



COMMON COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	2024-143
Report Date	May 22, 2024
Meeting Date	May 27, 2024
Service Area	Public Works and Transportation Services

Her Worship Mayor Donna Noade Reardon and Members of Common Council

SUBJECT: Traffic Safety Improvement Plan 2024

AUTHORIZATION

Primary Author	Commissioner/Dept. Head	Chief Administrative Officer
Tim O'Reilly	Michael Hugenholtz	J. Brent McGovern

RECOMMENDATION

Your Chief Administrative Officer recommends Common Council receive and file this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saint John citizens and stakeholders continue to request that City slow vehicle speeds, create or improve crosswalks, implement cycling facilities, make changes to how and where trucks operate, complete rail crossing improvements, etc. A current backlog of approximately 700 such requests support why improving access for all modes of transportation and defining safety programs are a priority within the City's 10 Year Strategic Plan.

It is important that expectations of action on each request are managed considering the number of requests received relative to available resources and the need to ensure that infrastructure investments result in desired outcomes.

This report highlights a series of traffic safety improvement projects planned for 2024 that demonstrate the City's response to community concerns in a way that aligns with organizational goals and strategies. The report also identifies continued transformational changes in how road safety is holistically improved.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The initiatives described in this report align with several City priorities and strategies. Specifically, the City's Transportation Plan (MoveSJ) is supported as the initiatives are focused on citizens having a choice of a variety of transportation modes.

The City's 10-Year Strategic Plan envisions growth to 20% of trips being accomplished with sustainable transportation modes and development of safety programs.

ActSJ envisions a reduced carbon footprint that is supported, in part, by greater use of sustainable and active transportation modes.

The City's 2024 Initiatives Plan includes a goal of continuing to implement traffic calming projects towards the 10-Year Strategic Plan's goal of 20 completed projects.

REPORT

Each year the City receives on average approximately 130 community requests for traffic safety and flow improvements with a current backlog of approximately 700 requests. These include requests to slow vehicle speeds (traffic calming), adjust on-street parking rules, manage how large trucks can operate, improve safety at rail crossings, and improve safety for motorists such as warning signage, for pedestrians such as new or enhanced crosswalks, and for cyclists such as new or enhanced bike lanes.

Some requests simply can't be acted upon. In some cases, requests don't align with municipal or provincial regulations, will not result in a net safety improvement for road users, or don't align with nationally-accepted best practices.

Incorporating asset management practices into decisions related to these traffic requests are also becoming more and more important. Whether it be a new sign or electronics associated with a signalized crosswalk, all added traffic infrastructure not only generates costs at the time of construction, but also creates ongoing operating, maintenance, and eventual replacement responsibilities. In alignment with asset management practices, it is important to not install more traffic infrastructure than can be sustainably taken care of.

The City is continuing to incorporate a broader risk management and systematic approach to planning where and when traffic improvements are made. Initiatives that align with MoveSJ, a future overall Road Safety Strategy, or results from a City-wide review such as the recent federally-funded crosswalk and sidewalk prioritization projects (presented at the last Public Safety Committee meeting) are all examples. This broad approach ensures investments are being made in the right locations at the right time, and complement community requests.

Again in 2024, City staff have assessed community requests in light of these broader considerations to develop another annual Traffic Safety Improvement Plan. Following is a brief summary of each project planned for 2024:

Speed Cushion Installations

As endorsed by the City's Public Safety Committee and Common Council last Fall, and in response to the growing community interest to slow speeding vehicles, City staff are transitioning from the successful trial of a traffic calming device called a Speed Cushion on McNamara Drive to an annual program on multiple streets, starting in 2024. Five additional streets are planned to have speed cushions installed in 2024. Four of the five have been confirmed so far to have excessive speeding above the threshold in the City's Traffic Calming Policy and will have speed cushions installed in 2024. These include:

1. Douglas Avenue
2. Cedarwood Drive
3. Spar Cove Road
4. Dever Road

In addition to more efficiently addressing community speeding concerns, these projects will contribute to deliverables identified in the City's 2024 Initiatives Plan and the 10-Year Strategic Plan.

Staff note, as detailed previously, that not every request for traffic calming is substantiated by collected speed data. So far in 2024 three requests for traffic calming will not move to the next stage of the City planning traffic calming measures. It remains important that limited City resources are invested where there is an opportunity for measurable results in performance, such as a traffic calming plan being implemented on a street that results in average speeds reducing back to within posted speed limits.

Signalized Crosswalk on Chesley Drive East of Reversing Falls Bridge

A crosswalk in the vicinity of the Reversing Falls Bridge has been requested by many stakeholders for several years. Pedestrian crossings are expected to only grow with continued expansion of Harbour Passage, including the 2025 construction of "The Cove" portion of the trail and eventual connection along Douglas Avenue. Given the volumes of vehicles crossing the Reversing Falls Bridge, a crosswalk complete with overhead traffic signals is warranted. The installation of such a crosswalk on the east side of the bridge in the vicinity of Douglas Avenue is planned for 2024. This project is also highlighted as a priority in the recently completed federally-funded Crosswalk Priority Project.

Garden at Coburg Accessible Pedestrian System

The Garden at Coburg intersection includes the City's first installation of the now popular Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) crosswalk system that includes side-mounted yellow flashing lights, solar power, and wireless technology. Technological advancements have allowed audible Accessible Pedestrian Systems (APS) to be incorporated with RRFB crosswalks affordably.

