

**MINUTES**  
**PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Held electronically via MS TEAMS**  
**April 8, 2021 at 5:30 pm**

Present: Councillor Zac de Vries (Chair), Ericka Amador, Sophia Baker-French, Sonja Cunningham, Lisa Gunderson, Brittany Higginson, Richard Michaels, Doug Pascoe, Peter Rantucci, Shawn Steele (6:17 pm)

Staff: Troy McKay, Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services; David Williams, Engineering Supervisor; Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

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**Minutes**

**MOVED by D. Pascoe and Seconded by P. Rantucci: “That the Minutes of the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting held March 12, 2021, be adopted as circulated.”**

**CARRIED**

**CHAIR’S REMARKS**

The Chair informed members that T. Alexander has had to resign from the committee due to work conflicts.

**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES**

The Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services noted that this item has already gone to Council in February and feedback was provided to the Capital Regional District (CRD), but it is important to continue to have conversations about transportation. An overview of Saanich’s Regional Transportation priorities was given and the following was noted:

- The CRD’s current mandate has three actions; this committee can continue to provide input on the third action which is to formalize coordination across jurisdictions on matters such as infrastructure, investments, transportation and land use policy, and behavior change.
- CRD have suggested that each municipality will be given equal points for setting priorities. Concern was expressed that Saanich is much larger than other municipalities and should probably have greater influence in setting priorities.
- Saanich priorities came from recommendations from staff informed by a variety of Saanich plans. It is important to note that mobility causes over half of Saanich’s Greenhouse Gasses (GHG).
- Understanding that the plan is a strong land use plan, priority #1 for Saanich is to continue to implement the vision and settlement concept outlined in the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The remaining Saanich priorities are: #2 to implement rapid bus services fully; #3 to develop regional “vision zero” for road safety; #4 to continue to develop the regional trail system; and, #5 to advocate for funding. This is important for Saanich as the current federal funding levels are not where they need to be to support funding levels. These must be accelerated to meet goals and targets.
- Council passed a motion on February 8, 2021 and a letter was sent to the CRD in this regard.

Comments, questions and responses to questions noted:

- In terms of development oriented transit, a number of issues play into this. In Saanich we are challenged on the way the street network is put together. We do not have a standardized grid and some areas difficult to reach. Our streets do not support high quality transit to some areas. There is lots of demand in the UVic area for housing and there is only one major road (McKenzie). There are some decent stops there but it is not a high class transit road. Council has asked staff to work with BC Transit on how to further develop McKenzie corridor as a transit friendly route.
- There are four rapid bus routes that are important and all start at Uptown and travel to downtown, to the ferries, to UVic and to the Westshore.
- Suggestion made to look at the Okanagan model when the STPCO bus system was formed. The regional communities came together in terms of developing the transportation system.
- Local governments and the CRD will discuss governance and it is not known what that conversation will look like. Local governments were asked for their top 3-5 regional priorities.
- If local governments do not agree with each other on priorities or have competing priorities the CRD will have to address this. Right now the process is they receive feedback from all local government and will start to reconcile commonalities and differences. The results will be brought back to the CRD Board and they will determine what needs to be actioned now or later. The piece they added about reflecting the climate emergency will be interesting to see in terms of how this will be applied to the priorities.
- Appreciation was expressed on the multiple plans guiding the strategy and that support has continued on priority climate initiatives. It is good to look at opportunities to move forward for safe pedestrians, cyclists and transit.
- Regionally it makes sense to think together to grow and transport across the region. Transit needs to be fast and accessible and “Vision Zero” is very important. Regional adoption of this is needed to make it more comfortable for cyclists and pedestrians.
- In reply to a question about the duration and lifecycle of these projects, it is hoped that some specific projects that could be completed within the next six years. Rapid buses will be complicated and will take time and money.
- Comment made that six years is good as more growth occurs the municipality will be able to review their priorities.
- In terms of how to bring in regional priorities/partners together, this has been done in Vancouver and other places. It would be good if all regions understood how unique BC transit is, as 50% of Transit funding comes from the government. Most jurisdictions provide capital but not operating funds. If people knew the formula, and knew about funding then it may change attitudes about transit.

The Chair advised they would like to see this committee discuss governance and give some feedback to Council. Land use planning and transportation policies are key. For the province to invest, it will need to be demonstrated how Saanich policies would help the government.

**MOVED by S. Baker-French and Seconded by E. Amador, “That the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee receive the presentation from the Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services regarding the Regional Transportation Priorities for information.”**

**CARRIED**

## **LEADING PEDESTRIAN INTERVALS/TRAFFIC SIGNAL PHASING**

The Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services introduced the Engineering Supervisor who provided information regarding signals in the municipality. The following was noted:

- Leading pedestrian Intervals (LPI) are a fairly recent project that Engineering has been doing for the last couple of years. LPIs or pedestrian head-starts are currently installed at 15 intersections and gives priority to pedestrians. This is a priority in the Active Transportation Plan (ATP).
- There are about 112 traffic signals in Saanich but we don't have control over all of them. Twenty-two of the busiest signals are under the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and are located along Blanshard, Vernon, and McKenzie. About 84 intersections are under Saanich's control; 61 are vehicle and pedestrian and 23 are pedestrian actuated.
- When we began the project, staff looked at the time the signals were on and feedback was they were too short. The walk signal is when pedestrian can proceed and has right-of-way over all vehicles. When don't walk and flash don't walk are lit pedestrians are not to enter the roadway as it is illegal to start then.
- Over the years there has been much progress to update signal timings for slower walkers. Timing used to be 4-7 seconds to cross the street regardless of length.
- Saanich has used 8 seconds since 2005 but are still hearing they need to be longer.
- The ATP provides longer walk signal provides substantial time increase to cross.
- The flashing don't walk countdown is intended to allow pedestrians to finish crossing.
- Pedestrian timing with leading pedestrian intervals changes were made because this improves safety, barriers and comfort for pedestrians. Saanich is a leader with this technology in BC along with Surrey, and also nearby Seattle.
- A trial project at Cedar Hill Cross Road at Braefoot in 2019 showed LPI works and helps drivers see pedestrians crossing. Drivers stopped inching forward and behave more considerately. Positive feedback received and there is overall acceptance of this system. There is no extra delay for drivers as they would already be waiting for pedestrians anyway.
- One more recent project took it a step further and Saanich installed LPI and LBI (for bicycles) at Royal Oak and Lochside Drive trail crossing.
- One of the successes is they are cost effective; the cost is less than \$10,000, improves accessibility, and includes countdown timers. Additionally an ICBC partnership is available for funding. The safety benefits are significant: there are no available stats yet in a Saanich context but other jurisdictions are seeing a 60% reduction in collision with vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists.
- Phasing of signals is not compatible with all areas as it can cause 'yellow trap or left-turn trap' with left-turn phases for areas where cars turn left first.
- Staff have identified areas where about 30 more LPIs can be added in the next two years.
- Information can be located on the Saanich website on where LPIs are installed and planned to be installed. Some of these are done via requests received and also through the safe routes to schools program. There are many LPIs close to schools, and also near major commercial centres (areas with lots of drivers and pedestrians).

Responses to questions from committee members noted:

- Regarding intersections Saanich does not control, staff definitely have lots of conversations with MOTI, but it is challenging to get traction for changes in intersections. Many intersections have advance left turns so Saanich couldn't do LPIs.
- Question asked how easy it is to change timing of pedestrian lights. Staff replied Saanich is not monitoring our traffic flows but does look at volume with the annual count program. We will become more proactive about changing timing to adapt to

development or any other land use changes. A traffic model (SYNCRO) is used and staff are able to run different scenarios with this.

- Comment made countdowns as well as audio signals make a good difference and staff was thanked in this regard.
- In terms of the left turn yellow trap and whether it is possible to have pedestrians cross and then allow left turns and then regular traffic staff replied they will look at 30 intersections where this can be done. The other 31 intersections need to be figured out as some issues surround funding.
- Fully protected left turns are for very big and busy intersections. Staff need to investigate improvements that can be made for pedestrians at those intersections.
- We are working within a certain amount of time as all signals operate under a cycle length; and usually try to keep it below 100 seconds to avoid traffic waiting for too long.
- Suggestion made that an automatic light changing system versus a person pushing a button would be good for half the day. Cyclists don't have signal buttons and have to get on the sidewalk so automatic would be good.
- Staff noted that "ped recall" is the automatic go for pedestrians and that some areas are automatic. Many intersections don't have constant volume and so staff look to see traffic flows happen. Striking a balance is challenging and staff receive feedback regarding intersections.
- A cyclist button is another project staff are working on and there is a list of locations to put those in.
- Question raised about an issue at the crossing at West Saanich Road and Elk Lake Road. Staff will investigate.
- In reply to a question, it was noted that flashing headlights will not change the traffic lights in Saanich.

## **2021 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET OVERVIEW**

The Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services spoke to the transportation budget, and noted engineering capital investments are about \$61M over all municipal assets.

- Funds are used to further leverage with grant funding. Last year Saanich received \$1.2M in funding for rebuilding assets and working on the Active Transportation Plan.
- Breaking it down, \$11.1M is split across broad areas for transportation. Expensive infrastructure needs to be replaced fairly frequently.
- There are many projects on the list; Engineering's capital projects booklet has projects listed for the year, and the five largest projects being worked on were noted.
- They are in the middle of phase one construction to implement short term improvements on Shelbourne. Phase two will start construction mid-2022 and will take about 18 months to build. Phase three will start when the second phase is completed. Phase two roads are in the worst condition and will improve connections.
- The existing network was shown and we will be adding some in 2021 budget. The 2022-2025 budget projects will really improve the area.
- There are some gaps: it is difficult to cross Highway 17, the Mount Doug park area is challenging with the many large trees along the road but a connection is needed there. Connections to Victoria and Esquimalt are needed as well.
- When asked if there are there opportunities to shift priorities towards active transportation the Manager noted that the \$61M is the total for all of Saanich and there is little funding for new assets and infrastructure. This budget is just maintaining existing infrastructure. Accelerating the Climate Plan may result in an extra \$2M for projects if we are fortunate enough to receive funding.
- In terms of gradual phasing, when streets are repaved they try to optimize the pavement width. They are reallocating road space on Shelbourne Street and will likely to same on the Gorge and Quadra Street. The Active Transportation Plan should help

- with many issues and obtain improvements when development occurs. It is difficult to retrofit existing streets to something different after development. In terms of leverage we cannot recover costs that are already spent.
- Infrastructure improvements are to be done on Shelbourne and Garnet. McKenzie needed to be done for cycling to UVic and had to build it before development occurred. New DCC program is helpful in consolidating funding and allowing to do projects at right time and either with or without development.
  - Regarding the times construction occurs; there is a policy to issue permits to contractors or staff doing work and the policy lays out the type of roads and when they can work on them. It is always a balance to get a full day work in and make it safe.
  - The 5-year financial plan is done and Engineering staff will work with Finance on long-range financial plan of 25+ years.

A brief discussion was held regarding the recent 30km speed limit and the associated timeline for this.

**MOVED by S. Baker-French and Seconded by L. Gundersen, “That the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee receive the presentation from the Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services regarding the 2021 Transportation Budget Overview for information.”**

**CARRIED**

## **NON-CONFORMING COLLECTOR ROADS**

Discussion occurred regarding road speed limits of 40 or 30km/h on collector roads without infrastructure. It was noted that roads have different infrastructure for different reasons; some roads have a centre line, some have painted bike lanes and sidewalks (or other variations) and others do not.

The Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services acknowledged there are big differences in roads and replied to questions and comments:

- Finnerty Road is a collector road as are to Cedar Hill, and Emily Carr Roads and there are lots of variations to these. Many thousands of vehicles use them daily.
- Staff are already directed to do 370 km of streets where the speed limit is changing and this is a good starting place.
- Staff is also pleased with the 30km/h limit as it gives more room to grow; we may be able to have a 40km/h growth in the future in some areas and the province may be able to do some testing in the future for us. Saanich can also learn from other jurisdictions.
- One barrier to looking at some of these collector roads is a staff capacity issue. There is limited ability to take on new work and a very large public education campaign is coming with the new 30km/h speed limit. Having two different speed limit pilots at the same time would be of concern.
- Some collector roads may need to be looked at and have a detailed review as was done with Prospect Lake Road.
- The Active Transportation Plan is a Saanich-wide plan and we have heard from rural Saanich so there is a specific plan for this area. We have different design guidelines for streets in Saanich.

Committee comments:

- This leads to broader discussion that is needed about road classifications.
- Need to consider limiting factors are both from engineering design and traffic volume standpoints and see what can be done to improve active transportation and road safety in general.

- Collector roads are to be 11 metres wide, and many rural roads are 5-7 metres wide and they become non-conforming collector roads. Traffic volumes can be between 1,000–12,000 vehicles per day.
- When non-conforming collector roads have limited width you can only do so much with speed and safety infrastructure.
- Road classifications should be looked at further and split into urban vs rural roads and also maybe with growth, put pressure towards major roads.

The Chair suggested that this could be discussed further at a future meeting.

\*\*\* R. Michaels left the meeting at 7:36 pm \*\*\*

## **ROUNDTABLE**

It was noted that discussion on the draft Cordova Bay Local Area Plan is upcoming. This went before Council a number of weeks ago and Council has requested input from advisory committees.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm, the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 13, 2021.

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Councillor de Vries, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary