high priority when making budget decisions.*
 - *We have had success in the past years getting designs done so that we are ready to go when funding is available. Whether that is city, provincial, federal funding, etc.*
- Will the City be connecting with other Community Associations?
 - *There isn't a community association for the Confederation Suburban Centre, but we can connect with the Massey Place Community Association.*