



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Council
From: Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering
Date: 11/22/2023
Subject: Final Draft Active Transportation Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the updated Active Transportation Plan.

PURPOSE

To present the updated Active Transportation Plan (ATP) for Council's consideration.

DISCUSSION

Background

Council adopted Saanich's first active transportation plan, *Moving Saanich Forward* in June 2018 as a guide for investment in active transportation improvements over 30 years. The award-winning plan established a vision, goals, and targets. It also outlined strategies and actions to ensure progress on policies, standards, infrastructure, and programs for active transportation.

Saanich is committed to monitoring and updating the ATP every five years. The purpose of this update has been to refresh the current ATP to support implementation of active transportation policies, standards, infrastructure, and programs into the future. The updated Plan will guide investment and decision-making for active transportation in the next five years, and beyond.

The update focused on the following priorities:

- Alignment with current policy documents, including recent plans and strategies for climate change, active transportation, land use, and road safety
- Incorporating current demographic and travel data, as well as crash data and statistics on new and updated infrastructure
- Addressing e-bikes and micro-mobility trends
- Incorporating Vision Zero and a Safe Systems Approach to road safety
- Reviewing progress towards achieving the vision, goals, and targets, as well as select strategies and actions and priorities for implementation
- Updating mapping
- Developing a framework for a future traffic calming policy

In addition to the priorities outlined above, incorporating an equity approach into the updated ATP has also been a key focus.

Planning Process

As per the approved Terms of Reference, the process to update the ATP was completed in five phases (Figure 1).

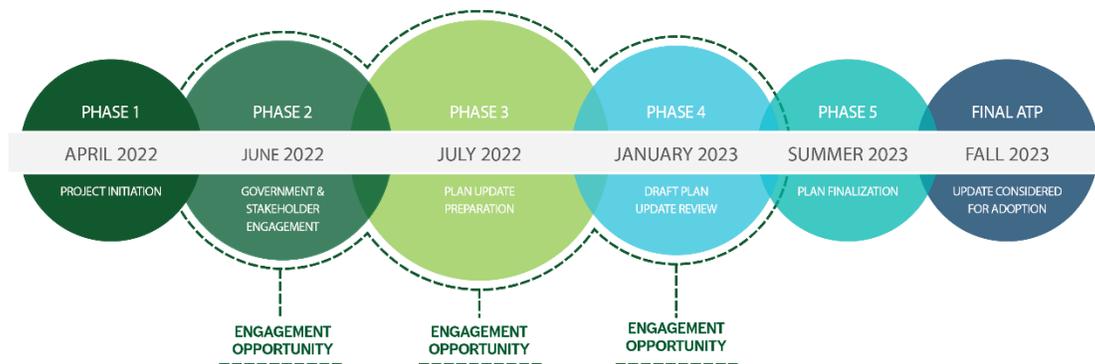


Figure 1: Project timeline

A summary of the activities undertaken by phase is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of activities by phase

PHASE	ACTIVITIES
1 (Apr-May 2022)	<p>Launch the project and undertake the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect relevant background information and data • Develop background materials and create a project website • Confirm the list of stakeholders and the project advisory committee • Prepare the engagement strategy
2 (Jun 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement
3 (Jul 2022 – Feb 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an equity review of key documents • Undertake research and technical analysis • Begin development of traffic management framework to support a future traffic calming policy and program • Stakeholder engagement • Prepare the Draft Updated ATP based on technical analysis and input received through stakeholder engagement
4 (Mar-Jun 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement to seek feedback on the Draft Updated ATP and to assess support for the draft plan.
5 (Jul-Dec 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize the Draft Updated ATP • Present the Final Draft ATP to Council

Community Engagement

Significant community engagement was undertaken in the development of the ATP in 2018. Given this, engagement was structured for the scale and purpose of an update and was not as fulsome as it would be for a new long-range plan.

