

DATE OF MEETING JULY 20, 2020

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SUBJECT TRANSPORTATION SEMI-ANNUAL UPDATE

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide Council with the inaugural semi-annual update on Engineering's Transportation Section's goals, projects, and accomplishments in the first half of 2020.

BACKGROUND

The Engineering Department's Transportation Section oversees all activities within the Road Network. This ranges from facilitating vision documents such as the Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan, through individual intersection reviews and traffic calming projects, to changes in on-street parking regulations. This section facilitates education, advocacy, and encouragement programs to give residents the tools to move through our community safely and efficiently. Staff entered 2020 with ambition and energy looking forward to a busy and productive year, and by March, it was clear that plans would be changing. It is hoped that this report gives Council and the public an understanding of transportation planning work in 2020.

DISCUSSION

The Transportation Section balances demands of day to day issues with the need to progress specific projects, while keeping long range plans current. One of the biggest challenges for both short term and long range tasks, is managing expectations. Staff seek ways to make the transportation system safer and more efficient, within resources available.

Film and Special Event Permits

In a typical year, the Section processes 15 to 20 filming or Special Event permits and hosts or facilitates 4 to 6 promotion and education sessions. The number of these events increases from one year to the next. Early in 2020, it appeared the year was going to be busier than normal with events like Tribal Journeys and a strong film economy. As a result of the COVID Pandemic, many of these events have been cancelled and as of June, Staff have only received 5 permit applications. There may be an opportunity for some of these events to take place later in the year, but this is unknown at this time.

Traffic Issues

On the technical side of things, Staff typically receive over 300 requests from the public for traffic reviews (speeding, pedestrian safety, parking, congestion, crosswalks) which, in concert with our annual data collection programs results in 100 to 125 traffic counts each year. Noting that the COVID has altered traffic patterns, Staff have made the decision to limit traffic data

collection until there is a higher degree of confidence that the road network has adapted to a new state of normal. There is a high degree of uncertainty due to the Pandemic. It is likely that there will be several test counts to see how people are adapting. Attachment A includes a summary of traffic data at three locations across the City, as well as data from the E&N Trail just north of Northfield Road. Not surprisingly, traffic volumes are down 15% to 35% depending on the location, and interestingly, walking and biking on the E&N is up almost 15%.

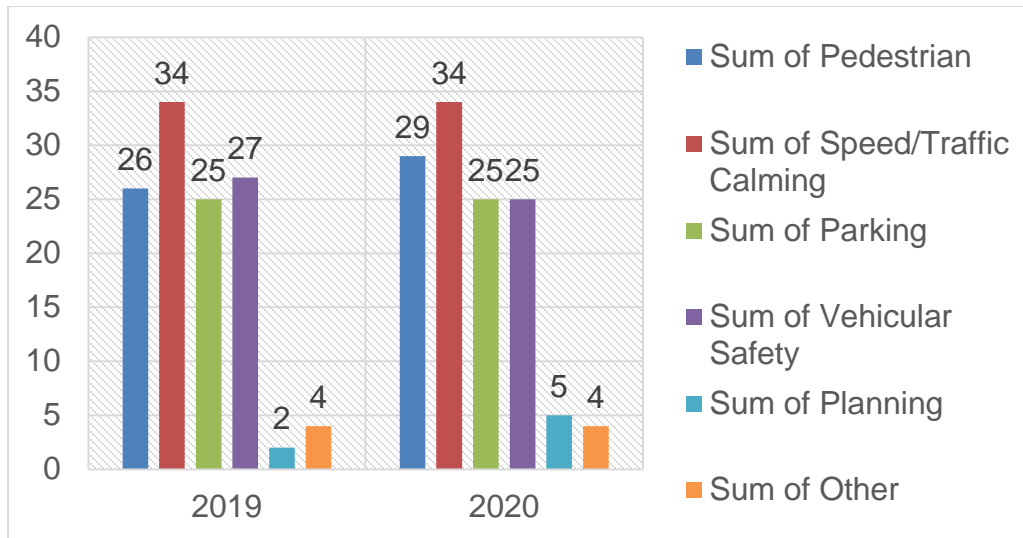


Figure 1 Year to Date Comparison of Traffic Concerns

Development Referrals

The Section supports other departments or agencies. As land availability diminishes and road designs become more complex, review requires a subject matter expert to ensure successful integration. Figure 1 is a summary of development review tasks for the first 6 months of 2019, compared to 2020. Review time varies with complexity and comprehensiveness of the development from dozens to hundreds of hours of Staff time.

