

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE,
HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM, 1st FLOOR, SERVICE AND RESOURCE CENTRE, ON
THURSDAY, 2013-MAR-07, COMMENCING AT 2:45 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor George Anderson, Chair
Councillor Ted Greves
Councillor Bill McKay
Jim Routledge
David Grey
Michele Patterson
Brian Patterson, Urban Systems
John Steiner, Urban Systems

Absent: Councillor Bill Bestwick
David Murchie

Staff: Susan Clift
Bob Prokopenko
Andrew Tucker
Rod Davidson
Gordon Foy
Amir Freund
Jodi Wilson

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 2:55 p.m.

2. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR:

a) BC Coastal Ferries Consultation and Engagement Response Letter

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure will take our comments into consideration.

The Chair expressed his thanks to staff for drafting the letter and to the Transportation Advisory Committee for their support.

3. INTRODUCTIONS:

Gordon Foy introduced guests, Brian Patterson and John Steiner from Urban Systems. Brian and John attended the meeting to present the Issues and Opportunities Report for the Transportation Master Plan.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND LATE ITEMS:

It was moved and seconded that the agenda be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

a) *It was moved and seconded that the 2013-Jan-23 minutes be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.*

6. DELEGATIONS:

No delegations were present.

7. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS:

a) Transportation Master Plan – Issues and Opportunities Report and Presentation – Brian Patterson / John Steiner from Urban Systems

Study Update:

For each section of the presentation agenda, Urban Systems presented an assessment of issues and opportunities and then lead that into a discussion for the future possibilities for each of the modes as well as gathering information and ideas about our vision and goals for the City of Nanaimo and the Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan (TMP).

We have had quite an extensive consultation and communication program throughout the study, involving Council, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) as well as a Technical Working group, consisting of staff and external agencies. Open Houses, Stakeholder Meeting as well as Social Media have all been used to gather input throughout the process.

Key initiatives being focused on within the City are the Community Sustainability Action Plan, Strategic Plan, Community Energy & Emissions Study, planNanaimo – Official Community Plan, Downtown Plan and Neighbourhood Plans. These studies and plans are what help to frame the direction for the TMP.

TAC is also working with External Initiatives such as, Transit Future Plan, BC Transit 2030 Strategic Plan, Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan and the Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Strategy.

We are here to discuss the review of the Transportation System, whether it be walking, cycling, transit, major roads, local streets or external connections. We want to identify existing and future challenges.

The City is projected to grow almost 40,000 people by 2041. The City's projected growth is a little slower than that of the Region; the surrounding area is expected to grow by approximately 80,000 people.

A lot of the growth in the past decade has been concentrated in the North West of the City with a third of all growth being in Dover, Rutherford and Long Lake. Future projections show growth in the North, South and West. This will increase population from about 900 people per sq. km to about 1400 people per sq. km in 2041.

Nanaimo is facing an aging population. Seniors are the fastest growing population over the next 30 years. The numbers forecasted are double from about 15,000 today to about 35,000 in 2041. This is important as seniors have different travel patterns than other segments of the population.

Discussion:

What are your comments on land use context?

Councillor McKay: If the OCP allows growth in many places, the town centre concept may fail to densify the downtown core. It is not clear how to achieve densification.

If the OCP just had high density in the downtown core, it would have prevented densification in other areas of the City. In the 2008 OCP, the choice was made to include corridors, so if we are going to allow density to occur, let's allow it along major roads and transit routes. The plan was kept general to allow for more opportunities for places where we can get increased density. The downtown model would have committed everything to be located in the downtown.

The whole idea of the town centre is to create high density near town centres so people don't have to travel distances to get to what they need and want.

There is a perception in our community that the only way to get around Nanaimo is by vehicle. We would like to see Nanaimo become a walkable community. Have successful connectivity that is easily integrated into our transportation system. Residential density is important in the downtown which will encourage more activity and reason for businesses to extend hours of operation.

Cycling in Nanaimo is perceived as not always being safe due to lack of infrastructure.

David Grey feels that he can get around quite easily in Nanaimo on his cycle. With a relatively small investment, you'll get a huge return in having people consider cycling as their transportation in Nanaimo. We've underinvested in cycling and walking infrastructure.

