

Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramps and Sidewalks – Accelerated Implementation Program

ISSUE

How can the installation of missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps and sidewalks in the City of Saskatoon (City) be accelerated?

BACKGROUND

History

At its meeting held on August 20, 2018, the Governance and Priorities Committee considered the Options to the Current Sidewalk Maintenance Service Level report and resolved, in part:

- “2. That the Administration report prior to Budget 2020 on potential timelines and associated resource requirements for establishing curb cuts at all locations where they are missing within the City and that a comprehensive funding strategy to support a variety of timeline options be included.”

At its Regular Business meeting held on March 25, 2019, City Council considered the Active Transportation Implementation Plan report and resolved, in part:

- “3. That at the time of receiving the funding plan as part of the Transportation Master Plan, the Administration provide options for accelerating phased-in funding for addressing missing sidewalks and curb ramps.”

The Active Transportation Implementation Plan provided a 5-year plan for sidewalk infrastructure expansion and identified the next steps for the Sidewalk Infill Program to conduct a detailed review of the database of missing sidewalks, prioritize the sidewalks for implementation, prepare designs for construction, and develop cost estimates.

The plan also identified an overall implementation strategy including:

- Integrating with standard practices;
- Leveraging other projects;
- Developing shelf-ready projects;
- Leveraging all funding opportunities; and
- Measuring and reporting progress.

Current Status

Transportation maintains a database of intersection corners that have missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps. The database indicates there are approximately 3,500 intersection corners (where sidewalks exist) that are missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps. This number does not include intersection corners with no sidewalk.

Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramps and Sidewalks – Accelerated Implementation Program

The Active Transportation Plan (2016) identified that 65% of streets have sidewalks on both sides of the street and an additional 10% have sidewalks on one side of the street, for a total of 75% of streets having sidewalks on at least one side.

By roadway classification, 25% of major and minor arterial streets do not have sidewalks, while 9% of major and minor collectors, and 18% of local streets do not have sidewalks. These numbers are estimates only and require validation to determine construction feasibility, particularly along corridors with drainage, right-of-way constraints, or conflicts with utilities and trees.

Missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps and sidewalks are currently addressed through the following:

- Asset Preservation program;
- Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramp program, an element of the Active Transportation Plan (Capital Project #2468) funded by the Transportation Infrastructure Expansion Reserve (TIER); and
- Sidewalk Infill program, an element of the Active Transportation Plan (Capital Project #2468) funded by TIER.

Recently, additional funding from the federal government was received through the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF).

Over 2017, 2018, and 2019, 639 pedestrian accessible ramps at a cost of \$1,525,565 will be, or have been, retrofitted.

Over the same time period, 3.5 kilometres of sidewalk will be, or has been, installed in existing developed areas of the City at a cost of \$1,152,000. TIER funded \$100,000 of this work, with the remaining being funded by PTIF.

Additional details on recent progress regarding pedestrian accessible curb ramps and sidewalk construction is provided in Appendix 1.

The intention of the roadway preservation program is to provide funding for roadways to receive a complete surface treatment on average every 20 years. This means that on average, 5% of the roadways in Saskatoon will be treated each year, with the actual totals varying from year to year depending on treatment distribution. In 2019, the program targeted 4.4% of the network, as more substantial treatments were being performed than in a typical year. The City is still on track to achieve the 5% per year average.

Favourable tender prices resulted in a positive balance of approximately \$3,000,000 in 2019. The City is pursuing adding additional roadways to the program, and in addition has modified its approach to the installation of pedestrian accessible ramps. Starting in late July, the remainder of 2019 roadways receiving treatments will have all inaccessible corners replaced with pedestrian accessible ramps. The 2020 program will be similarly

Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramps and Sidewalks – Accelerated Implementation Program

planned with this approach, and the Administration will report on the roadway and sidewalk asset preservation program in mid-2020.

Prior to this change in practice, the timeline for retrofitting all corners in the city is shown in the following table:

Item	Quantity	Current Annual Installation Rate	Years to Completion	Cost to Complete (2019 \$)
Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramps	3,500 intersection corners	75 intersection corners	47	\$11,025,000

Although the quantities will vary from year to year depending on the roadways identified for surface treatment, on average over the long term, the additional cost to replace all deficient corners adjacent to roadway projects is estimated to be \$350,000 per year. The 2019 and 2020 costs will be higher, as the locations planned for treatment have an inordinately high percentage of inaccessible corner crossings. This approach for 2019 and 2020 will result in an estimated total of \$1,800,000 being invested in retrofitting corners, which is a 450% increase over previous years.

