

REPORT

Engineering Services

To: Mayor Côté and Members of Council **Date:** January 10, 2022

From: Lisa Leblanc **File:** 05.1035.10
Director of Engineering Services (DOC #1978321)

Item #: 2022-12

Subject: **Uptown Active Transportation Improvements Projects - Design and Engagement Update**

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council receive the Uptown Active Transportation Improvements Engagement Summary Report and Multiple Account Evaluation memo for information.

THAT Council endorse configuration Option 2 for the Rotary Crosstown Greenway Upgrades.

THAT Council endorse routing Option 2 for the New Westminster Secondary School Cycling Connector.

THAT Council direct staff to implement an interim New Westminster Secondary School Cycling Connector along Sixth Street (routing Option 2) using high quality lower-cost materials, to test the feasibility and evaluate impacts of the routing option on transit and traffic operations.

PURPOSE

To seek Council's endorsement to move forward to conceptual design and the next round of public engagement with the recommended configuration option for Rotary Crosstown Greenway upgrades and the recommended routing option for the New Westminster Secondary School Cycling Connector, based on results of the first round of engagement as well as recommendations from the findings of a multiple account evaluation for the Uptown Active Transportation Improvements projects.

BACKGROUND

The Uptown Active Transportation Improvements include two projects that will reimagine some streets to make it easier for people of all ages and abilities to cycle, wheel, or walk comfortably and safely in Uptown. These two projects include:

- The **Rotary Crosstown Greenway (RCG) Upgrades** on Seventh Avenue, which will improve safety, comfort, and accessibility on the section of the existing RCG along Seventh Avenue, between Eighth Street and Fifth Street. These upgrades will replace the interim bike lanes installed on Seventh Avenue in 2017.
- The **New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) Cycling Connector** project, which will link the RCG on Seventh Avenue to the east entrance of the new school at Sixth Street and the new bike lane on the NWSS property, enabling students, staff and visitors to conveniently and safely cycle, wheel or walk to the school from the east and south.

These projects take direction from the vision set in the Council-approved Uptown Streetscape Vision, to create “a vibrant commercial district with a distinct identity, accessible and sustainable transportation, and inviting and engaging public spaces that are welcoming to all people.”

Additional goals include enhancing the public realm and tree canopy, seeking opportunities for green infrastructure, and reducing the impacts of motor vehicles and through traffic in this neighbourhood, while limiting the impacts to people who rely on on-street parking and loading.

EXISTING POLICY AND PRACTICE

The projects align with the City’s Master Transportation Plan goals, policies and actions, 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan, Uptown Streetscape Vision objectives, and Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action – specifically Bold Steps 2 and 7, Car-Light Community and Quality People-Centered Public Realm.

ANALYSIS

Rotary Crosstown Greenway (Fifth Street – Eighth Street)

Three configuration options for this section of the RCG were presented to the public:

- **Option 1** involves providing narrow protected bicycle lanes and retaining on-street parking and loading on both sides of the street.
- **Option 2** involves providing protected bicycle lanes as well as additional streetscape enhancements such as street trees and landscaping where possible, but would retain parking on only one side of the street. Some loading zones may be preserved on both sides of the street for improved accessibility.

- **Option 3** involves creating a shared street for cyclists and motorists, while retaining parking and loading on both sides of the street. This would be achieved by closing Seventh Avenue west of Sixth Street to motor vehicle traffic.

At its meeting on November 8, 2021, the Sustainable Transportation Task Force (STTF) suggested that staff consider an alternative Option 2 involving one-way traffic operations along Seventh Avenue between Sixth Street and Eighth Street to preserve more on-street parking and loading spaces. This option could preserve approximately 13 to 16 existing parking spaces and 2 to 3 existing loading zones, depending on finalized design details, and may provide opportunities to slightly increase parking supply relative to today. However, there are also challenges to consider in terms of limited vehicle access to adjacent residential properties and businesses, as well as potentially increased traffic circulation on parallel corridors such as Hamilton Street and Princess Street. Further exploration of this configuration option would require additional technical analysis and public engagement, adding up to 3 months to the project schedule. Additional information is provided later in this report.