- Approximately 70% of walking trips are less than 1 km in distance
- Approximately 70% of cycling trips are less than 3 km in distance
- There are still a significant number of driving trips within the 0 – 3 km range that many of them could be easily shifted to walking or cycling

Part 1 – Walking, Cycling, Transit:

Walking

About 40% of City streets have sidewalks on one or more sides; while the majority of major roads have a sidewalk on at least one side, only 25% of local streets have sidewalks.

The Plan will assist us in determining where we need sidewalks and where the gaps are. We would like to increase pedestrian network through improved shoulders, sidewalks or pathways and provide facilities strategically throughout the City.

Creating a more pedestrian friendly environment can make walking more attractive; benches, plantings, curb extensions and grass boulevards provide separation between cars and pedestrians creating a more comfortable environment to walk.

Pedestrians are most concerned about crossings and accessibility such as curb letdowns and pedestrian crossing timers and reducing crossing distances.

Work with partners to communicate and promote strategies to encourage people to walk.

Discussion:

Does the City of Nanaimo have a policy for increasing the amount of sidewalks or do new developments have to have sidewalks?

All new roads have sidewalks on at least one side, except for areas that are zoned industrial. Beyond new development, the City currently builds between 800 – 1000 metres of sidewalk per year. The City spends approximately 1/3 of our pedestrian budget on crossing improvements.

Susan Clift met with Access Nanaimo and they will be providing her with a list of locations where they are hoping to see improvements. We will be taking these requests into consideration for this year.

It is important to have more tree planting which will create a more walkable environment. North Vancouver has no sidewalks on their local roads. Although they have a lot of trees, they are planted on private property, or residents have taken it upon themselves to plant the boulevard. The space was organized in a more suburban way. You will have to base your decision on the location and what would best suit the density of the area. Some of the older areas in Victoria are beautifully planted and a pleasure to walk. The trees are planted by the municipality which follows more of an urban model.

Parking adjacent to sidewalks on corridors. The parking can provide a buffer for the pedestrian on the sidewalk from what can be a high volume traffic artery. Do we need to bring in time limits for parking on Bowen Road allowing parking during the day, but not in the evening?

Before we vary development related parking requirements, we need to make sure that alternative modes of transportation are available.

Cycling

Nanaimo has about 150 km of designated routes which includes about 50 km of off-street pathways, 60 km of paved shoulders along highways, less than 1 km of bicycle lanes and about 40 km of on-street shared routes.

Where would you want to invest in cycling facilities?

A GIS tool “Looking at Cycling Potential” that looks at different characteristics throughout the City. It shows areas where there are good road network connections, dense road network, destinations and relatively flat routes.

A lot of cities are now moving to cycling lanes, cycle-tracks, green painted bike lanes or multi-use pathways. Santa Monica has a full service Bike Centre in the centre of the city that includes bike storage, maintenance facilities and a coffee shop. Some cities are using interactive route planning along with many other ideas.

Discussion:

It is expressed by the cycling community that it is unsafe to cycle in Nanaimo. A solution for that, where it is warranted, on high volume and high speed roads, is to put in separated bike lanes, which will also address the issue of connectivity and provide you with access to all roads and areas. The payback for this infrastructure would be considerable, along with promotional activities.

To have the ability to navigate yourself across the city would encourage cyclists to ride more frequently. If infrastructures, such as bicycle racks and other end-of-trip facilities were frequently available in common locations that would also encourage cycling.

Is there any analysis being done about the number of people that would be interested in cycling on Newcastle? Gord will look into this further and report back to the committee.

The E&N Rail Development Group supports the possible extension of the trail and connection with segments of Lantzville and to have it built out to the south City boundary. This would be beneficial for recreational, commuting and tourism cycling. This trail is very well used.

Transit

Transit service has been noted as an issue. The transit system is broken primarily into three groups:

- Local Transit Service – which is most of the routes within the City
- Regional Connections – outside of the City
- HandiDart – provides accessible transit services to people who can't use the conventional transit system.

Just over 50% of the bus stops in the City of Nanaimo are accessible for wheelchairs.

