

## **Richardson Street BMP Priority Network Project**

### **Engineering & Public Works**

#### **Purpose**

During discussion of the latest Phase of the Bicycle Master Plan implementation at the CoTW meeting of March 18, staff were requested to provide some additional information on the Richardson Street bicycle route.

The purpose of this Briefing Note is to provide Council with a “refresher” on the project including a summary of the engagement process and offer context on the design treatment recommended by staff and approved by Council.

Over the past number of weeks there has been public discussion about this route on social media, through letters to the editor and email correspondence. Staff are also aware of the “Change.org” petition recently sent to the City. Through this public dialogue there have been statements and opinions expressed about the city’s outreach process and the robustness and rationale for the route choice and specific design treatments.

In conjunction with the information provided within this note, staff are also in the process of updating information and materials on the City’s website to ensure there is easily available and up to date information about this project, its history and scope.

#### **Background**

The Richardson Street project was approved by Council in July 2020 along with the Kings-Haultain, Kimta / E&N, and Government Street North corridors. The design process, and associated public consultation efforts, were completed for all four corridors at the same time between July 2019 to February 2020.

Since Council approval, work has been underway on the detailed design for these routes along with significant planning efforts for the co-ordination with other capital projects such as underground utility replacement and road re-paving. Some of these are already underway on Richardson Street in advance of the planned Cycling Network improvements.

The Richardson Street detailed design is now complete and tendering of the project (bundled with the Kings-Haultain, Oaklands Connector and Fernwood Connector projects) is scheduled to take place in the next few weeks with construction starting in early Summer 2021.

Within the July 2020 CoTW report, staff sought to provide a comprehensive description of the Richardson Street project including information on the recommended treatment and within the associated Appendices, a fulsome overview of the community and stakeholder engagement process and feedback. A link to that report is provided. [Committee of the Whole - July 02, 2020 \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)

Within all the BMP reports to Council over the last few years, staff have provided a comprehensive package of information and as a result, the CoTW reports have typically required extensive reading! It is therefore beneficial for staff to provide this additional note to allow a more focused sharing of information for the Richardson Street corridor specifically.

Given the level of continued interest in the project, this has necessitated providing a much increased length of Briefing Note than staff would typically provide.

### **Project Comments**

Staff have sought to provide information and background on some of the main themes (and by no means all) of the dialogue currently happening and it is hoped that the information provided will be of assistance when read in conjunction with the July 2020 CoTW report.

#### ***Insufficient consultation on selecting Richardson Street for the AAA priority network.***

Richardson Street was first identified in 2011 as an inter-municipal cycling corridor in the *CRD Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan*. The route directly links to McNeill Avenue which is also the designated active transportation corridor in the District of Oak Bay's Official Community Plan. City staff have had a long-standing and collaborative working relationship with all municipalities when it comes to planning inter-municipal connections for driving, transit, cycling and walking. The development of this regional strategy, which involved all 13 municipalities and broad public input, identified Richardson Street as the preferred shared, traffic calmed corridor.

In 2012, Richardson Street was included in the approved cycling network in Victoria's *Official Community Plan*. The OCP had its own extensive public consultation and was formally referred to adjacent municipalities and the CRD for feedback.

In 2015/2016, the City undertook a consultation process on the design of the All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Cycling Network – also known at that time as the *#Biketoria Study*. Fairfield Road was originally identified through the technical analysis as the east-west route but after public feedback, Richardson Street was recommended as the priority corridor. Fairfield Road was not prioritized based on community concerns about on-street parking loss associated with protected bike lanes as well as impacts to the Frequent Transit services (Appendix A includes images from the network study). The design concept developed for Richardson Street through this study was for a shared road, traffic calmed approach and the AAA priority network was approved in 2016.

In 2019, after an extensive multi-month consultation process, Richardson Street was also re-affirmed as the priority AAA route in the approved *Fairfield Local Area Plan*.

