

DATE OF MEETING SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

AUTHORED BY JAMIE ROSE, MANAGER, TRANSPORTATION

SUBJECT **TERMINAL AVENUE TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY CAPITAL UPGRADES**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide briefing notes on the plans for road and utility upgrades to Terminal Avenue and the Trans-Canada Highway.

BACKGROUND

At the May 11th Special Council meeting, Council passed a motion requesting Staff prepare briefing materials on specific capital projects which could be considered for future potential stimulus opportunities. One of the projects is the Terminal Avenue/Trans-Canada Highway (TCH) Corridor Upgrade. The details of the project are evolving with the Downtown Mobility Hub Project. This report provides an update on the vision and summarizes potential opportunities.

The corridor between Esplanade and Stewart Avenue has long been identified as a section that would benefit from urbanizing treatments, such as narrower travel lanes, wider pedestrian areas, and landscaping where possible. Between 2015 and 2016, a grassroots movement produced the Terminal-Nicol Re-Imagined visioning document, lead by professionals within the Nanaimo Business and Development Community, and included both Provincial MoTI and City Transportation staff. The final report highlighted a number of opportunities which could enhance the “first impression” of Nanaimo, unify the east and west sides of downtown, and support future growth and development along the corridor.

It was clear that the cost of implementing this vision would be significant and would require careful consideration and planning. A project of this size was seen as difficult to move forward in its entirety without third party contributions, such as senior government grants or adjacent land development. In anticipation of future action, both City and MoTI undertook a full evaluation of the condition of the existing assets: water, sewer, storm, and road.

This assessment revealed that all assets were in need of renewal, regardless of mobility or aesthetic enhancements. Following a significant watermain break in 2017, the City expedited the replacement of the watermain between Commercial Street and Cliff Street in 2018, and have plans to renew the remaining utilities and pavement in the near future. Noting the size, cost, and impact of construction in this area, Staff plan to include new curb in a location that supports the vision of the corridor. The final details have not been worked out, but the

Downtown Mobility Hub Project, coupled with the latest updates to Provincial and City road design standards, will help define the end product. |

DISCUSSION

While attention is being paid to the section between Esplanade and Stewart Avenue, other parts of the corridor are also in need of renewal. This provides a practical opportunity to enhance the overall look and feel in an effort to support the City's All Ages and Abilities (AAA) mobility priorities. This is an inter jurisdictional corridor; both MoTI and City staff will use the latest design standards, and will explore opportunities for collaboration on third party funding sources, such as grants or development contributions.

CURRENT PLAN

The phases outlined below are illustrated on Attachment A.

Phase 1 – Esplanade to Comox Road:

The TCH between Esplanade and Comox Road is identified as the highest priority; both the underground and surface infrastructure has reached the end of life and is failing. The current plan is to renew underground and surface utilities while setting the stage for future land development to complete the remainder of frontage works. Work to be included in this phase are curbs, medians, widened sidewalks, and enhanced pedestrian crossings, where possible. This is a balanced approach which enables the road authorities to take a guiding hand in how the corridor evolves to support the desired land use and mobility in the area. Staff are working towards including approximately \$4 million for this section in the next Financial Plan; however, the exact year will depend on funding availability.

Phase 2 – St. George Street to Brechin Road:

Terminal Avenue between St. George Street and Brechin Road has also reached the end of life for infrastructure and is identified as the next highest priority for major renewal and upgrade. This is a key transition from Highway to Urban Arterial Road. As such, it will include significant urban treatments to reduce speed, enhance safety, and increase comfort for all users. Staff are monitoring this section and will include approximately \$3 million for it in a future Financial Plan as funding availability allows.

Phase 3 – Esplanade to South Street:

The TCH between Esplanade and South Street underwent a major upgrade in the early 1990's which renewed utilities, the road surface, new sidewalks, and street trees. The utilities in this section are not approaching end of life, and there are continuous sidewalks on both sides with low volume local roads paralleling the corridor which can be used as cycling corridors. Upgrades to this section are not within the current Financial Plan.

Phase 4 Stewart Avenue to St. George Street:

Terminal Avenue between Stewart Avenue and St. George Street saw the utilities and road surface renewed in 2018. This section has continuous sidewalks on both sides, but is constrained by land ownership, meaning that any additional mobility upgrades will need to be through future land development or significant land acquisition. Additional upgrades to this section are not within the current Financial Plan.