The City of Nanaimo is responsible for on-street transit infrastructure, except at the RDN exchanges which are maintained by the RDN.

Young adults under 30 are the majority of transit riders in the City of Nanaimo. The service levels being offered are likely the reason for this.

Some communities promote their transit systems by branding. Kelowna has Rapid Bus which was recently implemented and travels between the University and the downtown and West Kelowna, travelling on dedicated bus lanes.

Discussion:

Why don't we have bus pull-outs in Nanaimo?

Transit pull-outs are expensive, but we do consider them in long single lane corridors that don't provide an opportunity to pass, such as Hammond Bay and Departure Bay Roads. If there could be a pull-out every 3rd or 4th stop, this would provide relief to the traffic and allow them to get past the bus. A lot of communities are now removing pull-outs to gain the additional space for sidewalks and treatments. In most situations, the goal is to try and keep the buses in the traffic and to keep them moving quickly. Pull-outs take up more time in service.

RDN is developing their Transit Future Plan and the City of Nanaimo has an opportunity to provide formal input into the process. In order for the transit system to work successfully, it is in everyone's best interest to work together.

VIU Student Union would like to see more identifiable features at bus stop locations and recommend better lighting. Student Union has also addressed that the bus stops are further apart than they were a few years ago and would like to know if they could be moved closer together again.

Part 1 – Discussion:

Major Streets

Congestion has been observed, mostly in the north end of the City. Many intersections on the Island Highway and the Parkway are where the pm peak congestion is concentrated as well as with the BC Ferries.

Once the model is complete, could we remove the Departure Bay Ferry Terminal data to observe what traffic is like without the ferry traffic at that location and reassign it to Duke Point?

Yes, it would be possible to remove Departure Bay Ferry Terminal and reassign trips to Duke Point.

There are quite a few collisions at Northfield Road at Boundary Avenue and Northfield Road at Bowen Road. Northfield Road area is the busiest part of the city with approximately 115,000 trips heading north/south on the Island Highway per day at Northfield Road. Improvements have been previously identified as priorities at these intersections and are under development.

Interchanges on the Parkway? An interchange runs about \$30 million and we would require 5 of them. If funding from senior government was available at approximately 2/3 of the total \$150 million cost, the City is still looking at approximately \$50 million over 20 years.

Some communities are developing "Complete Streets Guidelines" which will provide the guidance necessary to ensure streets are developed to be suitable to all users. Estevan is a potential candidate for reducing the current four lane cross section to two lanes; it would be relatively easy to add bike lanes and put a left turn bay in.

Neighbourhood Streets

Some concerns that were expressed by residents regarding local streets are:

- Shortcutting through neighbourhoods
- Truck traffic using local roads
- Speeding

We could look at street design and neighbourhood design to remedy these issues.

Parking

How do our parking rates compare to other municipalities?

Our rates are very low in comparison to other communities. The creation of parking spaces will cost \$40,000 - \$50,000 to install. Some communities take the revenue they make from parking and put it towards other modes of transportation.

External Connections

Most external connections are under the jurisdiction of other agencies.

Ferry – schedules, limited service, cost

Transit – connections between airport and downtown, integrated transit with ferry schedule, regional transit connections

Rail – connections on the E&N corridor throughout the island

How can private carriers compete with public transportation which is heavily subsidized?

Suggest to RDN that the City's general position would be to focus on routes within urban areas that have the best potential for ridership.

Part 3 Discussion:

Vision

If the City densifies, we will drive less kilometres.

Currently, 88% of trips are made by vehicles, 12% are by walking, cycling or transit.

What are our targets over the next 20 – 30 years?

Urban Systems will do further research and bring back some targets and how and where to set them.

8. NEW BUSINESS:

It was moved and seconded that Rod Davidson, Manager of Parking Services, provide an update at the next Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting.

9. CORRESPONDENCE:

No correspondence submitted.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

a) Transportation Advisory Committee – Terms of Reference Review

It was agreed that the Transportation Advisory Committee – Terms of Reference would be discussed at a future Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting.

11. NEXT MEETING:

To be determined.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 5:15 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

CHAIR