

DATE OF MEETING MAY 13, 2024

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SUBJECT **ALLOCATION OF UNALLOCATED PEDESTRIAN FUNDS**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Governance and Priorities Committee with options for the Financial Year 2024 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds of \$300,000, and reallocation of 2023 funds in the amount of \$182,500, and to provide a discussion about active school travel planning.

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council allocate \$300,000 of the 2024 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds and reallocate \$182,500 of the 2023 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds for a combined total of \$482,500 toward Albert Street Crossing Improvements from Milton Street to Dunsmuir Street.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in 2018, Council used Strategic Infrastructure Reserve funds to create an annual unallocated budget of \$300,000 within the Financial Plan for pedestrian mobility and safety enhancements. These funds were to be used to address issues that arise during the year and are more urgent than could be dealt with through the financial planning process. Council increased this amount to \$1,000,000 in Financial years 2021, 2022, and 2023. Year 2024 of the 2024-2028 Financial Plan has \$300,000 identified for Unallocated Pedestrian Transportation Improvements.

The program focus is on enhancing pedestrian mobility. Staff aim to increase the comfort and safety of all road users with projects including small scale street improvements, pedestrian crossing enhancements, updating of safer school travel plans, and traffic calming.

At last years 2023-JUL-17 Governance and Priorities Committee meeting, where Council discussed potential 2023 Pedestrian Unallocated projects, Council advised that Departure Bay Sidewalk Improvements should be prioritized in 2023 over the Albert Street Crossing Improvements. Due to the successful grant application for the Departure Bay Sidewalk: Alan-A-Dale to Wardropper, it is anticipated that \$182,500 can be reallocated to a new project. Staff understood, based on discussions regarding the BC Active Transportation Infrastructure grant during the 2023-SEP-13 Council meeting, that if grant money was received to support the Departure Bay Sidewalk, the difference in funds from the 2023 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds could be used to support the Albert Street upgrades in 2024. Council direction is requested for reallocation of remaining 2023 funds.

This report presents options for allocating the 2024 funding, and reallocating 2023 remainder funds, for a combined total of \$482,500, and a discussion about active school travel planning. |

DISCUSSION

Staff receive frequent requests for sidewalks and pedestrian crossing enhancements throughout Nanaimo. Locations are prioritized annually for improvements based on the Pedestrian Prioritization Tool developed and supported by Council at the 2021-NOV-08 Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting. The tool considers observed traffic and pedestrian volumes, adjacent land use, and other factors. City Plan reflects the community's needs and desires related to active transportation and led to the development of the pedestrian infrastructure prioritization tool. The tool provides a clearer and more transparent method for prioritizing active transportation projects by using data on several factors to assign a score to each crossing (e.g., speed, volume, safety, crossing distance, proximity to school, etc.).

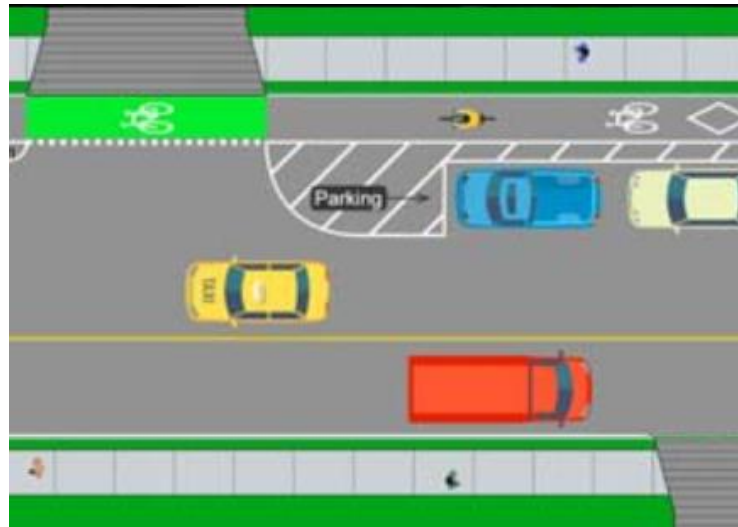
Higher scores represent higher priority, and lower scores represent lower priority; however, it is important to acknowledge that these numbers are attention-directing, not an explicit ranking. This assists when considering which locations represent the best investment in our community's needs to support walkability. At the same time, pedestrian collisions rarely occur along corridors; instead, they typically occur at crossings. That said, pedestrians spend most of their journeys on corridors, and if they are not comfortable, they are not likely to walk. Staff seek to balance these competing needs when developing the list of options in this annual report.

