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## City Entrance Signs

### Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That the remaining four City Entrance Signs, proposed to be created as per the Highway Entrance Features Concept Plan, not be constructed;
2. That \$374,229.74 be returned to the Reserve for Capital Expenditures; and
3. That funding continue to be provided to maintain the existing City Entrance Signs.

### Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and determine the future of the City Entrance Sign program.

### Report Highlights

1. Although the City Entrance Signs have been well received by the community, the future of the project needs to be considered.
2. The remaining signs are estimated to cost \$200,000 each to construct, with an additional \$3,000 annually for maintenance.
3. The Administration is recommending that the remaining four proposed signs not be constructed, and that the existing City Entrance Signs continue to be maintained.

### Strategic Goal

This initiative supports the City of Saskatoon's (City) Strategic Goal of Economic Diversity and Prosperity by collaborating with external partners to promote Saskatoon.

### Background

In 2001, the City Administration commissioned Crosby Hanna & Associates to prepare a "Highway Entrance Features Concept Plan" (Concept Plan). The approved Concept Plan proposed entrance signs involving large primary signs, smaller secondary signs, as well as overpass signs, all displaying the "Saskatoon Shines" community brand. The project was assigned to the Urban Design Section for implementation of the proposed entrance signs.

In 2004, the first City Entrance Sign was constructed on Airport Drive, in partnership with the Saskatoon Airport Authority. In December 2006, the second City Entrance Sign was constructed along Highway 11 South, leading into Saskatoon from Regina. With a capital budget of \$160,000, the Urban Design Section designed the sign and led the construction and installation of the City Entrance Sign project. Four additional primary signs have since been installed along Highway 16 Northwest (from Edmonton),

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Highway 16 Southeast (from Winnipeg), Highway 11 North (from Prince Albert), and Highway 7 West (from Calgary). Funding for the construction of the City Entrance Signs is from the Reserve for Capital Expenditures.

The Concept Plan also recommended overpass signs wherever opportunities were available. Two such signs have been constructed: the Blairmore Pedestrian Overpass Bridge, and a ground-oriented sign at the College Drive overpass. See Attachment 1 for a map showing the existing and proposed City Entrance Sign locations.

### Report

#### Future of City Entrance Signs

There are four additional City Entrance Signs proposed as part of the Concept Plan that have not yet been constructed. The proposed locations include Highway 219 South (Lorne Avenue), Highway 5 East, Highway 14 West, and along Valley Road. Highway 12 North was also discussed in the Concept Plan, but overpass signs were recommended along this highway. Total funding of \$380,406.93 has previously been approved for three of the signs:

- Highway 5: Budget of \$145,001.31, with \$2,758.71 spent to date;
- Highway 14: Budget of \$100,000.00, with no funds spent to date; and
- Highway 12: Budget of \$135,405.62, with \$3,418.48 spent to date.

The City Entrance Signs have been well received. The Urban Design program has received positive input from the public, receiving complaints only when damage occurred to the signs. However, the cost to construct and maintain the City Entrance Signs has increased over what was originally budgeted. There has also been difficulties in securing land for the remaining proposed signs, and a lack of resources in the Urban Design program to manage the project has led the Administration to consider the future of the City Entrance Signs.

In summary, the high volume entrance highways have been highlighted with new signs. Further highway entrance signs would have diminishing returns.

#### Construction and Operating Costs

The most recent City Entrance Sign was constructed along Highway 7 West, and was completed in 2014. The final cost of this sign was \$134,000. The Administration estimates the construction cost would now be approximately \$200,000 per sign, resulting in \$800,000 (2017 rates) to construct the remaining four proposed City Entrance Signs.

The overhead sign on the Blairmore Pedestrian Overpass Bridge was installed in late 2009 at a total cost of \$105,500. This amount included the cost to upgrade the sign to address brightness concerns. The Administration estimates the construction cost for each overhead-overpass sign would be approximately \$110,000, and \$80,000 for the ground-oriented overpass signs.