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Through the Downtown Mobility Hub Project, it is clear that the TCH is a high priority for the community. Upgrading would serve to unite the east and west sides of downtown. The community clearly expressed concern for the junction of Comox Road, Terminal Avenue, the Pearson Bridge, and Stewart Avenue. Public feedback indicates that this is viewed as a barrier for biking from Downtown, to areas north of the Millstone River, and that the sidewalks are uncomfortable for pedestrians.

Projects to upgrade the Pearson Bridge and this group of intersections, are in the current Development Cost Charge Bylaw, however, they are multi-million dollar projects which require 40% funding from City General Revenue. This makes them cost prohibitive at current funding levels with other priorities, and they have not been included in the current Financial Plan. For upgrades to this section to be viable, partnership or grant funding would be necessary.

In light of this, Staff developed an interim concept plan focused on the walking and biking connection through this area. The concept re-purposes the existing northbound TCH curb lane from a merge lane into a bi-directional cycle track. This adds an all ages and abilities cycling facility, and increases separation between cars and walkers. It eliminates the confusing merge lane configuration that exists today. This plan does not address all of the goals identified within the DCC Project Summary, however, it does address the highest concerns raised through the Downtown Mobility Hub Project, at a significantly reduced cost. Staff hope to incorporate this work into the 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan; if funding levels can support it.

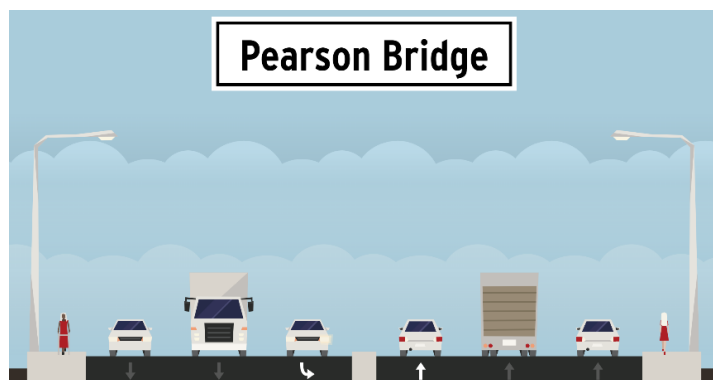


Figure 1 CURRENT LANE CONFIGURATION

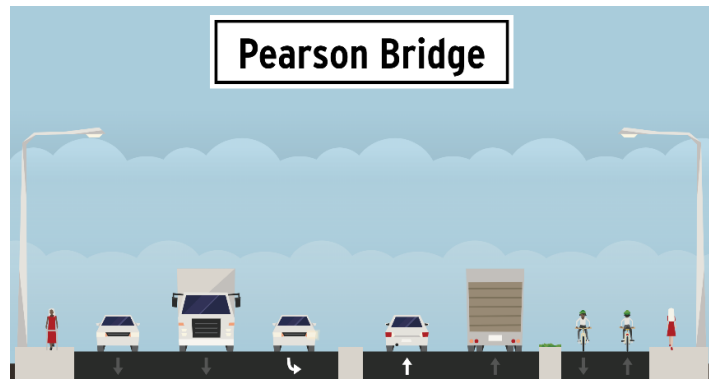


Figure 2 PROPOSED LANE CONFIGURATION |

CONCLUSION

There is a need to upgrade sections of Terminal Avenue and the Trans Canada Highway, including the utilities, in the near future. This work will be included in a future Financial Plan as funding levels allow, the exact year is still to be determined. In an effort to create a more complete and connected mobility network, Staff are continuing to expand and refine project plans to better meet the desires of the community, and Council's goals of improved livability. These types of projects are funded from general taxation. To lessen this burden Staff will continue to seek partnership and grant opportunities to assist with funding all projects. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Trans-Canada Highway between Esplanade and Comox Road is in need of significant utility and transportation upgrades in 2022.
- Timing of this work is still to be determined.
- Terminal Avenue between St. George Street and Brechin Road is in need of major transportation upgrades. Timing to be determined.
- The section of the Trans-Canada Highway between Comox Road and Stewart Avenue, including the Pearson Bridge, has been identified as an area of concern by the community, but is not in the current Financial Plan.
- Staff are seeking opportunities to add the Pearson Bridge Cycle Track to the 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan and to offset City expenditures through partnership and grant funding opportunities.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Phase Map |

Submitted by:

Jamie Rose
Manager, Transportation |

Concurrence by:

Poul Rosen
Director, Engineering |