The City's Ability Advisory Committee has made addition of APS to this existing RRFB a priority and is planned to be added to this intersection in 2024.

Westmorland at Ellerdale RRFB

A signed and painted crosswalk on Westmorland Road at Ellerdale Street has existed for many years. This crosswalk mainly serves a Transit stop on the side of Westmorland Road opposite Ellerdale Street but is currently separated from that Transit stop without a sidewalk on that side of the street. The crosswalk also warrants a greater degree of pedestrian protection. A planned 2024 project would include moving this crosswalk closer to the Transit stop and the installation of an RRFB system. This project is highlighted as a priority in the recently completed federally-funded Crosswalk Priority Project.

Loch Lomond School Zone Improvement

The Safer School Zones Program, that commenced in 2014, has successfully resulted in traffic calming measures around 17 elementary and middle schools in the City. From time to time, the associated administration or Parent & School Support Committees (PSSC) request further traffic safety enhancement measures around a school.

City staff plan to install in 2024 electronic driver speed feedback signs on the limits of the School Zone for Loch Lomond School on Loch Lomond Road to promote the lower 30 KM/H speed limit. This installation would respond to a prior letter to Common Council from the school's PSSC, which is attached to this report. These signs will complement similar electronic signs already installed on Evergreen Avenue, a City street. Staff note that these electronic signs are being installed on a Provincial Highway.

Centennial School Zone Improvement

The PSSC for Centennial School has reached out to the City with a request to enhance safety for students walking to school from the North End area. The written request is attached to this report. Currently, the defined School Zone and a signalized crosswalk is concentrated closer to the main entrance to this school on Millidge Avenue. However, many students walk to this school from the North End along Adelaide Street, crossing the street in the vicinity of Visart Street and accessing the back of the school property.

A planned 2024 project would include extending the limits of the existing School Zone with electronic driver speed feedback sign and the reduced 30 KM/H speed limit to include the Adelaide/Visart intersection. The project also includes upgrading an existing marked and signed crosswalk on Adelaide Street at Visart Street with an RRFB system. City staff would return to Common Council later in

2024 after construction is completed to recommend the resulting proposed change in the School Zone limits.

Princess Elizabeth School Zone Improvement

The PSSC for Princess Elizabeth School has reached out to the City to request an additional crosswalk for this school. Construction of a marked and signed crosswalk on Parks Street in the vicinity of Fifth Street is planned for 2024 to provide safer access for students walking from the “Five Corners” and Mount Pleasant Avenue area.

Glen Falls School Zone Improvement

The principal of Glen Falls School has requested Tim Street become a part of the School Zone for this school, as per the attached letter. Access to the school grounds is now achieved more via an entrance from Tim Street and therefore City staff support the school’s request. School Zone and 30 KM/H speed limit signs will be added to the limits of Tim Street and City staff will return to Council later in 2024 after installation for the recommended changes to the City’s Traffic By-Law.

Heather Way Road Diet

As previously reported to Council, in 2024 City staff plan to close down two of the four lanes on Heather Way to help assess the future state of this overbuilt street. The closure of the lanes on the *west* side of the median (i.e. the southbound lanes) will be accomplished through the use of concrete barriers, signage, and adjusted line painting. The community will be engaged after the project is implemented to solicit feedback toward a long term solution for this street.

Note that in the original staff report on this issue it was the lanes on the *east* side of the median that were earmarked for closure. Since that time staff have advanced the design further, and also received additional feedback from the Fire Department. As a result of that feedback a change was made. The outcomes of a road diet and traffic calming will still be achieved.

Addressing Sight Lines on Mystery Lake Drive and Candlewood Lane

Sight of approaching vehicles from Golden Grove Road and University Avenue by motorists attempting to exit Mystery Lake Drive and Candlewood Lane, respectively, have been confirmed to be too limited given knolls in the respective roads. In both cases, to respond to associated community concerns, the flow of traffic on both streets will be converted where motorists can only exit from alternate locations with improved sight lines. City staff will return to Common Council at a later date to seek approval for the necessary Traffic By-Law changes.

Roll Out of Traffic Safety Education Program

A preliminary Road Safety Education Program will roll out for the first time in 2024. Detailed at a recent Public Safety Committee, this first education program for the City will help road users become more informed about how their behaviours can contribute to a safer transportation system. The City will issue videos and facts about a variety of road safety topics over time. Development of this program was resourced by the Federal Active Transportation Fund.

Traffic Safety in 2024 Capital Projects

All of the projects identified so far in this report are to be funded through the General Fund Operating Budget, and largely supported by existing City staff. Staff are also continuing to take a more holistic view of Capital road reconstruction projects; besides replacing worn out existing infrastructure, these projects are also incorporating traffic safety and other improvements. Examples for 2024 include the introduction of bike lanes and other traffic calming measures on sections of Charlotte and Sydney Street, incorporation of Accessible Pedestrian Systems at two signalized intersections on Garden Street, creating the opportunity for a Road Diet and bike lanes on Station Street and City Road, and extension of a sidewalk on Boars Head Road.

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

Funds are available for the projects described in this report, including utilizing an additional \$75,000 approved as part of the 2024 General Fund Operating Budget.

INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Input from the general public, authorities of various schools, and the Saint John Ability Advisory Committee have been incorporated into this report.

ATTACHMENTS

- Request from Loch Lomond School PSSC
- Request from Centennial School PSSC
- Request from Glen Falls School Principal
- Staff presentation