NWSS Cycling Connector

Three routing options for the NWSS Cycling connector to link Seventh Avenue to the east entrance of NWSS were presented to the public:

- **Option 1** would be protected bicycle lanes along Fifth Street and a shared lane connection between the 900 and 800 block of Sixth Street. Note that two sub-options (1A: on-street with parking removal and 1B: off-street in the wide boulevards) were presented to the public for this route.
- **Option 2** would provide uni-directional protected bicycle lanes along Sixth Street (a bike lane on each side of the street in the same direction as motorized traffic), with parking/loading prohibited on one side of the street.
- **Option 3** is a hybrid route with protected bicycle lanes along Fifth Street to Eighth Avenue, along Eighth Avenue to Sixth Street, and along Sixth Street to the east entrance of NWSS. Note that the likely configuration consists of bi-directional bicycle lanes on the north side of Eighth Avenue (one bike lane serving both directions of travel on one side of the street), as well as uni-directional or bi-directional bicycle lanes along Fifth and Sixth Streets.

It should be noted that these are not the only possible configurations for each project. However, only the most probable configurations were presented to the public to keep the analysis and engagement manageable. Multiple design permutations are possible for each route and design details will still need to be evaluated.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement

The first round of engagement for the projects was launched in September 2021 with a variety of marketing and promotional materials to raise awareness for the projects and provide opportunities for the public to participate in the process. This included a project video with over 220 views, sending notification letters to over 2,800 addresses,

distributing e-newsletters to over 1,800 Be Heard New West subscribers, as well as hosting five stakeholder meetings with participants representing 10 stakeholder groups, and two pop-up events with over 220 participants.

In addition to feedback submitted via email, the online interactive map, and the Question and Answer section of the project website, over 260 online surveys were completed. It should be noted that the survey participants are self-selecting, so the results are not a statistically representative sample of the population.

For the RCG Upgrade, Option 2 (protected bike lanes with parking on one side of the street) received the most support with 46% of participants indicating it as the preferred configuration option.

For the NWSS Cycling Connector, Option 2 (via Sixth Street) received the most support with 47% of participants indicating it as the preferred routing option.

An Engagement Summary Report and graphic are provided in Attachments #1 and #2.

Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE)

The primary objectives considered in the evaluation of the configuration and routing options for the two projects include:

- Providing a crosstown cycling route for people of all ages and abilities
- Improving the walking experience and accessibility
- Enhancing the public realm and tree canopy cover
- Maintaining transit service and operations
- Accommodating emergency access
- Reducing the impacts of motor vehicles and through traffic in this neighbourhood
- Limiting impacts to people who rely on on-street parking and loading
- Seeking opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure
- Minimizing risk and consider implementation and maintenance
- Considering results of public and stakeholder engagement
- Considering other outcomes and alignment with the City's Seven Bold Steps

For the RCG Upgrades, the project team recommends configuration Option 2 for advancing to conceptual design based on the assessment. This option is preferred given the higher community support and relatively fewer implementation challenges. As noted, however, STTF suggested that one-way traffic operation be considered, subject to Council direction. Should Council wish to consider one-way traffic operation, staff would require additional time to assess the impacts; a one-way configuration on Seventh Avenue would result in approximately 1,000 vehicle trips per day being diverted to nearby streets, and consideration may need to be given for additional traffic calming to mitigate the impacts.

