

# PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASS – VANCOUVER AVENUE

## Meeting Minutes – Massey Place Community Association

**Date:** September 21<sup>st</sup> 2023

**Time:** 7:00 PM

**Location:** Cosmo Civic Centre

### Attendees

Name	Organization
Jay Magus	City of Saskatoon
Jan Cunningham	City of Saskatoon
Julian Petras	City of Saskatoon
Joseph Santiago	Massey Place Community Association
Krystal Born	Massey Place Community Association
Danika Dinko	Massey Place Community Association
Devin Hyde	Massey Place Community Association
Angela Yam	Massey Place 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.

## Discussion Period

- One community association member noted that St. Edward School uses the tunnel twice a year to access St. Peter Parish for events.
- Is there a timeline for when the pedestrian overpass will be build?
  - *The pedestrian overpass will be triggered when there is enough development on the west side of the city.*
- Is there an option to close the tunnels at night?
  - *There are some examples of other municipalities that close pathways and tunnels at night. Kelowna closes some of their tunnels, but it is unknown if they are physically locked during those periods. Another example is Prince Albert, which has a bylaw stating you cannot be in alleys at night.*

- Has the City conducted any intercept surveys since 2015 to talk to residents that are using the tunnels?
  - *No, there have been no recent intercept surveys.*
- One community association member noted that cameras would be one of their preferred options. It would not fix the safety problems, but they would provide a record of any incidents and would provide more data on who is using which tunnels.
- Has there been any past work to replace the tunnel lighting?
  - *There has been regular maintenance on the lighting, but the current lighting looks very dated.*
- Do the bicycle police patrol through the tunnels?
  - *We do not know if the police patrol through these tunnels.*
- Can we add some signage or names to the tunnels? Can we name them Tunnel #1, Tunnel #2, etc.? Labelling the tunnels will let people better identify where they were if a crime occurs and would give the police better tracking data.
  - *Yes, this sounds like something we could investigate and implement easily.*
- One community association member commented that they believed the tunnels should not be closed.
- One community association member commented that the City should complete some planning work to see if a pedestrian overpass is even feasible at this location. The study should identify the issues with the rail line and overhead high voltage power line.
- What would be the Community Association's preferred improvements?
  - The members noted that adding tunnel names or numbers, improved lighting, passive cameras, and landscaping changes to improve sight lines would be their preferred improvements.