

DATE OF MEETING JULY 20, 2022

AUTHORED BY ANNALISA FIPKE, PROJECT ENGINEER

SUBJECT MARY ELLEN DRIVE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT FUNDING

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To advise the Finance and Audit Committee of a budget transfer greater than \$75,000 to construct intersection improvements on Mary Ellen Drive.

BACKGROUND

Mary Ellen Drive was constructed in 1999 to an Urban Arterial standard and provides a link between two provincial highways. Over the past 23 years, the community has guided the re-development of the area to include a more comprehensive mix of land uses. The 2008 Official Community Plan, 2014 Transportation Master Plan, and most recently the City Plan have all advanced the evolution of this area to become a walkable, live, work, play community. These changes have highlighted growing operational and safety concerns:

- Long Crossing Distances - The area is not pedestrian friendly and the crosswalk is not located at a natural crossing location. The crosswalk is currently on the west side of the intersection, which is not directly connected to the sidewalk network. It is also closest to the Parkway, where vehicles approach at higher speeds.
- High Speeds - The 1999 design principles for Mary Ellen Drive include wide lanes, too many lanes, and a free flow nature off the Parkway. These factors contribute to higher speeds, which are not pedestrian friendly and could result in severe collisions.
- Congestion & Driver Confusion - The multitude of travel lanes and absences of intersection right-of-way control, forces drivers to make more decisions which increases the risk for driver error. This intersection is also subject to periods of high demand (congestion) during busy shopping times, which further exacerbates the situation, leaving vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, at greatest risk.

In 2014, a design was developed for a full-scale roundabout at the entrances to Woodgrove Crossing and Woodgrove Centre, to address some of these concerns. The intent was for the project to be a cost share between the City and the developers; however, rising project costs and higher priority projects for the City, the roundabout was not constructed.

DISCUSSION

Community contributions have been received from development properties over time, with the intent of supporting pedestrian mobility along the Mary Ellen corridor. In total, there is \$205,382 in developer contributions available to improve this intersection.

A large, full-scale roundabout would be significantly costly; however, staff identified an opportunity to pursue a lower cost option which would make use of existing infrastructure and limit the direct costs to the City. This option would achieve many of the positive impacts of a full-scale roundabout, at a lower cost.

The key features of the planned upgrade include:

- Relocating the crosswalk to the eastern leg of the intersection away from the free-flow Parkway exit, and to better align with pedestrian desire lines.
- Reducing the pedestrian exposure in the crosswalk from five lanes down to a two lane two-stage crosswalk.
- Improving operations in the intersection, while managing speeds and reducing conflict points.

ICBC has completed a Road Safety Audit for the design and their comments have been integrated into the final design. They have committed to financially contributing to the project; however, at this time the amount is unknown. Any contributions from ICBC on this project will offset City funding.

The cost for the upgrades are expected to be in the range of \$365,000, based on the pricing we have received from the contractor, and construction would be expected to happen this fall.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The project budget will be increased from \$195,000 to \$365,382 funded by a budget transfer of \$160,000 and an additional \$10,382 in developer contributions (total developer contributions \$205,382). The budget transfer consists of \$115,000 from a project that came in under budget, and \$45,000 from cancelled projects.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Operational and safety concerns at the intersection of Mary Ellen at Woodgrove have been addressed with the proposed improvements.
- Cost for the Mary Ellen Roundabout is expected to be \$365,382. Of this, \$205,382 is being funded through community contributions, and the remaining \$160,000 will be funded by the City of Nanaimo.
- ICBC has also committed to funding a portion of the project, with confirmation of total contribution still to occur.
- Funds are available within the 2022 – 2026 budget to cover the additional costs of the project.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Mary Ellen Rendering

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