
Inquiry – Councillor R. Donauer (January 29, 2018) Method for Pedestrians and Cyclists Moving from River Heights and Lawson Heights to the North Industrial Area

Recommendation

That the report of the General Manager, Transportation & Utilities Department dated May 14, 2018, be forwarded to City Council for information.

Topic and Purpose

This report outlines the ongoing work and next steps for pedestrian crossings of the Canadian National (CN) rail tracks to connect the River Heights and Lawson Heights neighbourhoods with the North Industrial Area.

Report Highlights

1. There is a pedestrian desire to cross the CN rail tracks west of Warman Road in the vicinity of Assiniboine Drive and Primrose Drive, resulting in trespassing concerns.
2. Conceptual plans for pedestrian crossings have been developed.
3. The Administration will work with CN Railway and Transport Canada to identify the rail requirements for approval of at-grade pedestrian crossings at these locations.

Strategic Goal

This report supports the Strategic Goal of Moving Around by improving the safety of all road users (pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers), and helps provide a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Background

The following inquiry was made by Councillor R. Donauer at the meeting of City Council held on January 29, 2018:

“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.”

Report

Pedestrian Crossing and Trespassing Issues

There is clear evidence of pedestrian desire to cross the railway track in the vicinity of Assiniboine Drive and Primrose Drive. This is evident through the worn paths that have developed at both locations. A legal crossing of the railway is recommended for both locations to ensure the safety of the pedestrians and cyclists crossing the rail corridor. It is anticipated there will be an increase in the number of pedestrians wanting to cross the rail corridor once the proposed Bus Rapid Transit corridor is operational on Warman Road.

The Active Transportation Plan (June 2016) proposed a pedestrian connection in the vicinity of Assiniboine Drive. However, an overpass or underpass is not feasible due to the proximity of the railway to Warman Road, elevation differences and the limited right-of-way width.

Proposed Concept Plan

The Administration has developed a concept plan for at-grade pedestrian rail crossings at both Assiniboine Drive and Primrose Drive (Attachment 1).

The proposed pedestrian crossings will be designed in accordance with Transport Canada's Grade Crossing Standards and Regulations to ensure public safety and compliance with regulatory requirements. The crossings will include hand rails, bike wheel track, warning signals, as well as guide fencing to channel pedestrians to the designated crossing area to ensure pedestrians and cyclists use the crossing as intended.

Due to the steep embankment and grade differentials, it is not practical to construct pathways and crossings to be wheelchair accessible. The proposed concept plan calls for use of stairs to get up and down the embankment. Fully accessible crossings would require reinforced concrete walls and the provision of sidewalks or pathways to Millar Avenue.

Application and Approval Process

Subject to City Council endorsement of the proposed crossings, the Administration will pursue the required approvals from CN and Transport Canada.

The approval process is as follows:

1. Approach CN and submit the concept plans for their review, comments and agreement in principal.
2. Assuming CN's endorsement and collaboration, and based on their input regarding the design and protection requirements, the Administration will then prepare detailed design and construction drawings along with complete cost estimates.
3. The required City's contribution to construct one or both crossings will be requested in Capital Project #1456 – Railway Crossing Safety Improvement;

eligibility for potential provincial or federal funding contributions will also be investigated.

4. Submit a formal application to CN and Transport Canada along with mandatory notices of work to all stakeholders.

Options to the Recommendation

There are two options available as alternatives to the recommendation:

1. No further development of the crossings. Due to the evidence of pedestrian activity at these locations and the railway concerns regarding trespassing, this alternative would involve the construction of a fence along the rail tracks between Circle Drive and 51st Street to prohibit trespassing.
2. The Administration could be directed to alter the design of each crossing to provide fully accessible crossings at each location along with the provision of sidewalks to Millar Avenue. This is not recommended, as Millar Avenue and the rest of the North Industrial Area does not have sidewalks or ramps. Accessible crossings may suggest the destination area is also accessible and potentially trap users or force users to navigate along Millar Avenue on the street to their destinations. There is a long-term intent to improve the accessibility of the North Industrial Area (sidewalks and accessible ramps) and at that time, the addition of accessible rail crossing improvements could be revisited.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

The Administration will engage with both CN Railway and Transport Canada on the design of safe crossings.

Communication Plan

In the event that the railway endorses the proposal, and the crossings receive funding, a communication plan will be developed at the time of construction.

Financial Implications

There are no immediate financial implications; however, a cost estimate for each of the pedestrian crossings of the CN Railway will be prepared once the CN Rail and Transport Canada requirements have been identified.

Safety/Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

The pedestrian crossing of the rail line and the pathway connections to the road network will be recommended for a safety/CPTED review, once approved to proceed by CN Railway and Transport Canada, and before tendering the construction.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no environmental, policy, or privacy considerations/implications.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

Assuming endorsement of the proposed crossings by CN Rail, a request for funding will be considered for inclusion in the 2019 Business Plan and Budget.

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Public Notice

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

Attachment

1. CNR Pedestrian Crossing Warman Road & Primrose Drive Cross-Section, April 3, 2018

Report Approval

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