Stakeholder and public engagement occurred throughout the planning process, with specific engagement periods implemented in Phases 2, 3, and 4. In Phases 2 and 3 the engagement process focused primarily on connecting with key stakeholders to gather input on the proposed scope of the update, and to learn more about their priorities, concerns, and ideas for the updated plan. In Phase 4, the focus was on broad community engagement to seek feedback and gauge support for the Draft Updated ATP.

Details of the engagement processes and the feedback received are document in the engagement summaries dated, February 2023 and September 2023. Both documents are available online at www.saanich.ca/atpupdate.

Participation in engagement activities in Phases 2-4 is summarized below:

Phases 2 and 3

- Over the course of the project, approximately 50 individuals, organizations, agencies, and groups with an interest in active transportation were contacted. In addition, governments including local First Nations, neighbouring municipalities, and the Capital Regional District were invited to participate in the planning process and provide input.
- 2 meetings with accessibility representatives
- 1 meeting with rural stakeholders
- 2 community-based workshops with a total of 14 stakeholders participating
- 1 technical workshop with a total of 7 stakeholders participating
- 1 workshop with the Active Transportation Advisory Committee

Phase 4

- 600 responses to a joint online survey. 475 responses to the questions on the ATP
- 327 connections with residents at pop-up locations around Saanich
- 86 attendees at two open houses
- 7 discussions with equity deserving groups including seniors, immigrants, and persons with disabilities.

In support of the methods of engagement outlined above, communication tools used to reach stakeholders and residents included email messages and notifications, social media, print media, utility bill inserts mailed to individual households, and website updates.

Advisory Committees

The Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) was the advisory committee to this project from April 2022 to March 2023. The Committee's mandate and membership was

consistent with the subject and goals of this project. When ATAC disbanded in March, the Project Team began meeting regularly with the new Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

Other advisory committees were also engaged at various times throughout the planning process. They included:

2022-2023

- Planning, Transportation, and Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Parks, Trails, and Recreation Advisory Committee

2023-present

- Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) Advisory Committee
- Natural Areas, Parks, and Trails (NAPT) Advisory Committee
- Sustainability and Climate Action (SCA) Advisory Committee

At its regular meeting on November 9, 2023 the NAPT passed the following motion in support of the Draft ATP:

“That the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee (NAPT) supports the Final Draft Active Transportation Plan with minor updates to the mapping, which are currently underway.”

At its regular meeting on November 23, 2023 the TAC passed the following motion in support of the Draft ATP:

“That the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) supports the Final Draft Active Transportation Plan with minor updates to the mapping, which are currently underway.”

Plan Content

The purpose of the update to the ATP was to build on the existing plan and, to make revisions and add new content, where appropriate based on the approved priorities for this project, as well as public and stakeholder feedback. It was also to remove content that was no longer relevant. Table 2 below provides a summary of the changes to the document, organized by part (chapter).

Table 2: Summary of Changes in the Updated ATP by Part

PART	UPDATE IN THE PLAN
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial Acknowledgement • General information updates to reflect the current planning context • The District’s Active Transportation achievements since 2018

2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened rationale for active transportation – stronger links to climate action, economic, health, social, and safety benefits • Updated community profile to reflect current demographics, land use, policy context, travel patterns, infrastructure, road safety and new mobility trends • A new map (Figure 16) of the existing trails network • New section, including a map (Figure 5) on community equity • New section, including maps (Figures 21 and 22) on road safety and crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists • Increased profile for Rural Saanich
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised vision and goals • Alignment of the mode share target with the 2020 Climate Plan • New section on micromobility
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New principles to guide implementation of the plan • New and revised actions under the themes of Connections, Convenience, and Culture • Reference to the BC Active Transportation Guide • Refinements to the long-term sidewalk, bicycle, and trails network maps • New definitions for Multi-Use Trails and Recreational Trails • New content on traffic calming to inform a future policy and program
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated implementation tables (Tables 1-3) • Revised network prioritization criteria for sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure projects • New prioritization criteria for trails projects • New mapping for priority sidewalk, bicycle, and trails projects (Figures 29-31) • New tables to describe priority sidewalk, bicycle, and trails projects (Tables 4-6) • New maps to show buildout of the bicycle network by 2030 and 2040

Updated actions

The 96 actions outlined in Part 4 provide the necessary direction to realize the plan vision, which is to develop universally accessible, complete, and connected walking, rolling, and cycling networks for people of all ages and abilities.