| Type | January to June 2019 | January to June 2020 |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Development Permit | 13 | 19 |
| Subdivision | 12 | 7 |
| Rezoning | 10 | 8 |
| Other (OCP, Land disposal, etc) | 2 | 8 |
| Total | 37 | 42 |

Figure 2 Year to Date Comparison of Development Reviews

Entering 2020, the Section had a number of its own projects that were being wrapped up, and several more that were just getting started. The major projects are summarized below.

Traffic Signal Upgrades

In 2018, the Section coordinated the traffic signals on Bowen Road, often referred to as a “green wave”. This makes travel more efficient and sustainable, and contributes to substantial safety enhancements. ICBC contributed almost 50% funding for the planning and implementation of the green wave. Staff were able to successfully implement most of the original plan, despite out of date traffic controllers. A summary of outcomes and societal benefits, totalling over \$2 Million are outlined in Attachment B.

Staff are using the lessons learned on the Bowen Road green wave to implement a Centralized Traffic Signal Management System. This is a system which enables planning, monitoring, and maintenance of the 53 signals in the City. Benefits of the centralized traffic signal management system include:

- Greater responsiveness to the public.
- Reduced time and cost for infield investigations.
- Improved asset management of signal infrastructure.
- Greater accuracy for detecting and counting pedestrians, cyclists, cars, and trucks.
- Greater flexibility for bus and emergency vehicle prioritization.
- Better signal coordination (similar to Bowen).

Transit Planning

Both the City and the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) planned to undertake studies relating to Transit in 2020. The RDN, a system review, and the City, a plan to better integrate and support Rapid (Route 50) and Frequent (Route 40) Transit Routes. In partnership, a procurement process started in early March, but was terminated as COVID took hold. As a result of the limited ability for Staff to engage with the community, these projects have been postponed. RDN and City Staff are still considering ways to move forward with portions of this work, but have yet to formulate a plan.

Active Transportation Plan

In concert with the City’s Official Community Plan update, the Section is preparing an Active Transportation Plan. This will assess the progress that has been made in Active Transportation since the adoption of the Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan, and engage the public to understand what has worked, what hasn’t, and where resources could be focused in the future. The key outputs of this plan will be strategies for build-out of walking and biking infrastructure, and promotion and education strategies to support our community until the infrastructure is in place. The data gathering has begun, and Staff are working within the **REIMAGINE NANAIMO** team to embark on the preliminary stages of public engagement.

Traffic Calming

In the span of 10 years between 2007 and 2017, there were 5 traffic calming projects. Between 2017 and 2019 there were 2, and in the first 6 months of 2020 there have been 3 with several more in the queue to be processed by Staff. Council and residents are rightly concerned by driver behaviour in Nanaimo and want swift action. Staff process each request as they come in

using our guidelines. The success of Traffic Calming is contingent on the thoroughness of the work leading to action. This includes a fulsome engagement process that ensures those affected feel that they had a say in the matter. This approach can be frustrating to some members of the community, but a rushed or poorly thought-out plan can be even more problematic. A typical local traffic calming plan will take 6-10 months to achieve implementation, while a neighbourhood wide plan could easily take upwards of a year. Staff are at the public engagement stage of the traffic calming projects for Lost Lake Road and Bay Street, and Departure Bay Road is in the process of being implemented.

