

## COMMON COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	M&C 2021-139
Report Date	April 27, 2021
Meeting Date	May 03, 2021
Service Area	Public Works and Transportation Services

His Worship Mayor Don Darling and Members of Common Council

***SUBJECT: 2021 Planned Traffic Safety Improvement Projects***

### ***AUTHORIZATION***

Primary Author	Commissioner/Dept. Head	City Manager
<b><i>Tim O'Reilly</i></b>	<b><i>Michael Hugenholtz</i></b>	<b><i>John Collin</i></b>

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS***

Your City Manager recommends:

1. Common Council support, pending a detailed traffic safety and operational study, the conversion of one or two centre vehicle lanes on Main Street North and the Viaduct to bike lanes, and
2. His Worship be supported in sending a letter to the Provincial Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure indicating support for said bike lanes.

### ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

Each year the City of Saint John undertakes several projects to help improve the safety and access of our transportation system for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists. This report summarizes the current plans for 2021, broken down into policy, communications, and infrastructure categories.

### ***PREVIOUS RESOLUTION***

N/A

### ***REPORT***

#### **Policy Improvements**

The most substantive policy change expected in 2021 related to traffic safety is the planned adoption of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final phase of MoveSJ, our new Transportation Plan. Community input has been collected and is being incorporated into final Phase 3 strategies. Common Council will be requested to endorse Phase 3 strategies and related recommendations later in 2021. Every

Phase 3 strategy contains traffic safety components such as the traffic calming and accident mitigation benefits of Modern Roundabouts, provision of cycling infrastructure to promote safe travel by that mode, and the policy, data-driven, and collaboration components of a City of Saint John Road Safety Strategy.

Enhancements to the City's Traffic Calming Policy, as recommended in MoveSJ, are also planned for 2021.

### **Communications**

Traffic safety is improved via the use of the 3 "E"s, Engineering, Enforcement, and Education. The latter involves road users of all transportation modes continuously becoming more aware of safe techniques and appreciation of their rights and responsibilities. Ultimately, we are all roadway users, as motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and we can do our part to help our roads become safer.

The City of Saint John will continue at least two programs into 2021 that will help educate road users to improve safety. The first is continuation of issuing "Traffic Tips" through the City's Communications Department. As common community concerns are raised, the City will issue a "Traffic Tip" to help all road users become more educated. Topics such as where to park safely on neighbourhood streets and yielding to pedestrians at signalized intersections are examples of these tips that will be issued.

The second communications program that will continue in 2021 will be the use of portable electronic speed display signs. These signs will move bi-weekly to various streets in Saint John where community concern of speeding is expressed. These signs are meant to provide feedback to motorists that may be speeding while the signs are present but are also hoped to have a longer lasting effect to correct speeding behaviours. Data collected from these signs will help inform the effectiveness of the signs and the need for more comprehensive measures via use of the City's Traffic Calming Policy.

### **Infrastructure**

In 2021 the City is planning to undertake several infrastructure projects that are expected to result in improved safety and access for the various transportation modes.

Work that will finish four Safer School Zone Projects are planned for 2021. These include Samuel de Champlain, Lakewood Heights, Devine Mercy, and Loch Lomond schools. Each of these projects include permanent electronic speed feedback signs at the limits of the respective school zones as well as installation or updates to crosswalks, all except Divine Mercy having activated signals installed at the crosswalks. At a later date this year Common Council will be asked to approve reductions to the speed limit in some school zones from 40

KM/H to 30 KM/H, provided the latter is now the default limit in urban areas. After 2021, only four elementary or middle schools in Saint John are left to receive Safer School Zone Projects before the program is complete, being Millidgeville North School, Islandview School, Beaconsfield School, and the new South Central Peninsula school (once constructed).

City staff continue to upgrade the audible messaging at existing Accessible Pedestrian Systems (APS) with the goal of all becoming accessible in both official languages by the end of 2021.

City staff are continuing to implement longer Walk times for pedestrians at signalized intersections in 2021. This was a recommendation of MoveSJ.

Completion of an APS crosswalk to the Tim Horton's at the Bayside Drive/Causeway intersection is planned for 2021.

Addition of APS to the signalized crosswalk on Churchill Boulevard to the YMCA is planned for 2021.

A new signalized crosswalk on Grandview Avenue between the Transit stop and the UCT employment facility is planned for 2021.

Completion of improvements at the Consumers/Westmorland traffic signals are planned for 2021. This project results in APS crosswalks on all legs of the intersection as well as addition of vehicle detection to improve traffic flow in the growing East side retail area.

Working with the Ethos Ridge developer, traffic calming measures, including the installation of rumble strips and electronic speed feedback signs, will be installed on two approaches to the Foster Thurston/ Sandy Point Road intersection in 2021.

The Saint John Ability Advisory Committee, the Saint John Transit Commission, and the City of Saint John have partnered to submit a funding application to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative in 2021. If successful, this funding will support installation of three signalized APS crosswalks at Transit stops in either 2021 or 2022, including:

- Millidge Avenue at Sussex Drive,
- Somerset Street at Lime Kiln Road, and
- Grandview Avenue at the NBCC.

A project proposed for University Avenue is expected to include three deliverables, including improved cycling facilities on this portion of the Campus Harbour Connection Bike Route, addressing pedestrian crossing safety concerns expressed by the community, and mitigating community congestion and traffic safety concerns near Millidge Avenue. City staff are currently undertaking

community consultations. The City has partnered with the Saint John Cycling Club to apply to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative to fund the project. Improvements are planned for 2021 or 2022, depending on feedback and funding.

A similar exercise to University Avenue will be undertaken later in 2021 for Heather Way. The outcome of this engineering and consultation effort will help inform extent of asphalt resurfacing that will be completed on that street in 2021.

As committed at Council's April 5, 2021 meeting, effort is already underway to identify improvements to accessibility of on-street barrier-free parking spaces in Uptown Saint John with a goal of implementing some identified improvements in 2021.

There are many other smaller infrastructure projects that would be completed in 2021 resulting in improved safety or access. These include projects such as addition of warning signs, parking restriction signs, and possibly marked crosswalks.

The many Capital projects planned for 2021 will include accessibility and/or safety improvements.

Aligning with our 2021 Work Plan, City staff continues to explore options to improve active transportation access on Main Street North. Similar to the temporary installation over two seasons approximately 10 years ago, one or both centre lanes between Chesley Drive and Union Street are being considered for possible protected bike lanes. Since mid-January, City staff has been attempting to ensure no Provincial policies would prevent the bike lane(s) from being installed, such as those related to Motor Vehicle Act regulations or limitations on access control to this Provincial Highway.

Although communications between City and Provincial staff continue, confirmation has yet to be provided. It would be helpful if the Mayor, on behalf of Common Council, would express support for this project to the Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure and ensure that there is political support to enable active transportation initiatives and provide a timely review and analysis of the proposed bike lanes.

City staff intend to complete a safety and operational traffic study after any policy-related concerns are overcome; this study would confirm the feasibility, safety, and impact of various options, as well as assess detailed design components.

## **A Collaborative Effort**

In addition to the collaboration already detailed in this report, City staff would like to highlight the cross-departmental teams that are involved in the many infrastructure projects described in this report. Crews from Public Works & Transportation, the City's Carpenter Shop, and Utilities & Infrastructure will all be engaged in different aspects of some of these 2021 projects.

Collaborating with internal crews to complete some of these projects has benefits and costs. Incremental labour costs are reduced by having existing crews fit this work into their schedules, which allows more projects to be completed with available resources. However, as these projects require work completed in a particular sequence by various crews and these crews have other work to complete, project schedules can be challenging to manage.

## **Managing Community Expectations**

Even though many traffic safety improvement projects have been completed, are planned for 2021, and will be completed in future years, community expectations must continue to be managed. There are several reasons why many community requests either will be delayed beyond timelines expected, will be resolved differently than requested, or not resolved at all. Examples include:

- The number of requests exceeding resource capacity,
- Seeking broader community feedback that is needed to consider different perspectives on the issue,
- A different solution than suggested would solve the community concern more effectively,
- The solution would actually create a net detriment to the community,
- By-law changes that are required to resolve the issue,
- Ensuring infrastructure installed can be managed throughout its lifecycle (asset management),
- Preventing road user "Information Overload",
- Alignment with industry best practices, and
- Alignment with regulations.

In every case, it is staff's intent to understand a community member's concern and maintain communications. This is good customer service, particularly needed in situations where the safety of community members are of concern. However, ultimately community members' concerns may not always be addressed or in the way or within timelines requested.

## ***STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT***

This report aligns with Common Council's Safe, Vibrant City's priorities.

This report aligns with MoveSJ.

This report aligns with City staff's 2021 Work Plan, which included intent to explore active transportation opportunities, including and specifically on Main Street North.

***SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES***

Projects identified in this report are budgeted within available resources or, as noted in the report, may be delayed until external funding is secured.

***ATTACHMENTS***

City staff presentation