Through this update several changes were made to the existing actions. New and/or revised actions were added to address issues related to equity, accessibility, trees in proximity to transportation infrastructure, climate change and adaptation, road safety and active transportation in rural areas. In some cases, actions that were redundant or no longer relevant were removed.

Priority projects

New to the plan is a series of maps and tables describing the short- and medium-term priorities for new sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure, as well as trails. The purpose of these new elements is to provide greater transparency about the projects and investments that will be made over the next 17 years to improve walking, cycling, and rolling in Saanich.

The maps and tables in Part 5 of the plan were created based on discussions with Saanich staff and feedback from stakeholders and the public. The following network prioritization criteria was also considered:

- Proximity to land use generators such as corridors, centres, and villages, schools, and parks
- Addressing network gaps
- Road classification and a priority on major and collector roads where vehicle speeds and volumes are higher
- Access to transit
- Opportunities to improve road safety in locations of concern
- Equity-deserving areas
- Opportunities to coordinate with other planned projects
- Support in other plans and documents

Feedback, received through engagement, help to inform further refinements to the priority projects. Public and stakeholder comments included recommendations for new priority projects, as well as revisions to identified projects such as extensions or modifications. A significant amount of feedback was received on the proposed timelines for the different projects. In many cases, residents requested accelerated timelines.

The project team made changes to several projects to better reflect the feedback received. For projects on Glanford Avenue and Carey Road, staff met with members of the Carey Area Residents' Association (CARA) to discuss changes and make refinements based on their input. Changes to the timing of projects on Cordova Bay Road were shared with the Cordova Bay Association for Community Affairs (CBACA).

Equity Analysis

Transportation equity addresses how the benefits and costs of transportation systems are distributed and whether there are disparities between different communities. Equity is a key consideration in transportation planning, as the allocation of public resources can significantly impact quality of life, including the livability of neighbourhoods and individuals' ability to access services, education, and economic opportunities.

Equity-deserving individuals and groups are defined as those facing significant barriers to participation in different facets of society due to policies and practices that result in inequitable treatment. Marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social, economic, legal and/or environmental obstacles, based on such factors as age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, and transgender status. (Government of Canada at: [Guiding principles on diversity of content online - Canada.ca](https://www150.ca.ca/guiding-principles-on-diversity-of-content-online)).

Active Transportation provides individuals with healthier, more affordable, and more sustainable options to move around Saanich. Identifying equity as a goal and planning for future investments in active transportation are important steps taken in this updated plan to create a more equitable transportation system.

Equity was a key consideration in the process to develop the Draft Updated Plan. Efforts to address equity through the planning process included:

- Completion of equity reviews for the existing ATP and the Communications and Engagement Strategy. The purpose of these reviews was to identify gaps and provide

recommendations on how to incorporate and/or strengthen equity in the documents and through the planning process.

- Development of a spatial (GIS-based) tool, using census data to better understand the geographic distribution of equity-deserving groups in Saanich. This tool was used to identify locations where current and future engagement should be focused, as well as areas where infrastructure improvements could be prioritized.
- Hosting small group discussions with equity-deserving individuals and organizations to learn about the needs and barriers they face to accessing the transportation system in Saanich.
- Integration of equity into the Draft ATP.

ALTERNATIVES

That Council:

1. Approves the recommendation outlined in this staff report
2. Rejects the recommendation outlined in this staff report
3. Provides alternative direction to staff

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with adoption of the Draft ATP. However, it is important to note that the costs associated with the ongoing implementation continue to rise year over year. The capital costs for construction of new infrastructure and the reconstruction of existing infrastructure that has reached the end of its useful life have increased by approximately 9% per year since the ATP was adopted in 2018. This equates to a nearly 50% increase in construction costs since 2018.