Recommended Project

1. **Albert Street Crossing Improvements from Milton Street to Dunsmuir Street**
Selby Street crossing **(49 points)**
Dunsmuir Street crossing **(53 points)**
Add raised crosswalks, or bump-out curb extensions, or RRFB's as appropriate.
Estimate: \$475,000

The intersections of Albert Street with Dunsmuir Street and Albert Street with Selby Street are uncontrolled pedestrian crossings on a Mobility Collector within the Downtown Primary Urban Centre and along the City's Primary Active Mobility Route. There is no marked crossing at Prideaux Street; a new pedestrian crossing could be added here. Adding raised crosswalks and shortening the crossings with reconfigured bump-outs are expected to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort along the Albert Street section of the City's Primary Active Mobility Route, and at the gateway to the Downtown Primary Urban Centre. This area is also within the Pauline Haarer and Fairview Elementary School catchments. Design details have not been confirmed, however, with support from Council, provisions for an uphill bike lane could be considered with the elimination of some parking.

The following page is an example of the potential future cross section of Albert Street, showing a bike lane on the uphill side only, with some retention of parking:



Future Considerations for Unallocated Pedestrian Funding

1. Funding for Accessibility Improvements at Existing Crossings & Sidewalks
Estimate: \$300,000+

There are many historically built segments of the transportation network that remain inaccessible. Accessible design elements such as tactile walking surface indicators and directional indicators are incorporated into the design of new facilities, and where possible, into existing facilities during infrastructure improvements. However, existing facilities generally lack overall design (space allocation) and design elements to support accessibility. In 2022, Staff worked with the Transit Stop Accessibility Working Group of ACAI to understand challenges of accessing transit stops in Nanaimo. At the 2022-SEP-21 meeting, Council directed Staff to identify and establish transit accessibility improvements, and while many projects have been completed, retrofit opportunities continue to emerge beyond original funding. Money would allow for retrofit upgrades to improve accessibility at existing crossings, along pedestrian facilities in locations with known issues, and/or transit accessibility improvements.

2. Third Street East Sidewalk – Rotary Field House to Jingle Pot Road
Estimate: \$400,000

The sidewalk on the east side of Third Street terminates approximately half-way between the Rotary Field House and the intersection of Jingle Pot Road near Buttertubs Marsh. The shoulder continues for more than 400m along Third Street to the intersection with Jingle Pot Road. In order to complete a separated walking facility between Wakesiah Avenue and the Jingle Pot Road Intersection there can be 150m of infill work between the existing connection at the parking lot to the intersection. This would increase the pedestrian connectivity between the Buttertubs trail network, the Rotary Field House, and transit stops, while increasing pedestrian comfort along Third Street. An easterly sidewalk would discourage pedestrians from jaywalking across Third Street to the nearest existing sidewalk. As well, it would improve the walkability of the stadium district which is becoming increasingly important as the district becomes busier on event days.

High Priority Projects - Not Suited to Pedestrian Unallocated Funding

Staff have carefully chosen the above locations for improvements within this program based on a rigorous prioritization process. There are several high priority locations for intersection improvements or sidewalk enhancements that are not suited for the pedestrian unallocated funding program; some improvements are of a value beyond what this program can offer, and some locations have already been incorporated into larger projects and will be addressed within the current 5-year Financial Plan. A sampling of locations that were considered and excluded are:

Crossing Location	Consideration
Norwell Drive (Island Hwy to Barons Rd)	In approved capital plan
Third Street at Howard Avenue	Adjacent development
Wallace Corridor (Comox Rd to Franklyn St)	In approved capital plan
Fitzwilliam Corridor (Milton St to Bastion St)	In approved capital plan
Fifth St Corridor (Shephard Ave to Wakesiah Ave)	In approved capital plan
Wakesiah Avenue at Foster Street	In future capital plan
Crosswalk at 700 block of Third, just west of Nanaimo Ice Centre and at the Ice Centre/Aquatic Centre	Exceeds Pedestrian Unallocated budget
Stewart Avenue at Dawes Street	Requires consultation with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI)
Stewart Avenue at Rosehill Street	Requires consultation with MOTI
Stewart Avenue at Townsite Avenue	Requires consultation with MOTI
Stewart Avenue at Larch Street	Requires consultation with MOTI
Needham Street at Nicol Street	Requires consultation with MOTI
Uplands Drive at Primrose Drive	Redevelopment may bring cost sharing opportunities
Fitzwilliam Street at Wesley Street	Primary emergency response route
Maki Road at Island Highway	Requires consultation with MOTI
Seventh Street (Railway Ave and Victoria Rd)	Requires consultation with SVI

Projects of Community Interest

The following projects are not suited to the Pedestrian Unallocated funding program. They have been identified out of community interest, however, there are other processes suited to addressing these projects:

Hammond Bay Road:

- a. Request for enhanced pedestrian facility from 3190 Hammond Bay Road (the Biological Station) to Lagoon Road.