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Land for the existing City Entrance Signs has been either purchased or leased. In one location, a 0.10 acre parcel of land was acquired at a cost of \$1,200.00, plus an additional \$7,030.50 to subdivide and register the parcel. Where land is leased, the cost is approximately \$1.00 per year; therefore, no significant cost respecting the land. However, in some cases, it has been difficult to secure an appropriate site.

Maintenance and operating costs are funded annually with a \$24,500 contribution from the mill rate. These costs include bulb replacement, electrical component replacement, power consumption, repair to signs damaged by accident or vandalism, lease of property on which the signs are located, and landscape maintenance where landscaping is included.

### Options for the City Entrance Sign Project

The Administration has identified four options for consideration in determining the future of the City Entrance Sign project:

1. Any or all of the remaining four proposed City Entrance Signs may be constructed. The construction cost would be approximately \$200,000 per sign, with an annual maintenance expense of approximately \$3,000.
2. A scaled-down version of the City Entrance Signs may be developed. This option would involve low maintenance landscaping and a more modest sign featuring the community brand. It is estimated that the cost per sign could be reduced to approximately \$100,000, with an annual maintenance cost of \$2,000.
3. The remaining four proposed City Entrance Signs may be cancelled, and efforts could focus on smaller walkway and ground-oriented overpass signs. These signs could be similar to the walkway sign on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street in the Blairmore neighbourhood, or on the ground level of the overpass on College Drive. The overhead and ground-oriented overpass signs would cost approximately \$80,000 to \$110,000, with maintenance costs of approximately \$500 annually.
4. Do not construct additional City Entrance Signs, but continue the current level of annual funding to ensure the existing signs are maintained for their full lifespan. By discontinuing the program, the City would save approximately \$800,000 in future construction costs, plus up to \$3,000 annually per sign. Furthermore, there would be cost savings related to securing land and managing the construction project.

The Administration is recommending Option 4 due to the cost savings for the City. If Option 4 is supported by City Council, a total of \$374,229.74 would be returned to the Reserve for Capital Expenditures, available for possible reallocation to other projects.

### **Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement**

The Administration will directly notify key stakeholders, such as Tourism Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Airport Authority, of the decision regarding the future of the City Entrance Sign program.

### **Options to the Recommendation**

City Council has the option to:

- i) support construction for any or all of the four remaining signs originally proposed;
- ii) request development of a modest version of an entrance feature;
- iii) request that the project focus on overhead and ground-oriented overpass signs; or
- iv) do not construct additional City Entrance Signs.

If City Council requests additional entrance features, the Administration would need to identify staff resources before a capital budget request could be submitted.

### **Financial Implications**

The Administration has determined there would be financial savings of up to \$800,000 by not constructing the remaining four proposed City Entrance Signs, as well as up to \$3,000 per sign in annual maintenance costs. The annual budget of \$24,500 would continue to be required for the maintenance of the existing signs.

Three City Entrance Signs have previously been approved through capital budget requests, but the signs have not been constructed at this time. The total funding approved to date is \$374,229.74. If City Council decides to not construct new City Entrance Signs, this money would be returned to the Reserve for Capital Expenditures, and future capital budget requests pertaining to this program would not proceed.

### **Other Considerations/Implications**

There are no policy, environmental, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations at this time; a communication plan is not required.

### **Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion**

There will be no further reports on this matter.

### **Public Notice**

Public notice, pursuant to Section 3 of Public Notice Policy No. C01-021, is not required.

### **Attachment**

1. Plan of Existing and Proposed City Entrance Signs

### **Report Approval**

Written by: Paul Whitenect, Manager, Neighbourhood Planning Section  
Reviewed by: Lesley Anderson, Director of Planning and Development  
Approved by: Randy Grauer, General Manager, Community Services Department

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