For the NWSS Cycling Connector, the project team recommends Option 2 - it provides the most direct route and received the highest level of support, but with the most impacts on transit, traffic, and businesses - as the preferred routing option. Staff recommend that Option 2 be implemented in the near term using high quality temporary treatments, which would provide an opportunity to observe impacts, particularly to transit, traffic, and business access. If successful, the temporary treatment could remain in place for several years. Staff recommends removing routing Option 1 from further consideration due to its poor cycling connectivity and directness. Option 3 would provide a less direct route and received the lowest level of support, but it would have fewer impacts to transit, traffic, and businesses; it remains a feasible routing option in the event that the impacts of Option 2 are determined to be too significant.

A Multiple Account Evaluation memo with more detailed analysis of the various options is provided in Attachment #3.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the RCG upgrades and the NWSS Cycling Connector are important projects for the Uptown neighbourhood, as well as the rest of the City and region, because they will provide local and regional connectivity to the BC Parkway and Central Valley Greenway. These projects will encourage active mobility and will reallocate street space, both of which align with the City's Master Transportation Plan goals, Council Strategic Priorities, and Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action. The project offers improved opportunities for residents, visitors, and employees of New Westminster to travel using sustainable modes. The design of the projects will be particularly oriented to those who might not otherwise feel comfortable walking and cycling on the existing active transportation network. Furthermore, the project seeks to increase tree canopy and implement more sustainable rainwater management techniques on the selected corridors, some of which currently lack green space. The projects also support socioeconomic equity goals by enabling more affordable and comfortable mobility options for those in need. The needs of seniors, families and people with disabilities will be carefully considered throughout the design and implementation process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A budget of \$450,000 for the engagement and design aspects of the projects, as well as \$2,500,000 for construction, is included in the 2020-2024 Financial Plan, and the draft 2021-2025 Financial Plan. The implementation of an interim NWSS Cycling Connector using high quality, but lower-cost materials in the near term (currently estimated to cost approximately \$200,000, based on recent experience with the interim Agnes Greenway) leaves the remaining budget for the RCG Upgrades, potentially enabling improved landscaping, green infrastructure, and greenway amenities to be integrated into the design. Implementation of permanent infrastructure for the NWSS Cycling Connector would be achieved through a combination of development contributions at the time of redevelopment of adjacent properties, and capital investment through future budget allocations.

The RCG Upgrades have confirmed funding from TransLink in the amount of \$590,750, and an application for additional cost-sharing has been submitted for the 2022 funding year for implementation of the proposed infrastructure. Grants from other sources are also being considered.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

In the planning for this project and the development of an initial concept for scoping and grant applications, staff from Engineering have convened a project steering committee comprising representatives from several departments and divisions, including Climate Action, Planning & Development, Parks & Recreation, Finance, Engineering Operations, and the CAO's office (Public Engagement, Communications).

OPTIONS

The following options have been presented for the Council's consideration:

1. **THAT** Council receive the Uptown Active Transportation Improvements Engagement Summary Report and Multiple Account Evaluation memo for information.
2. **THAT** Council endorse configuration Option 2 for the Rotary Crosstown Greenway Upgrades.
3. **THAT** Council direct staff to undertake further technical analysis and public engagement on converting Seventh Avenue to one-way between Sixth Street and Eighth Street and report back to Council.
4. **THAT** Council endorse routing Option 2 for the New Westminster Secondary School Cycling Connector
5. **THAT** Council direct staff to implement an interim New Westminster Secondary School Cycling Connector along Sixth Street (routing Option 2) using high quality lower-cost materials to test the feasibility and evaluate impacts of the routing option on transit and traffic operations.
6. **THAT** Council provide alternate direction to staff.

Staff recommend options 1, 2, 4, and 5.

CONCLUSION

The Rotary Crosstown Greenway Upgrades and New Westminster Cycling Connector will provide New Westminster residents and visitors with all-ages-and-abilities cycling facilities, which will help the City achieve its transportation and climate action goals.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1 – Uptown Active Transportation Improvements Round 1 Engagement
Summary Report

Attachment #2 – Uptown Active Transportation Improvements Round 1 Engagement
Summary Graphic

Attachment #3 – Uptown Multiple Account Evaluation Memo

APPROVALS

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