The Stephenson Point Neighbourhood Association has a long history of requesting a sidewalk along Hammond Bay Road between 3190 Hammond Bay Road (the Biological Station) and Lagoon Road, a distance of approximately 2 kilometres.

A sidewalk would be cost prohibitive, in the order of \$10,000 per metre. There is limited road right-of-way with narrow pinch points which could sterilize access to some properties. In the

near term, the road will be impacted as the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) completes major sewer upgrades in this location within the next three-five years. Through discussion at the Neighbourhood Association engagement event in April of 2023, Staff considered a painted 1.2m-1.5m wide paved shoulder with a painted fog line as an interim measure. However, with these limited improvements estimated at approximately \$100,000, and the short time frame before the road is impacted by the RDN Hammond Bay Road Sewer Project, it is not recommended for Pedestrian Unallocated funds to be used on this project, but improvements could be considered when restoring roads from RDN Hammond Bay Road Sewer Project.

b. Hammond Bay Road at Oakridge Drive – Add Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB's)

Residents have shared concerns regarding the safety of the crosswalk on Hammond Bay Road at Oakridge Drive, citing low compliance of vehicles stopping, and that children use this crossing to access a nearby transit stop. The Pedestrian Prioritization Tool scores this crossing as a 24, well below the threshold of action currently. Staff are reviewing how to improve visibility of the existing crosswalk, such as by realigning existing signage.

Hammond Bay Road generally has a low walkability score and has known speeding issues. Another common inquiry is adding crossings along Hammond Bay Road. There is a perception that adding crossings increases safety for pedestrians. However, this is a misconception; as adding crossings alone without reducing vehicle speeds may increase risks. More needs to be done along Hammond Bay Road to reduce vehicle speeds before enhancing or adding new crossings.

Active School Travel

a. Bayview Elementary School Pedestrian Facilities

The South End Community Association recently enquired about the potential for sidewalks within the vicinity of Bayview Elementary School. Specifically, the Needham Street (north side) and Princess Street (west side) frontages currently lack sidewalks. A sidewalk was installed along View Street during a previous Active School Travel program.

Typically, sidewalks are installed in association with a new development where they are required to provide frontage works. The cost for sidewalks is continually escalating, so where possible, Staff try to include sidewalks where there are other City infrastructure projects taking place in the same location and budget is available. In this case, the sewer is located on the opposite side of Princess Street from the school, and new sidewalks are well beyond the financial scope of the sanitary sewer project. It is estimated that adding sidewalks to the Needham and Princess Streets frontages would add \$600,000 to the project cost.

The request for sidewalk arose from neighbourhood concerns. The data does not reflect speed issues or high traffic volumes in this area. However, with the sewer project cost coming in under budget, a defined pedestrian shoulder could be provided on the Needham and Princess Streets frontages within the existing project budget. This improvement would include limited grading, gravel shoulder, bollards, and No Stopping at Any Time signage. Unless Council directs otherwise, Staff will proceed with this work.

Additionally, in the future, if the community association and school district are supportive, there may be an opportunity to close View Street between Old Victoria Road and Needham Street to implement a School Street in this location through a future Active School Travel (AST) process. A School Street is a road adjacent to a school that is closed to vehicles during school hours to prioritize walking, rolling, and cycling. School Streets are shown to improve safety, encourage active school travel, and ease vehicle congestion around schools. Anything beyond the delineated pedestrian facilities would need to be addressed through an Active School Travel planning process.

b. Park Avenue Elementary School – Sidewalk Infill

Residents of Park Avenue have inquired regarding potential for sidewalks within the vicinity of Park Avenue Elementary School. While some segments of sidewalk have been installed near the school due to surrounding development, many segments remain where children must either cross the street to use a sidewalk or walk along a gravel shoulder. There is an estimated 1,050m of sidewalk that could be infilled within an approximately 420m radius of the school, for an estimated cost of \$3,150,000.