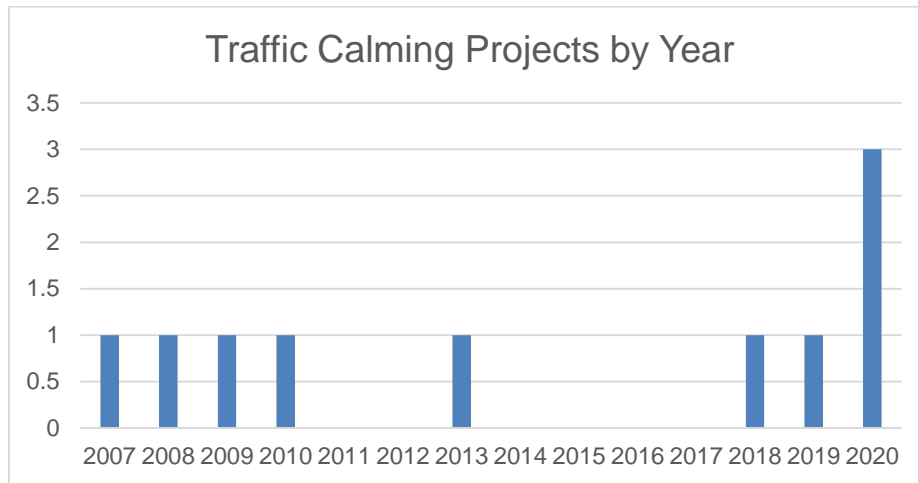


Figure 3 Annual Traffic Calming Projects

Cranberry Connector/Cinnabar Valley Access

For almost 20 years, the plan to address congestion on the Trans Canada Highway between Cedar Road and Maki Road has been the “Cranberry Connector”. In recent years, the pressure has continued to build. In 2019, Staff reviewed previous work and collected fresh traffic data to ensure a thorough understanding of the problem. Staff, in collaboration with MOTI, are developing cost effective short, medium, and long term solutions to alleviate congestion. The short term, small scale solution would only manage current demand. Future growth from development needs to be managed by larger scale, medium to long term solutions.

Manual of Engineering Standards and Specifications Update

The Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan guided an update to Design Standards to provide more inclusive mobility, often referred to as Complete Streets. This standard update directly responds to community and Council vision. The benefits of Complete Streets include:

- Support for sustainable, active transportation.
- Enhanced road safety, through reduced speeds and separation of travel modes.
- More aesthetic streets which include environmentally beneficial green space and opportunities for place making.

Staff and the consultant developed a new standard and have undertaken an extensive engagement process with residents and members of the development community. The Complete Street Standards are incorporated into the proposed Manual of Engineering Standards and Specifications, part of Subdivision Control Bylaw 1989 No. 3260. The proposed

design standards have received the **2020 Transportation Association of Canada Sustainable Urban Transportation Award**. This success is directly related to Council's commitment to transportation through the roll-out of the Metral Drive Complete Street Corridor Upgrade. Metral Drive was successful in receiving the Province's highest dollar value contribution through the Active Transportation Grant process.

Traffic and Highway Bylaw (5000) Update

The ongoing changes and evolution to transportation triggered a need for Staff to review the City's existing Traffic and Highway Bylaw. This process is exploring opportunities to update regulations as they relate to active transportation, new or emerging technology such as ride hailing, EV and AV vehicles, as well as micro mobility. This discussion relates directly to **REIMAGINE NANAIMO** and the Active Transportation Plan, and so it is envisioned that the update will be finalised with these other projects.

Active School Travel Guide

In the fall of 2019, City and School District staff began creating an Active School Travel Guide. This will provide direction and guidance for Staff and other participating agencies to prepare and maintain school-specific Active School Travel plans. We expect to publish the guide this fall. We can then engage schools that wish to have an Active School Travel Plan. Prior to the onset of COVID, Chase River Elementary, Uplands Elementary, and Pleasant Valley Elementary had all expressed interest in participating.

CONCLUSION

The Section adapted to the disruption caused by COVID and progressed much of the work that was envisioned for 2020. Staff have endeavoured to keep pace with the changing needs of the community throughout COVID and are continuing to explore opportunities to enhance the transportation system. It is expected that the Section will be fully staffed by early September, when the last remaining vacant position will be filled.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Transportation Section proposes to update Council and the public semi-annually.
- The COVID Pandemic disrupted some elements of the Engineering Department Transportation Section's work plan for 2020. However, the section is successfully adapting and moving forward.
- Interest in traffic calming has reached unprecedented levels, and Staff are systematically processing each request as outlined in the Guideline.
- The City's Draft Complete Streets Guidelines have received the 2020 Transportation Association of Canada Sustainable Urban Transportation Award.
- The Metral Drive Complete Street Project has received the highest level of contribution offered through the Provincial Active Transportation Grant Program.
- The Bowen Corridor Signal Coordination project achieved estimated annual societal savings of over \$2 million.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Summary of Traffic Data

Attachment B – Summary of Benefits from Bowen Road Coordination |

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