

DATE OF MEETING JULY 17, 2023

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SUBJECT EXTENSION ROAD TRAFFIC CALMING

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide an update to the Extension Road traffic calming project and receive the Governance and Priorities Committee's direction on next steps.

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council approve advancement of Extension Road traffic calming to the implementation stage with funding from the 2023 Financial Plan.

BACKGROUND

Extension Road runs north-south connecting the Trans-Canada Highway to the Cinnabar Valley and areas outside the City limits. The road forms a spine from which side streets extend into residential areas. The long reach of the road, its rural character, and its adjacent land use give drivers the sense that speeding is acceptable. The area is densifying, and with the increase in homes, the traffic volumes and speeds are increasing. As a result, in 2020, Staff received several complaints about speeding and requests for traffic calming on Extension Road. Data collection confirmed the concerns with speeding on the corridor.

In May 2021, Staff prepared a report to Council regarding Extension Road traffic calming and Council approved the advancement to the public consultation stage, which would be used to inform the traffic calming design.

This report includes the outcome of the public consultation, presents the planned design, and requests Council's direction on next steps.

DISCUSSION

A conceptual design for Extension Road traffic calming was developed in early 2023. The conceptual design was shared digitally with the community. Between January and March 2023, Staff held three public engagement meetings and collected feedback via email.

Staff shared the initial concept with internal stakeholders including Nanaimo Fire Rescue. Internal feedback was incorporated into the design and the proposed plan was generated at the end of 2022. The proposed plan included concrete medians at crosswalks, road narrowing along Extension Road, and one raised crosswalk by Cinnabar Valley Elementary School.

The next three months of community engagement yielded three public consultation meetings and fifty-eight (58) feedback emails. Two meetings were held with the Chase River Community Association (CRCA). CRCA have been strong supporters of the traffic calming project throughout the process. Using an online platform in June 2023, CRCA asked for signatures of support for the traffic calming project and 43 residents responded.

Staff held one meeting with the Chase River Elementary School parent advisory group who were generally supportive. The parent advisory group also wanted to see better traffic flow in front of the school which was not part of the scope of the traffic calming; however, this information can inform future planning.

Within the 58 emails of feedback, there was an equal distribution between the feedback of residents who strongly support and of residents who are strongly against the traffic calming conceptual design:

- Residents with supportive feedback (27%) were in favour of the raised crosswalk and the overall plan.
- Residents who were against the plan (27%) were primarily concerned with increasing traffic volumes in the neighbourhood and requested another exit out of the area. However, this is not part of the scope of the Extension Road traffic calming project.
- The remaining (46%) consisted of mixed feedback, where most respondents supported traffic calming initiatives, but they were concerned with road narrowing at intersections of steeper slopes, such as Roberta Road East and Roberta Road West.

Staff modified the design to reflect public feedback. For example, the CRCA expressed concern about larger vehicles turning at Richardson Road over a raised crosswalk on Extension Road. In response, the design was changed to a raised speed table south of Richardson Road. Also, the locations and style of road narrowing were shifted, and driveway access was adjusted. Sketches are shown in Attachments A and B. Snow and ice control is addressed by temporary features that can be changed or removed if necessary to achieve effective winter maintenance.

Traffic calming is intended to address higher, unwanted speeds and improve the pedestrian experience along the corridor. Speed and volume data from 2020 and 2023 are shown in Attachment C. If Council chooses to endorse construction, Staff will collect speed and volume data post-installation, to measure the effectiveness of the traffic calming.

Funding is available within the 2023 Financial Plan. With Council's endorsement, work would begin this fall and be complete by spring 2024.

OPTIONS

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council approve advancement of Extension Road traffic calming to the implementation stage.
 - The advantages of this option: Traffic calming is expected to reduce travel speeds on the corridor which will in turn improve livability for residents and enhance the pedestrian experience on Extension Road.

- The disadvantages of this option: There may be a perception that slower speeds mean congestion and poor winter driving conditions. Traffic calming will not address neighbourhood desires for an alternative exit from the Chase River area.
 - Financial Implications: Funding is available within the 2023 Financial Plan.
2. That the Governance and Priorities Committee provide alternate direction to Staff.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Traffic calming is intended to improve livability of Nanaimo city streets.
- The proposed layout for Extension Road has been adjusted to address resident concerns.
- If Council endorses construction, work would start this fall and be complete by spring 2024.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Extension Road Traffic Calming – north portion
Attachment B – Extension Road Traffic Calming – south portion
Attachment C – 2020 and 2023 Traffic Speeds and Volumes
Attachment D – Powerpoint Presentation

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