Currently, there are no capital plans to install sidewalks in the vicinity of Park Avenue and sidewalks would only be provided if development nearby provides frontage works. The Transportation department has a prioritized and rigorous process for selecting sites for upgrades and tend to prioritize intersection improvements rather than sidewalks as intersections are much higher conflict points where collisions take place, rather than sidewalks which tend to increase comfort more than safety. Crosswalks in the Park Avenue neighbourhood all rank in either the good or medium category.

c. Ecole Quarterway Elementary – Add RRFB's to Existing Crossing & Add a New Crosswalk

Some parents of children who attend Ecole Quarterway have indicated the need for flashing lights at the existing crossing of East Wellington Road in front of the school. The existing crossing of East Wellington Road scores 41.5, in the medium category. Staff are working to collect data for future decision making but note that the score is below the threshold for action at this time.

Parents have also asked for a new crossing to be added mid-block on Townsite Road between Bowen Road and East Wellington Road. This segment of Townsite Road does not have any existing pedestrian crossing and while there is a desire line for pedestrian traffic connecting residential neighbourhoods from the north to commercial services and Ecole Quarterway to the south, the pedestrian facilities are very limited on the south side of Townsite Road. Adding a crosswalk on Townsite Road does not address that there are no pedestrian facilities to connect the requested crossing and Ecole Quarterway. This type of project could be identified as a priority through a future AST process. However, as Ecole Quarterway is a commuter school with no defined catchment, it is anticipated that the potential for active travel to school travel is much lower here than at other schools. Without going through the AST process, we do not know the share of students walking to school from this direction.

School selection for AST programs occurs in conjunction with the School District. Staff are currently working with the School District on completing AST Plans for Cinnabar, Chase River, and Rutherford Elementary Schools, which will take place over the next 2-3 years. Staff also work to implement AST action items to address priorities acknowledged by schools which have already

gone through the AST process. Through these processes, key active transportation improvements are identified by the school and justified based on data collection and school engagement. Once an action plan is established within the AST process, Staff monitor and work to implement priority improvements where possible in an ongoing manner. Improvements identified through the AST process can be incorporated into the five-year Financial Plan, either within existing programs or into project allocations. Staff take a measured approach, identifying priorities and developing reliable cost estimates which are then incorporated in the financial planning process, and delivered through the established construction program.

The intent of pedestrian unallocated funding is to allow for projects that would otherwise not be completed due to lack of funding. Since the AST program is ongoing, it can be rolled into existing City budget processes. To put in new crossings or sidewalks without data collection and school engagement, would undermine the AST process, minimize the priority action items identified by schools who have already completed the AST process, and impact the funding of pedestrian projects that would otherwise not get completed.

Closing

Staff strive to strike a balance between strategic efforts to generate mode shift versus necessary investments to support pedestrian safety. With this in mind, Staff have considered several options for improvements, and recommend these funds be used to enhance pedestrian safety at intersections.

Staff recommend that the full \$300,000 of the 2024 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds and the remaining 2023 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds in the amount of \$182,500 be reallocated toward Option 1, as described below. The Albert Street upgrades are the highest priority as the project would facilitate a safer and more comfortable pedestrian network within the City's Primary Urban Centre and along its Primary Active Mobility Route. The improvements are targeted to improve safety at intersections.

OPTIONS

Option 1 includes the Albert Street multiple crossing improvements, and Option 2 provides for Council to give alternate direction.

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council allocate \$300,000 of the 2024 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds and reallocate \$182,500 of the 2023 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds for a combined total of \$482,500 toward Albert Street Crossing Improvements from Milton Street to Dunsmuir Street.
 - One advantage of this option is that it balances active transportation corridor improvements and safety enhancements for pedestrian mobility in identified high conflict intersections.
 - This option strategically supports walkability in the city's most pedestrian dominant areas.
 - Financial Implications - funding is included in the approved 2024 - 2028 Financial Plan.
 - Project Delivery Implications – construction industry growth; with a shortage of workers and materials, supply chain disruptions contribute to a level of uncertainty with respect to construction costs, timelines, and project delivery.

2. That the Governance and Priorities Committee provide alternate direction to Staff. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- Staff have used the Council endorsed process to evaluate priority locations for annual improvements based on safety, risk factors, geographical data, influence on mode shift, and public input.
- The recommendation has both safety and connectivity benefits which serve to balance strategic and operational needs.
- Staff recommend that the 2024 Pedestrian Unallocated Funds be allocated toward upgrades to Albert Street.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Map and Images – Albert Street Crosswalks (Existing Conditions)

ATTACHMENT B: Images – Future Considerations

ATTACHMENT C: Map and Images – Projects of Community Interest (Existing Conditions)

ATTACHMENT D: PowerPoint Presentation |

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