#### ***Insufficient consultation on Richardson Street project designs.***

The concept design consultation was held between October 2019 and February 2020. There were more than 2,000 people involved and feedback was collected in person at public open house events, via email, on-line surveys and through Community Association meetings. Opportunities to participate were promoted through on-street signs, pop-up stations, newspaper and social media advertisements, television new stories, radio interviews, and on the City's website. (Note: this process was completed before the launch of the City's on-line engagement platform which requires pre-registration and can provide demographic and neighbourhood

representation statistics). Regular staff to staff discussions between Victoria and Oak Bay were also undertaken both in advance of and subsequent to this consultation.

Like any road retrofit project, there was a range of views including opposition to the changes.

Participation included:

- Online survey (738 participants)
- Community meetings with Neighbourhood Associations (8 sessions ~ 145 people)
- Corridor tours (4 tours ~ 150 participants)
- Pop-up on-street events / information stations (6 stations ~ 340 participants)
- Public Open house events (4 events ~ 750 people)
- Agency partner design review and discussion meetings (11 meetings – ICBC, Victoria Fire, Victoria Police, BC Emergency Health Services, BC Transit)
- Meetings with cycling businesses and walking & cycling advocacy groups
- Design discussions and consultation with the Active Transportation Advisory Committee
- Designs posted online providing opportunity for email feedback (More than 500 unique emails)

As noted above, with any road projects and in this case a cycling project, staff typically receive a range of comments and differing levels of support. Public feedback is assessed and taken into consideration in the development of staff's recommendations to Council. Reaching consensus on a project is not always possible and this was the case for Richardson Street.

***Other AAA design solutions weren't considered or would have fewer impacts than what is planned.***

Different route treatments were explored including protected bike lanes (both one way and two way) and advisory bike lanes.

An advisory bike lane design treatment, shown in the picture below, was originally explored as a potential treatment option for Richardson Street. Advisory bike lanes are bicycle priority areas within a shared street environment where riders have priority with dashed painted bike lanes on either side of the road. Under this design scenario motorists may legally enter the lanes to pass on-coming motor vehicles. There are 2 blocks of advisory bike lanes on Humboldt Street between Douglas and Quadra. The advisory bike lane design includes a posted 30km/hr speed limit and target of ~2,500 vehicles per day or less. However, the public engagement outcomes suggested that the advisory lanes were not preferred as they did not achieve the desired level of protection or comfort for riders of all ages and abilities, did not reduce the volume of traffic appropriate for a AAA facility and others also felt that the infrastructure had not been widely used in the region.



Protected bike lanes were not supported by the public or recommended by staff due to the high number of driveways on the corridor (which would mean few zones of actual protection), and the magnitude of on-street parking loss (ranging from 175 – 315 on street stalls, depending on the specific design approach). Future land use in this area also does not call for substantial densification and as such the land use pattern will continue to align with a traffic calmed, rather than protected bike lane design approach.

Traffic calming has been used in Victoria for decades including the use of directional diverters, speed humps and road closures. Implementation has shown that traffic patterns and driver route choices change and adjust when these types of interventions are made. For example, directional diverters installed at the Kings/Shelbourne and Kings/Richmond more than a decade ago in the Jubilee neighbourhood reduced daily volumes on Kings Road from ~1200 vehicles/day to 400 vehicles/day, virtually eliminating non-local traffic on the street. The type of measures being introduced on Richardson Street are consistent with other corridors including Haultain Street (both long standing existing and planned new measures), Belton Street, Pine Street, and more recently on Vancouver Street, Chambers Street and Lang Street.

***Designs will result in traffic congestion on Fairfield Road and other east-west routes.***

To achieve target volumes on Richardson Street, different traffic management scenarios were assessed by City staff to help manage the redistribution of traffic onto other parts of the network. The approved traffic diversions on the corridor work collectively as a system and the design establishes three distinct catchment areas to accommodate local vehicle access, circulation and manage traffic volumes in an equitable way. Each catchment area will serve residents and will achieve the target of 1,000 vehicles per day.

As a part of the design development process for Richardson Street, staff undertook a data collection exercise to understand traffic conditions on other routes like Fairfield Road. Current vehicle volumes on Fairfield Road are up to 7,700 vehicles per day. Other collector and arterial roads such as Craigflower Road, Esquimalt Road or Shelbourne Street carry upwards of 18,000 vehicles per day with similar widths and profiles.

