

DATE OF MEETING MAY 26, 2021

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**SUBJECT** ALLOCATION OF PEDESTRIAN BUDGET TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness with options for a portion of the 2021 Pedestrian Unallocated Budget, and to receive the Committee's feedback on preferred options for Council's consideration.

### **Recommendation**

That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness recommend the following allocations of Pedestrian Unallocated Funds for Council's consideration:

- \$200,000 for transit stop accessibility improvements
- \$250,000 for traffic signal accessibility improvements
- \$45,000 for miscellaneous accessibility improvements allocated to the Small Scale Road Improvement budget.

## **BACKGROUND**

Beginning in 2018, Council allocated \$300,000 each year, for pedestrian enhancements. Council increased this amount to \$1,000,000 for 2021. Approximately \$505,000 of this budget was allocated to general pedestrian infrastructure projects in March 2021. Staff suggest designating the remaining \$495,000 to accessibility improvements with a focus on transit stops, traffic signals, and miscellaneous accessibility needs. Before bringing recommendations to Council, Staff are requesting input from the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI).

## **DISCUSSION**

Council's Strategic Plan and the Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan emphasize the importance of accessibility and inclusion in the transportation system. Staff propose that Part 2 of the Pedestrian Unallocated Funds, approximately \$495,000, focus on accessibility improvements, in support of these policies.

For the purposes of this report, the term accessibility is focussed on the needs of people living with limited mobility. Through previous consultation with this Committee, and through targeted REIMAGINE NANAIMO engagement with people living with limited mobility, opportunities for improving transportation accessibility, in Nanaimo, have been identified.

There are many historically built segments of the transportation network that remain inaccessible. Moving forward, the City's new Complete Streets Standards will ensure that new roadway projects will be built to an accessible standard through the capital program. However, Staff are recommending that Council consider a series of retrofits now, so that short term, lower cost improvements to accessibility can be realized earlier than if the improvements were absorbed into longer term, high cost capital projects.

Staff suggest targeting accessibility upgrades in three general areas: transit stops, traffic signal improvements, and miscellaneous improvements. For transit stops and traffic signals, Staff have data and field observations which will help identify the locations, types of projects, and priorities. For miscellaneous improvements, Staff are seeking input from the ACAI on its project list. Discussion about each target area follows.

## **1. Transit Stops**

Accessibility related to transit, was a predominant theme that arose from REIMAGINE NANAIMO consultation. City and Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Staff have been working together to ensure this input informs the region's Transit Redevelopment Strategy.

In addition to transit accessibility, opportunities for accessibility improvements were identified within the pedestrian realm at transit stops. The City records which transit stops are considered wheelchair accessible and which are not. Staff also access BC Transit data showing the number of people getting on and off the bus at any given stop. Together, this information allows us to identify the inaccessible transit stops that are used most frequently, suggesting the highest need for accessibility improvements.

On October 19, 2020, Council passed a motion "to direct Staff to prepare a report for improving transit stops within the City of Nanaimo, including options to ensure all bus stops are uniform and highly visible so they are accessible for all citizens". This was based on a motion made by the ACAI, and there is an opportunity to address the intent of that motion at this time.

Staff suggest allocating \$200,000 of the remaining Pedestrian Unallocated budget towards improving accessibility at the most frequently used inaccessible bus stops, and visual accessibility at as many bus stops as possible within the funding limits, starting with those that are most frequently used.

## **2. Traffic Signal Improvements**

The City has 53 fully controlled signalized intersections of various ages and with various pedestrian features. The typical features include pedestrian actuation buttons, countdown timers, and audible speakers which sound when the "walk" signal flashes.

Staff propose a program for full accessibility improvements at traffic signals. Data indicates which intersections are used most frequently by pedestrians. The improvements would include updated pedestrian actuation buttons, countdown timers, and audible speakers. If needed, curb cuts with tactile walking surface indicators would be added at letdowns.

Staff suggest allocating \$250,000 towards accessibility improvements at the highest priority locations.

### 3. Miscellaneous Improvements

Council or the ACAI may have additional items that they may identify in the near future so Staff suggest that the remaining \$45,000 be added to the existing small scale road improvements budget, to be utilized as and when needed to address accessibility issues that may arise through community feedback.

#### Summary

Staff have provided suggestions for the allocation of the remaining pedestrian unallocated funding, and would appreciate feedback or additional suggestions from the ACAI. ]

#### OPTIONS

That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness recommend the following allocations of Pedestrian Unallocated Funds for Council's consideration:

- \$200,000 for transit stop accessibility improvements
  - \$250,000 for traffic signal accessibility improvements
  - \$45,000 for miscellaneous accessibility improvements allocated to the Small Scale Road Improvement budget.
    - The advantages of this option: This option addresses significant accessibility gaps in the transportation system, in a prioritized way, while allowing room for flexibility if an urgent need is identified.
    - The disadvantages of this option: This option only addresses each accessibility issue in a limited way.
    - Financial Implications: None
2. That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness recommend alternate allocations for Pedestrian Unallocated Funds for Council's consideration.
- The advantages of this option: This option could bring previously unidentified projects to the forefront for swift resolution.
  - The disadvantages of this option: This option may be perceived as not addressing issues in a systematic, prioritized fashion.
  - Financial Implications: None
3. That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness provide alternate recommendations to Staff. ]

#### SUMMARY POINTS

- The City is proposing allocating \$495,000 for transportation accessibility improvements in 2021.

- The projects have been identified through consultation with the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness, and through targeted REIMAGINE NANAIMO engagement with people living with limited mobility.
- Transportation accessibility improves livability for all citizens of Nanaimo.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Proposed Accessible Signal Upgrade Locations  
Attachment B – Proposed Accessibility Upgrades – Transit Stops

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