The Administration has developed a number of options for City Council to consider.

OPTIONS – PEDESTRIAN ACCESSIBLE CURB RAMPS

Option 1

In mid-2020, the Administration will report further on the overall roadway and sidewalk asset preservation programs and in particular, the 2019 and 2020 impacts of upgrading all corners to pedestrian accessible ramps. Because it appears that the City will be just able to meet its 5% target over a 5-year period, at this time the Administration estimates that an additional \$350,000 of base funding will be required in order to continue upgrading all corners requiring retrofit. This approach would reduce the number of years to completion to approximately 17 years, from the currently projected 47 years.

OPTIONS – SIDEWALKS

Option 1 – Status quo

The Active Transportation Plan (2016) identified that \$31,000,000 in funding was required to address all possible missing sidewalks on major roads. An accurate database of missing sidewalks on local and collector streets is yet to be confirmed, therefore a comprehensive financial value of missing sidewalks is unknown.

This option proposes that the installation of sidewalks continues as is. At current funding levels of \$100,000 annually, and assuming no additional funding is received from any source, the time to complete the backlog of missing sidewalk projects is effectively never.

Option 2 – Continue to leverage funding opportunities and complete planning

Active transportation projects are attractive for provincial and federal funding due to their reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and support of mode split away from the

single-passenger vehicle. For example, the City may submit the following projects to the federal government under their Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan:

- Green Infrastructure Stream Projects, Active Transportation Plan – sidewalk expansion - \$5,000,000
- Public Transit Infrastructure Stream Projects, sidewalks and pedestrian accessible curb ramps - \$15,000,000

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:

1. That the Administration continue the recently implemented practice of replacing all missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps adjacent to complete roadway resurfacing projects;
2. That the Administration report back on the adequacy of funding levels, service levels and long-term sustainability of the roadway and sidewalk asset preservation programs in mid-2020;
3. That the Administration report back within one year with a prioritized list of projects totalling \$20,000,000 for the Sidewalk Infill program; and
4. That the City continue to leverage all funding opportunities for sidewalk and accessible pedestrian curb ramp infrastructure.

RATIONALE

The rationale supporting the pedestrian accessible curb ramps recommendations is as follows:

- Reporting back after delivering the 2019 program and finalizing pricing for the 2020 roadways and sidewalks program will allow for further analysis to determine the impacts to services levels, adequacy of funding, and long-term sustainability of the program.

The rationale supporting the recommendations regarding the sidewalks is as follows:

- The City has previously been successful in receiving funding from other levels of government.
- Within the next year, the Administration will:
 - Complete a detailed review of the database of missing sidewalks;
 - Develop a prioritization criteria and obtain City Council’s direction on the criteria used to prioritize locations;
 - Create a priority list totalling \$20,000,000 to position the City for future potential federally funded programs; and
 - Prepare preliminary construction designs and develop cost estimates.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

Additional considerations regarding pedestrian accessible curb ramps include:

1. Update current inventory and align with asset preservation program databases.
2. Revise asset preservation replacement criteria to install missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps regardless of the condition of the existing corner panel.
3. Update design standards to reflect a variety of intersection configurations.

4. Develop a pedestrian accessible curb ramp retrofit program to address intersection corners where the pedestrian accessible curb ramps are not properly placed or do not have the appropriate texturing to assist visually impaired pedestrians.

Additional considerations regarding sidewalks include:

1. A complete inventory of missing sidewalks.
2. A feasibility assessment of all potential sidewalk projects to ensure constructability.
3. Finalize prioritization criteria.
4. Functional plans and detailed cost estimates for all potential sidewalk projects.
5. Coordination with industry to ensure capacity for concrete construction (avoid competing contracts for City work).

For either pedestrian accessible curb ramps, or sidewalk infrastructure projects, the Administration will continue to consider other potential funding sources as they become available.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Information will be communicated as part of the Building Better Roads Program.

APPENDICES

1. Current Approach

Report Approval

Written by: Jay Magus, Director of Transportation
Reviewed by: Todd Grabowski, Acting Engineering Manager, Asset Preservation
Approved by: Jeff Jorgenson, City Manager