With the measures adopted for Richardson Street there is an estimated 2,200 vehicles a day which will now use alternative routes on the city road network to travel east and west including Oak Bay Avenue, Fort Street, Johnson Street, Rockland Avenue, Fairfield Road or even Dallas Road.

The assumption that all traffic will arrive at a particular location where a diverter has been introduced, turn and divert along another route is inaccurate. Rather, drivers will make a range of route choices considered optimum for each individual situation, based on where they are starting and finishing their journey. The result is traffic re-distributed across the broader road network.

For completeness, specifically as a part of this project, the following measures are also happening:

- A traffic signal upgrade to include an advanced left turn at Richmond Avenue and Oak Bay Avenue to support road safety and vehicle circulation.
- A northbound closure on Maddison at Quamichan to support traffic calming and greenways implementation
- A full closure at Gonzales Avenue east of Richmond Avenue to reduce potential cut-through traffic on Gonzales between Rockland Avenue and Richmond Avenue

***This project creates safety issues on Fairfield Road and other local streets.***

In addition to the three crosswalk upgrades that the City recently completed on Fairfield Road (Fairfield Road at Foul Bay Road, Fairfield Road at Kipling Street and Fairfield Road at Lilian Road), two new speed reader boards are also being installed in late Spring 2021. Locations were selected in coordination with the Neighbourhood Association and will be installed at:

- Fairfield @ Kipling (facing WB traffic)
- Fairfield at Cornwall (facing EB traffic)

Traffic calming medians have already been installed on Fairfield Road at Irving Road and staff are in the planning stage for another installation at Fairfield Road at Memorial Drive. Further west on the corridor, accessibility upgrades on Fairfield Road @ Quadra Street and on Fairfield Road @ Rupert Terrace in tandem with road re-paving, are planned.

There has also been a recent installation of an advanced left turn signal at the Fairfield Road and Cook Street intersection and staff are planning for a future traffic signal at St. Charles Street and Fairfield Road.

New speed humps, expanded 30km/hr zones and enhanced signage around Sir James Douglas and Margaret Jenkins Elementary have been installed and a program to support “school streets” where roads are temporarily closed in the morning and afternoon to support active transportation have been piloted and are planned again for 2021. On Maddison Avenue, the City has funded a “My Great Neighbourhood” Grant Program to support traffic calming and placemaking.

The traffic calming program is also targeting efforts on several other local streets in the neighbourhood. Data collection on vehicle volumes and speeds will continue in 2021 and 2022 and interventions will be assessed against established program criteria and road safety priorities.

***AAA shared road design approaches and targets are established by City Staff***

Designs are based on national and provincial standards of guidance for designing shared use AAA cycling facilities. The *National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)* provides contextual guidance for developing these types of bikeways and suggests shared-use facilities are appropriate where volumes are in the range of 1000-2000 vehicles per day. The City of Vancouver and the *BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Design Guidelines* have established a goal of 500 - 1,000 vehicles per day with 30km/hr design speeds. Council confirmed this latter target in December 2018 and it has been used as a foundational design principle for all the City shared road AAA projects.

***Transit and emergency services will not be able to access Richardson Street.***

The designs accommodate public transit, fire, police and ambulance. Early concepts had planned to move the transit route off of Richardson Street, to support BC Transit's goals for frequent transit on Fairfield Road. Based on public feedback collected through the design process, the design team adapted designs to retain transit service on the corridor.

***This project is not a good use of local taxpayer dollars.***

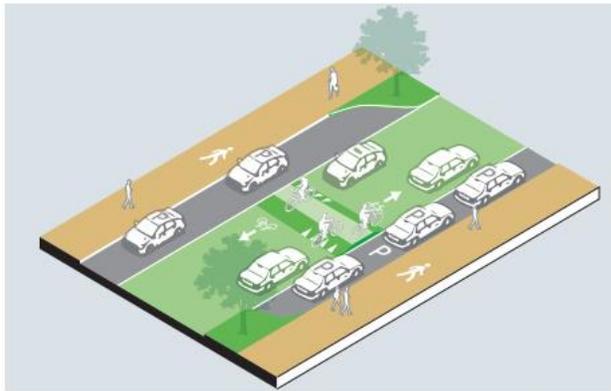
Bicycle Master Plan implementation is largely funded from the Federal Gas Tax Reserve and funds collected through Development Cost Charges. The City has also secured more than \$4.5M in grants to support network delivery since 2016. Staff applied for an additional \$2M in funding through the Federal Government as a part of the COVID Recovery Stimulus Funding in January 2021. The City will continue to seek grant opportunities through the new \$400M Active Transportation funding program announced in March 2021.

