

DATE OF MEETING    SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

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**SUBJECT            WAKESIAH AVENUE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report:**

To provide briefing notes on the plans for Wakesiah Avenue Corridor Improvement Project.

## **BACKGROUND**

At the May 11<sup>th</sup> Special Council meeting, Council passed a motion requesting Staff to prepare briefing material on specific capital projects which could be considered for future potential stimulus opportunities. One of the projects that was identified was the Wakesiah Avenue Corridor Improvement Project.

### **PLANNING AND LAND USE**

The Wakesiah Corridor is one of three north south connections through the University Mobility Hub and the Harewood Neighbourhood; Bruce Avenue and Howard Avenue are the other two. Between Nanaimo Lakes Road and Third Street, the west side of the corridor is owned by public entities, (Nanaimo School District No. 68, Vancouver Island University, and the Federal Government/First Nation). At this time, these all represent an institutional type of land use. There is an expectation that each of these will develop or re-develop over time, however, a schedule has not yet been established, so it is unlikely that there will be any activity in the near future.

The remaining land along the corridor is privately owned and is predominantly residential with roughly 60% being single family and 40% being multi-family. With the exception of the institutional land, the remainder of the corridor has been subdivided and is either developed or in the process of being developed. Some land assembly has taken place, but this has been on a small scale and has targeted student only housing. With the impacts from the current pandemic still unclear, it is difficult to say if this type of development activity will continue.

### **CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL AND UPGRADE**

Through asset management and strategic infrastructure planning, the Wakesiah Corridor has been identified for a series of renewals or upgrades including:

- Watermain replacement between First Street and Third Street,
- Storm sewer replacement between Third Street and Fifth Street,

- Repaving between Second Street and Fourth Street,
- Cycling upgrades between First Street to Sixth Street (reallocation of road space to create bike lanes),
- Sidewalk on the west side between Second Street and Fifth Street, and
- Minor Intersection upgrades all the signalized intersections along the corridor.

Transportation upgrades are currently planned to include complete street elements, however, it will not be a comprehensive road upgrade project. The capital upgrades would take place primarily on the west side of the road project enhancing mobility and completing required asset management upgrades. Further, the project would develop a vision for Wakesiah Avenue so that future land development would complete frontage upgrades on the east side of the road in conjunction with this comprehensive vision.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **CURRENT PLAN**

Project planning and design began in 2018 with construction anticipated to start in 2020. This process identified required utility renewal and ensured that the transportation upgrades met the community's needs. With guidance from the Official Community Plan, the Transportation Master Plan, the Harewood Neighbourhood Plan, and the Vancouver Island University Campus Master Plan, Staff prepared preliminary road designs. This design was presented to the Neighbourhood Association, VIU, SD 68, and other stakeholder groups from the area to gather feedback. The engagement process concluded in late 2019 with the adoption of a conceptual corridor design which features improved transit features, along with safe and enhanced cycling and pedestrian facilities on every block, as well as landscaped medians, boulevards and swales, and setback multi-use pathways embedded along the institutional frontage of Vancouver Island University and School District No. 68.

With the adoption of conceptual corridor design, cost estimates were developed and the project cost is expected to be approximately 10 million dollars. With rising demand on general revenue, it became apparent that all of the transportation project priorities would not be able to be completed in the short term. When the projects were reviewed in context of their community wide benefit, projects such Metral Drive were prioritized, and despite being an important and beneficial project to the neighbourhood, the Wakesiah project was delayed from 2020 to 2024.

The overall project is estimated to be about \$10 million and it is currently divided into 3 phases, with construction planned in 2024, 2025 and 2026:

- Phase 1 has a budget of \$2.9 million in 2024 and includes water and storm sewer replacements.
- Phase 2 has a budget of \$3.3 million in 2025 and includes surface works from Sixth Street to Fifth Street and First Street to Third Street.
- Phase 3 has a budget of \$3.6 million in 2026 and includes surface works from Third Street to Fifth Street.

Further detail on this project can be found at [Wakesiah Map Boards](#).

## POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Since the onset of the pandemic, there has been speculation that senior government would offer grant or stimulus funding for public projects such as this. These opportunities are rolling out slowly and the information is being shared as to what the project selection criteria could include. At this point, it appears that the focus is on active transportation or infrastructure upgrades that support sustainability. It is also clear that in order for a project to be considered eligible, it must be able to be completed within 1 or 2 years, depending on the funding program. To meet that deadline, an aggressive schedule would be needed, increasing the project risk and possibly the project cost. Also, the underground infrastructure renewal portion of this project does not appear to be eligible for grant funding, so significant funding would need to be allocated to the underground infrastructure. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the conceptual corridor plan that was prepared for this project was done so prior to the creation of the new road design standards. In order for this project to continue moving forward, the conceptual road design would need to be updated to reflect this change. Applying the new road standards is not expected to have a major impact on the costs, however, the update will take time to complete.

## CONCLUSION

The Wakesiah Avenue Corridor Improvement Project is important because it will enhance mobility within the Harewood and University area and will serve to guide future mobility upgrades along the corridor. Unfortunately, it appears that because of its overall size and complexity, it may not be a good candidate for any of the grants that have been shared by senior government so far. Should there be an appetite to discuss the timing of this project, it should be done so as part of the overall budgeting process.

### SUMMARY POINTS

- The Wakesiah Avenue Corridor Improvements Project will enhance mobility in the neighbourhood.
- The Project is estimated to be approximately \$9.8 million.
- The Project is planned to be constructed over 3 phases in 2024, 2025 and 2026.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Wakesiah Avenue Project Location

### **Submitted by:**

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### **Concurrence by:**

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