

COMMON COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	2024-323
Report Date	November 29, 2024
Meeting Date	December 02, 2024
Service Area	Public Works and Transportation Services

Her Worship Mayor Donna Noade Reardon and Members of Common Council

SUBJECT: Heather Way Future Use

AUTHORIZATION

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

RECOMMENDATION

Common Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to re-open all four lanes of Heather Way to vehicular traffic as soon as practically possible in 2024, and plan to finish the asphalt resurfacing of the remaining lanes of Heather Way in 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community consensus on how Heather Way should function into the future was revealed at a recent public consultation session. It was very clear the overwhelming majority of the residents in the area want Heather Way to be returned to a four (vehicular) lane roadway, and as soon as possible. This is largely in line with the staff analysis as the option that represents the lowest cost, and lines up with the City's various strategic plans.

Opening the lanes currently barricaded and resurfacing the asphalt on the remaining lanes in 2025 retains the opportunity to consider bike lanes in the future.

PREVIOUS RESOLUTION

On April 19, 2021 Common Council received and filed a report on 2021 Roadway Construction Projects that referenced the planned resurfacing of Heather Way.

On July 26, 2021 Common Council resolved a change in the 2021 Asphalt Resurfacing Program that included resurfacing another street instead of Heather Way.

On November 14, 2023 Common Council resolved that the submitted report M&C 2023-246: Heather Way Resurfacing/Reconstruction be referred to the CAO for a revised solution. The staff recommendation in that report was to resurface both sides of Heather Way and incorporate buffered bike lanes.

On January 22, 2024 Common Council resolved that, as recommended in the submitted report M&C2024-019: Heather Way Resurfacing/Reconstruction, Common Council approve the recommendation to proceed with the resurfacing of one half of Heather Way and close off the other side of the median with temporary barricades as outlined in M&C2024-019.

REPORT

Background on Prior Public Consultation

City staff held a virtual community meeting on June 30, 2021 to solicit feedback from the local residents on potential options for re-imaging this street. Only five community members participated in the meeting. The virtual meeting was also saved and provided on the City's website following the meeting with a further 23 community members providing feedback via e-mail. The meeting included a presentation by City staff where context and a series of potential options for Heather Way's layout with pros and cons of each were provided to help generate discussion and feedback.

During the community meeting there was no consensus on what, if any changes, should occur for Heather Way. There were suggestions related to closing a portion of the street temporarily for community events. Some concerns were expressed with reducing space for vehicle traffic during limited times where major work is scheduled at the nearby Irving Oil refinery. Some comments related to improving Active Transportation beyond Heather Way were provided. Similarly, there was no consensus on a single approach among the 23 written email responses. There were some who did appear to consolidate on the idea of buffered bike lanes if an option were chosen to add cycling facilities. However, there were others who commented that spaces should be maintained as is for motorists with some indications that improved pedestrian crossings, as opposed to cycling facilities should be the focus. It appeared some respondents may have had a stronger opinion that cycling infrastructure should be added if it connected to a broader cycling route, which it does not.

In summary, there was not a general consensus from feedback provided at the June 30, 2021 meeting or in follow-up correspondence on what, if any changes to Heather Way, should be implemented.

Public Consultation of Last Week

On the evening of November 27, 2024 a public consultation session was held to seek input on the future use of Heather Way following the January 2024 resolution. The session was held at Simonds High School. Approximately 200 individuals from the public attended.

During this consultation session City staff presented a number of options for the future of Heather Way including pros and cons of each option and associated costs. The information presented at this session is attached to this report.

Virtually all the residents that provided input wanted to see Heather Way reinstated to four vehicular lanes. There was further clear consensus from the majority of the individuals who spoke that the city should implement this option as soon as possible, and ahead of the approaching 2024-2025 winter season.

The following concerns were expressed by many attending:

- safety issues based on the limited width of the two open lanes,
- concerns that the street could not be plowed safely or effectively given the width,
- concerns about pedestrians trying to cross the street or catch a bus from the centre median,
- larger vehicles attempting to turn safely at the two ends of the street,
- lack of other feasible uses for the closed lanes

City staff were intending to provide time for individuals to complete a survey and review materials, available on Shape Your City. Given the clear, overwhelming consensus from community members and several Council Members after the meeting, staff are returning with an expedited recommendation. With winter upon us the window for reversing the existing lane closure is closing rapidly, and delays to support further feedback will mean this work would have to be postponed until spring 2025.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

How well the different options presented at the November 27 consultation align with different city policies and strategies are summarized in the attached information.

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

The estimated cost to resurface the two remaining lanes is between \$200,000 - \$325,000 depending on the exact scope of work. The approximate costs of the other options discussed at the feedback session are presented in the attached materials.

INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS

In addition to the community input provided at the November 27, 2024 session detailed previously in this report, the following additional city departments contributed to the materials attached to this report:

- Utilities & Infrastructure
- Growth & Community Services
- Communications

ATTACHMENT

1. *M&C 2023-246 Heather Way Resurfacing/Reconstruction*
2. *Materials presented at the November 27, 2024 community consultation session*