Increases in capital funding have not kept pace with inflationary increases. Aligned with adoption of the Climate Plan, Council increased funding for implementation of the ATP by \$2 million annually to accelerate implementation. Unfortunately, this acceleration funding has been absorbed by the increasing capital construction costs, and as such the full implementation timeline for the ATP is 2050. An update to the sustainable funding levels for Transportation is expected to be presented to Council in 2024 as part of ongoing work on asset management.

On January 10, 2022, Council passed the following motion:

“That Council direct staff to report back on the options and implications for reducing the implementation timeline of the Active Transportation Plan to 15 years through a phased implementation approach.”

Staff will present options to Council for reducing the implementation timeline of the ATP after the new asset management sustainable funding levels are established and a funding strategy is in place. This is expected to be in late 2024. These options will reflect the updated ATP and the inflationary realities of 2024.

A lesson learned from the first 5 years of implementation of the ATP is that while Engineering is well positioned to implement infrastructure, the department lacks capacity as it relates to the long-term planning and analysis of our transportation system and transportation policy development and implementation. The 2024 budget process presents an opportunity to review resourcing as it relates to meeting the objectives of the ATP.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The current ATP was approved by Council in 2018. The Draft ATP builds on this plan and will provide an updated framework to guide investment and decision-making for active transportation for the next five years and beyond.

Implementation of relevant goals and prioritized initiatives identified in the District's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan will begin once the Draft ATP is approved and implementation gets underway.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

External Plans and Strategies

Several external plans and strategies have been developed since 2018 and through this update an effort has been made to ensure that the revised ATP aligns with the directions articulated in these documents.

Two key provincial documents are relevant to the updated ATP include the Clean BC plan to lower climate-changing emissions by 40% below 2007 levels by 2030, and the Active Transportation Strategy "*Move, Commute, Connect*", which aims to double the percentage of trips taken by active modes by 2030 in an effort to meet legislated targets of reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, active transportation plans from other jurisdictions, including Esquimalt, View Royal, Central Saanich, North Saanich, and Victoria have also informed this update.

Saanich Plans and Strategies

Policy documents in Saanich that have informed the Draft Updated ATP include existing plans and strategies that are currently being updated such as the Official Community Plan (OCP) and Urban Forest Strategy, as well as new plans that have been developed since 2018.

The OCP is the main document that guides growth and change in Saanich. The Draft Updated ATP reflects with the values, vision, goals, and policies of the OCP.

The 2020 Climate Plan identifies active transportation as a key strategy to reduce GHG emissions and address climate change. The goal in the Draft Updated ATP to increase active forms of transportation and reduce vehicle trips mirrors the direction in the Climate Plan, as does the revised target to achieve 50% of all trips taken by active modes by 2030. The Draft ATP also aligns with Climate Plan priorities related to transit-supportive policies and practices and e-mobility.

Saanich's Electric Mobility Strategy, also adopted in 2020, prioritizes a rapid transition to e-bikes. The Draft Updated ATP supports the increase in electric mobility, including e-bikes by addressing potential environmental and social benefits, as well as the implications for the provision of safe, connected, and convenient infrastructure for these new forms of transportation.

The Urban Forest Strategy articulates a vision for Saanich's trees and their associated ecosystems (collectively referred to as the urban forest) that exist in parks, on private, commercial, and institutional lands, along highways, roads, and trails and in open spaces. The urban forest is a critical component of green infrastructure in Saanich and the vision and direction in Urban Forest Strategy to protect and enhance the trees and their ecosystems, is reflected in the Draft Updated ATP.

Transportation-Related Plans and Initiatives

Several transportation projects and initiatives are currently underway that correspond with the purpose and objectives of the Draft Updated ATP. These are summarized below and include the Road Safety Action Plan (RSAP), implementation of the Speed Limit Establishment Policy, and development of a Traffic Calming Policy Framework.

