
Plan for Growth – The Need for Change

Recommendation

That the report of the General Manager, Community Services Department, dated June 20, 2018, be received as information.

Topic and Purpose

This report provides an overview of the context leading to the Plan for Growth and the current implementation activities, including the Transit Plan, based around Bus Rapid Transit and aligning with the Downtown All Ages and Abilities Cycling Network.

Report Highlights

1. The City of Saskatoon's (City) Growth Plan to Half a Million (Growth Plan) integrates land use and transportation planning, and establishes a framework for how Saskatoon will grow in order to meet the vision and needs of the community, now and in the future.
2. Mobility demands and perspectives are changing with disruptive technologies (ridesharing applications and autonomous and connected vehicles), new transit technologies, changing perspectives/behaviours on vehicle ownership, and responses to climate change and public health causing demand for more mobility options.
3. The Transit Plan will increase mobility options for current and future residents, provide a catalyst for infill development, and is a responsible investment with significant benefits resulting from the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, between 1.7 and 2.5 benefit-to-cost ratios.
4. The Active Transportation Plan supports active transportation modes such as walking and cycling. The development of the Downtown All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Cycling Network (AAA Cycling Network) is an important component of the plan for cycling by providing practical routes for cycling and options for those who may not be comfortable riding on busy streets with high traffic volumes and speeds.

Strategic Goals

The Growth Plan supports the City's Strategic Goals of Asset and Financial Sustainability, Sustainable Growth, and Moving Around.

The Growth Plan will also assist in meeting the Strategic Goal of Environmental Leadership by enhancing the range of sustainable choices for Moving Around, and providing a new model for growth that more effectively utilizes infrastructure.

Background

At its April 25, 2016 meeting City Council approved, in principle, the Growth Plan. Under the umbrella of the Growth Plan, the Active Transportation Plan was approved by City Council at its June 27, 2016 meeting.

At its June 27, 2016 meeting, City Council approved a preliminary scope of work that included planning and design of the BRT system, as well as other initiatives identified within the Growth Plan as part of the submission for federal funding under the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund. This implementation work was supported financially through the 2017 Business Plan and Budget.

During its November 20, 2017 meeting, City Council resolved, in part:

“That the preferred configuration and conceptual network for the Bus Rapid Transit system, as outlined in the report of the General Manager, Community Services Department dated November 6, 2017, be approved as the basis for further engagement and design.”

In November 2017, City Council received a report on the evaluation results of the Protected Bike Lane Demonstration Project and an outline of the next steps recommended for the provision of the AAA Cycling Network in the Downtown. At that meeting the following recommendations were resolved:

- 1) That a provision for protected bike lanes be included in the Downtown All Ages and Abilities cycling network;
- 2) That the Administration develop a Downtown All Ages and Abilities cycling network (including protected bike lanes) in concert with other downtown policy and planning initiatives in 2018; and
- 3) That the existing protected bike lanes on 23rd Street (from Spadina Crescent to Idylwyld Drive) and 4th Avenue (from 20th Street to 24th Street) be retained until the Downtown All Ages and Abilities cycling network is presented to City Council.

Report

Need for the Growth Plan

The Growth Plan initiatives respond to a number of imperatives facing Saskatoon:

- a) Sustained annual population growth ranging between 1.9% and 3.7% since 2007 – With a sustained growth rate of 2%, the city can be expected to grow to a population of 500,000 in approximately 30 years.
- b) Financial costs of growth – In 2009, the City Manager appointed a Future Growth Team to review the funding model and develop a strategy to meet the needs of growth. The team concluded that fundamental changes are necessary in the City’s approach to transit, transportation, and land use, to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the City.

- c) Community Vision – The Saskatoon Speaks initiative identified that changes in how the City plans for growth and moving around were necessary to align with the expectations and values of the community. The Strategic Plan 2012-2022 addresses these goals of Sustainable Growth and Moving Around through an “Integrated Growth Plan”.
- d) Growth Plan – This plan, and its supportive initiatives, identified the negative implications of continued “business-as-usual” growth including increasing traffic congestion and roadway infrastructure costs, reduced level of transit service and growth that is imbalanced and unsustainable.
- e) Targets – in order to mitigate future traffic congestion and infrastructure needs, the Growth Plan and Active Transportation Plan identify a number of targets necessary to achieve their objectives:
 - i) Mode Share
 - Transit – increase from 4% to 8% of all trips, and from 10% to 25% for peak period to the Downtown and University areas.
 - Cycling – increase from 4% to 8% of all trips and from 2% to 4% of commute trips.
 - Walking – increase from 8% to 16% of all trips, and from 5.5% to 11% of commute trips.
 - ii) Transit Service Levels – increase to between 1.8 and 2.0 service hours per capita by increasing annual service hours by between 2.5% to 3%.

Responding to the Future of Mobility

A number of trends are affecting mobility. They include sustained growth in cities (urbanization), technological innovation, changes in attitudes and behaviours, and sustainability and health imperatives. The BRT/Transit Plan and Active Transportation Plan play key roles in preparing Saskatoon for the future of mobility, where a variety of transportation modes and ownership models, ride and bike sharing, connected and autonomous vehicles, smart transit, and mobility hubs provide for integrated mobility for residents and visitors to Saskatoon.

See Attachment 1 for a report that addresses the future of mobility in a Saskatoon context: *Achieving Integrated Mobility in Saskatoon: A Review of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and Emerging Mobility Models*.

BRT and Transit Plan

The Transit Plan, which was created to address how the rest of the system would support the BRT concept, proposes a transit system designed to attract and support greater mode share by providing higher, more consistent levels of service across the transit system. It will also act as a catalyst to support corridor infill growth and development.

Saskatoon's transit system will focus on providing direct, frequent, two-way connections between locations with high demand, with BRT forming the "spine". The plan also addresses improved reliability and consistency of service throughout the day and week (including weekends). With these system configuration changes, travel times for transit users will be significantly reduced, and the system will become more appealing to potential riders.

A cost-benefit analysis based on a Multiple Account Evaluation (see Attachment 2) has been prepared to evaluate the relative benefits of the BRT system against costs associated with building and operating it. It considers the following accounts:

- a) Transportation User Benefits;
- b) Financial;
- c) Environmental;
- d) Economic Development; and
- e) Social and Community Impacts.

This analysis shows a benefit-to-cost ratio of 1.7 to 2.5. Using even the most conservative assumptions, the BRT system is a beneficial investment for the City to make. Potential funding from other levels of Government has not been factored in. Senior government support would further improve the benefit-to-cost ratio for the City's investment.

AAA Cycling Network

The Active Transportation Plan identified the need to improve cycling safety, comfort, and convenience for people of all ages and abilities. Ideally, a cycling network serves users from age 8 to age 80, offering practical route options for those who are interested in cycling but who may not be comfortable riding on busy streets with high traffic volumes and speeds.

The Active Transportation Plan recommended the Administration focus on completing a Downtown AAA Cycling Network as a key network enhancement. The Downtown was identified as one area of the city with a high level of discomfort for less experienced cyclists, but also one of the areas with the highest demand and potential for future ridership.

The implementation of a Downtown AAA Cycling Network supports the goals identified in the Active Transportation Plan for more cycling and safer cycling.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

The Growth Plan and Active Transportation Plans are the products of public and stakeholder engagement spanning several years, hundreds of activities and thousands of individual responses/interactions as well as significant interdivisional collaboration. The basis for these plans – the Community Vision and the City's Strategic Plan were further based on extensive public and stakeholder engagement, through the Saskatoon Speaks process.

Communication Plan

The Administration has developed comprehensive communication and engagement plans for the Growth Plan implementation initiatives, including the BRT/Transit Plan Implementation and Downtown AAA Cycling Network projects.

The plans identify numerous opportunities to communicate project progress with the public through the project websites, engagement page, news releases, press conferences, monthly Plan for Growth newsletters, and a range of social media and public space communication channels. Also, each component of the Growth Plan has identified stakeholder and public engagement touchpoints.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, financial, environmental, privacy or CPTED implications of considerations. No options to the recommendation have been considered.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

A report dealing with next steps and implementation is submitted as part of this report package.

Public Notice

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

Attachments

1. Achieving Integrated Mobility in Saskatoon: A Review of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and Emerging Mobility Models
2. Multiple Account Evaluation: Saskatoon BRT

Report Approval

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