## Appendix 1



April 22, 2016

URBAN  
systems



The statistics below provide a high-level summary of the key themes that emerged through the process.

**Over 2,500** people participated in the #Biketoria engagement process by attending events, writing emails, interacting on social media, or completing surveys

**78%** of survey respondents agree the proposed AAA network connects them to the places they want to go

**70%** of survey respondents agree that they will cycle more once the AAA network is built

**71%** of survey respondents agree the AAA network comes close enough to their home

**19%** of survey respondents live outside of Victoria

**65%** of engagement event participants do not normally get around by bicycle

**73%** of engagement event participants feel their input was valued and will help shape #Biketoria

**Safety matters!** Infrastructure improvements that will make cycling safer was the most common reason that survey respondents gave for being excited about the AAA network

**Congestion is a concern.** Potential traffic impacts and loss of parking were the most common reasons that survey respondents gave for being concerned about the AAA network

**Quality counts.** Engagement participants stressed the importance of including high quality design and landscaping improvements. Survey participants wanted to see broader streetscape enhancements included as part of this process.

## HUMBOLDT - RICHARDSON STREET

The Humboldt - Richardson Street corridor provides access from downtown into the Fairfield neighbourhood. Richardson Street is already a popular route for people riding bicycles and has a relatively low volume of vehicle traffic. The installation of traffic diversion and traffic calming measures would make it a pleasant riding and walking corridor. It would also connect to McNeill Avenue in Oak Bay. In addition to traffic calming, certain segments would be converted to a one-way street for motor vehicles, while maintaining two-way flow for transit, people on bicycles, and people walking.

It should be noted that Fairfield Road was initially identified as the preferred cycling access to the Fairfield neighbourhood because it provides direct access from Downtown and destinations include two schools, a community centre, and commercial area. With further analysis, several challenges with this corridor were identified, including:

- It is a Frequent Transit Network corridor;
- Narrow road width with limitations to provide bus landing pads; and
- On-street residential parking removal would be required along the entire corridor.

The recommended Humboldt - Richardson Street alignment is a local transit network corridor and has gentler topography. During the public consultation process, there was strong support for the Richardson Street corridor with multiple letters of support.

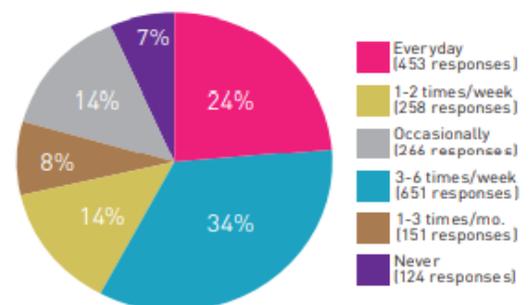
The recommended bicycle facilities on Richardson - Humboldt Street include:

- Humboldt Street between Government Street and Douglas Street: Two-Way Protected Bicycle Lane
- Humboldt Street between Douglas Street and Richardson Street: Neighbourhood Bikeway
- Richardson Street: Neighbourhood Bikeway

Through the engagement process, we heard from a wide cross-section of Victoria residents. We received balanced input by gender and age, and also heard from many non-regular cyclists. While many survey respondents are active cyclists, nearly a third (29%) of survey respondents are not regular bicycle users, and travel by bicycle less 1-3 times per month or less, including 21% who never ride a bicycle or only occasionally ride a bicycle.

### 4a. How often do you currently bike?

Responses: 1,903



In addition to surveys, attendees of the #Biketoria engagement event were asked to write what excited/concerned them about the AAA network on postcards. Various themes were developed to help illustrate what we heard, as shown on the following page.