Road Safety Action Plan

The RSAP is a new framework to support implementation of road safety policies and actions over the next 10 years. It will address safety for all road users, and especially people who walk, roll, or cycle and are more vulnerable to injury and death when involved in crashes. The plan will be grounded in Vision Zero and a Safe Systems Approach.

Development of the RSAP is currently underway. Once completed, it will articulate a vision and guiding principles, as well as a target to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on roads by 50% by 2030. The RSAP will also outline actions to improve road safety, and a process and timeline for prioritized implementation and monitoring of the plan.

Saanich's Official Community Plan (OCP) and the ATP envision a multimodal transportation network where pedestrians (including people who use transit), cyclists, equestrians, and other mobility users share the roads with drivers. Prioritizing road safety is an important step to ensure residents are safe when they travel in Saanich.

Speed Limit Establishment Policy Implementation

The Speed Limit Establishment Policy was approved by Council in July 2022 to help guide changes to speed limits on Saanich roads.

Research indicates that vehicle speed is a safety issue and a barrier to people using more active forms of transportation. Implementation of the Speed Limit Establishment Policy is an important step in managing motor vehicle speeds on Saanich roads and supporting a more multi-modal transportation system.

Traffic Calming Policy Framework

At the February 28, 2022, meeting Council directed staff to “consider the development of a traffic calming policy in the update of the Active Transportation Plan.”

In response to Council’s direction, work on a traffic management framework that embodies the principles of Vision Zero and a Safe Systems approach is underway. This framework will be the foundation for a traffic calming policy and program for Saanich to be developed in 2024.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Population and Land Use Change, and Climate Change

The District is committed to increasing housing supply and affordability by achieving the mandated targets established by the provincial government in 2023. These include tripling the number of permits over the next five years to allow for 4,610 new housing units. To achieve these targets Saanich will explore new housing opportunities on municipally owned lands, as well as infill housing in neighbourhoods, and intensification on major transportation corridors, including Quadra Street and McKenzie Avenue.

The Engineering and Planning Departments will work together to meet the province’s mandated housing targets, while providing a connected and convenient multi-modal transportation network to support projected population growth and land use changes. A common goal for these two departments will be to ensure that people can live affordably and move safely and easily through the community using sustainable transportation modes.

Engineering will also need to work with the Sustainability and Strategic Initiatives Division to achieve community-wide emission reduction targets.

Trees and New Active Transportation Infrastructure

The Transportation Division will work with the Parks and Sustainability and Strategic Initiatives Divisions to achieve an equitable distribution of tree canopy throughout the District and to ensure that green infrastructure is considered as part of new active transportation infrastructure projects. Together, staff will explore options to retain existing trees during the planning and design phases of active transportation projects. If trees cannot be retained and protected, staff will explore options to replace trees at a ratio of 3:1 in the same local area, when possible.

CONCLUSION

Saanich’s award-winning Active Transportation Plan was adopted by Council in 2018. The Plan is now five years old, and while much of it remains relevant, an update was needed to support implementation of active transportation policies, standards, infrastructure, and programs into the future.

The process to update the ATP was completed in five phases and included several opportunities for stakeholder and public engagement. Throughout the document changes were made to address the approved project priorities, which included alignment with current policy, updated demographics and travel data, a focus on electric mobility and new mobility trends, greater emphasis on road safety, and incorporation of an equity approach.

Updates to the Draft ATP also reflect the input received through engagement.

Short- and medium-term priorities projects for new sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure, as well as trails have been added to the updated plan to provide greater transparency about the investments that will be made over the next 17 years to improve walking, cycling, and rolling in Saanich.

If approved by Council, the Final Draft ATP will help guide investment and decision-making in active transportation for the next five years, and beyond.

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Attachments:

Attachment A: Final Draft Active Transportation Plan

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Engineering.

Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer