City of Saskatoon

Connecting Victoria Avenue

WHAT WE LEARNED REPORT

Round 1 – Public Engagement

CIMA+

City of Saskatoon

Connecting Victoria Avenue

WHAT WE LEARNED REPORT

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| Register of issues			
Issue No.	Reviewed by	Date	Description of the review
0	JM	2024-09-13	Initial draft for COS Review
1	JM	2024-10-24	Revised version
2	JM	2024-11-14	Final version

Confidentiality and ownership

Executive Summary

Connecting Victoria Avenue is a functional planning study for walkable and bikeable infrastructure improvements on Victoria Avenue between Taylor Street East and Ruth Street in Saskatoon.
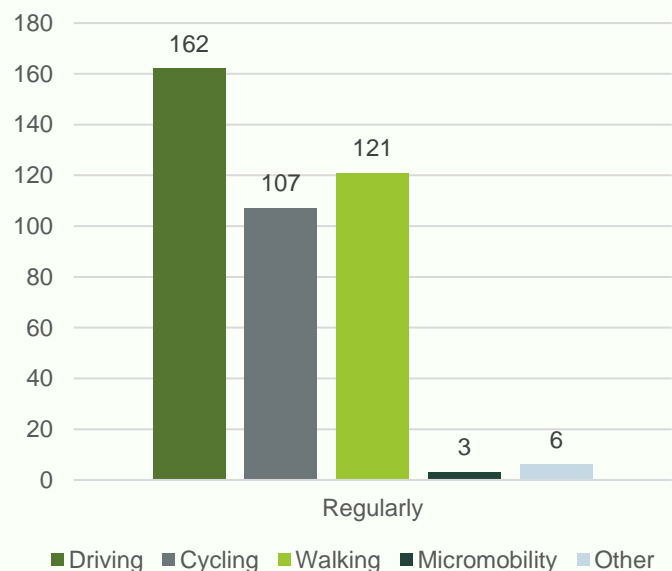
The project team has completed Round 1 of public engagement through an online survey and an open house to determine current traffic safety and operational issues along Victoria Avenue for people of all ages and abilities using all modes of transportation. Both engagement activities asked participants what they would like changed and what they would like to remain the same on Victoria Avenue.

The survey received 228 valid responses, predominantly originating from neighbourhoods near the project area (Queen Elizabeth, Buena Vista, Avalon, and Exhibition). Driving was the most common mode of travel from all respondents; walking and cycling made up 53% and 47% of regular (daily and weekly) mode choice on the corridor, respectively.

Responses by Homebase

- Live adjacent to Victoria Avenue
- Live in Surrounding Neighbourhoods
- Live elsewhere in the City
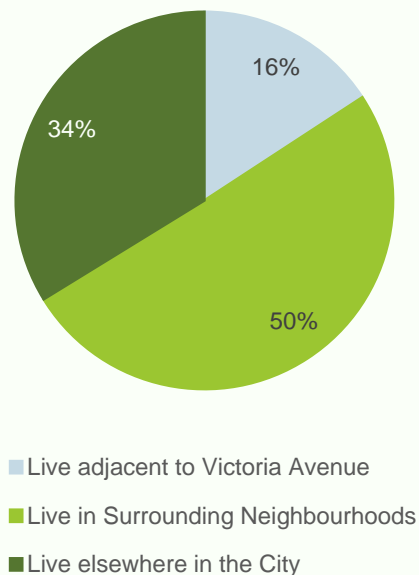
Mode Choice for All Responses
(Select All That Apply)

Driving Cycling Walking Micromobility Other

When asked what respondents would like changed and what they would like to remain the same on Victoria Avenue five categories of responses emerged, coded manually based on written responses. The five categories include:

- Explicitly requested sidewalk improvements (termed 'walkable' in subsequent graphs).
- Explicitly requested cycling infrastructure (termed 'bikeable').
- Generally supported a more walkable and bikeable environment (termed 'supportive').
- Displayed ambivalence or indifference (termed 'neutral'). This category was made up of respondents who stated they were confident cyclists and saw no issues with the current infrastructure or respondents who offered no comments at all.

- Explicitly rejected a walkable and bikeable environment (termed 'against').

Improvements to pedestrian and cycling facilities on Victoria Avenue were requested regardless of homebase. Improvements to pedestrian and cycling facilities were also broadly requested by respondents regardless of mode choices. Responses were categorized by regular mode choice; as a result, responses may be reported under multiple mode choices if a respondent walked, biked, and drove the corridor on a regular (daily or weekly) basis.

Requests for Improvements to Pedestrian and Cycling Facilities by Regular Mode of Travel
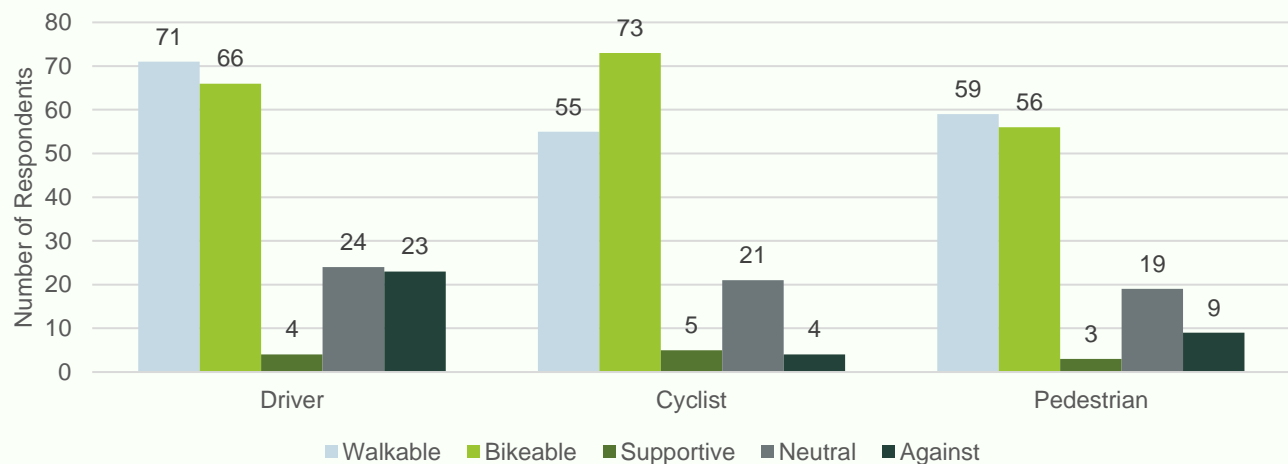
Respondents commonly identified six targeted priority areas that should be considered in the development and evaluation of alternatives:

- Reduce speeding but keep current speed limits,
- Diverging opinions on keeping or removing some but not all on-street parking,
- Maintain and plant new vegetation,
- Improve pedestrian crossing control and existing crosswalk locations,
- Resurface the street, and
- Review traffic control at the intersection of Victoria Avenue and Ruth Street.

The public open house drew 17 attendees. Feedback from the open house mirrored the survey. The majority of attendees were very supportive of improvements to the pedestrian realm and generally supportive of cycling facilities that would result in an all ages and abilites network.

Attendees offered specific feedback about intersection traffic control and detection, travelled speeds, and route preferences that will be incorporated into the development of alternatives and evaluation metrics.

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1. Background

1.1 Strategic Goals

The City of Saskatoon is committed to promoting active transportation and providing transportation choices that are safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities year-round. Saskatoon's Active Transportation Plan (2016) identified Victoria Avenue as a future all ages and abilities (AAA) cycling route. Victoria Avenue provides an important connection to existing and future walking and cycling facilities.

1.2 Summary of Engagement Strategy

Table 1: Summary of Engagement Strategy

Round	Participants	Level of Participation	Objective	Engagement Goal	Engagement Activity
1	Impacted Groups Internal Stakeholders Subject Matter Experts	Inform / Consult	Consult with the community, identify local knowledge on existing challenges and opportunities	Inform, consult and understand opportunities and challenges	Public open house Online Survey Engage Page
2	Impacted Groups Internal Stakeholders Subject Matter Experts	Inform / Consult	Inform the community, demonstrate how round 1 feedback influence recommended design.	Close the loop	Public open house Online Survey Engage Page

2. Engagement Activities

2.1 Round 1 – Online Survey

An online survey was prepared using the Microsoft Forms platform to help solicit feedback on public concerns and desires with the project corridor. The survey was open from July 8th, 2024 to August 20th, 2024 for a total of 44 days. The online survey had a total of 228 valid respondents. Survey questions are provided in **Appendix A**.

2.1.1 Intended Audience

The online survey was developed to build a strong understanding of user groups, general community concerns with the current corridor, and participant desires for future improvements.

2.1.2 Marketing Techniques

The survey was advertised on the City's Engage page website and through the City's social media channels. The engagement was advertised on the City's Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram pages with posts on July 11th, August 6th, and August 20th.

Flyers were also distributed throughout the neighbourhoods surrounding the project area. The approximate limits of the flyer drop were from Lorne Avenue to Lansdowne Avenue as the east-west boundaries and Taylor Street East to Ruth Street East as the north-south boundaries. A total of 1638 flyers were distributed throughout this area.

Specific stakeholders identified in **Appendix C** were also emailed directly to advise them of the project, online survey and open house.

2.1.3 Data Limitations

It should be noted that survey was self-administered and non-random, and as such the results should not be considered statistically significant or representative of all residents in the City.

Context clues from some respondent comments indicate they completed this survey for cycling improvements planned to the north of the study area on Victoria Avenue from 8th Street East to Taylor Street East. The exact number of respondents that completed the survey thinking it was meant for another project is unknown and may skew results. Examples of possible misinterpretation include respondents who:

- Opposed any cyclist infrastructure and referenced existing designs with a median, or
- Who identified cycling safety issues at the transition from the cycle track to mixed traffic lanes through the Victoria Avenue and 8th Street East intersection.

2.1.4   What We Learned

2.1.4.1   Demographics

Responses were received from 38 neighbourhoods around Saskatoon, the majority of which originated from neighbourhoods adjacent to the project corridor: Queen Elizabeth, Buena Vista, Exhibition, Avalon, Nutana, and Haultain. Responses by neighbourhood are illustrated in **Figure 2-1**.
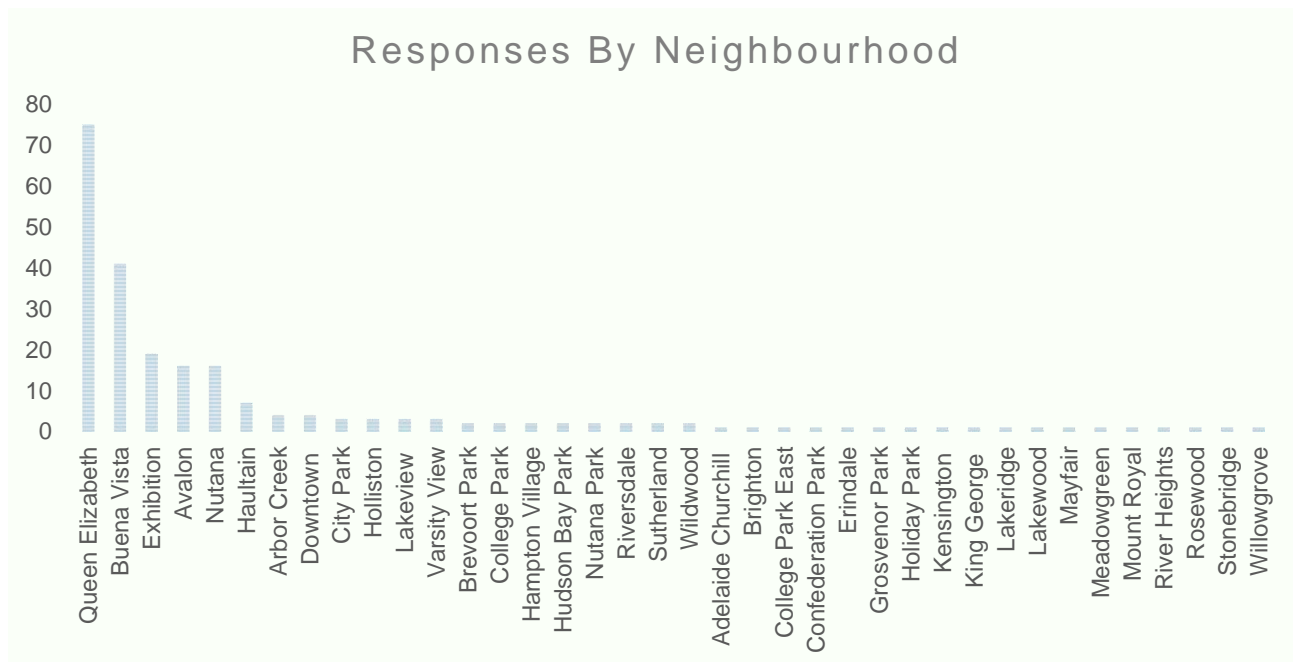
Figure 2-1 Responses by Neighbourhood

Later assessments compare responses by neighbourhood groups to determine if proximity shaped responses. Place was separated into respondents who lived on Victoria Avenue within the study area, those who lived within the surrounding neighbourhoods (Queen Elizabeth, Buena Vista, Exhibition, and Avalon), and those who lived elsewhere in the City.

Of the 228 responses, 16% lived along Victoria Avenue within the study area, 50% lived in nearby neighbourhoods, while the remaining 34% lived elsewhere in the City, illustrated in **Figure 2-2**.

Responses by Homebase

- Live adjacent to Victoria Avenue
- Live in Surrounding Neighbourhoods
- Live elsewhere in the City

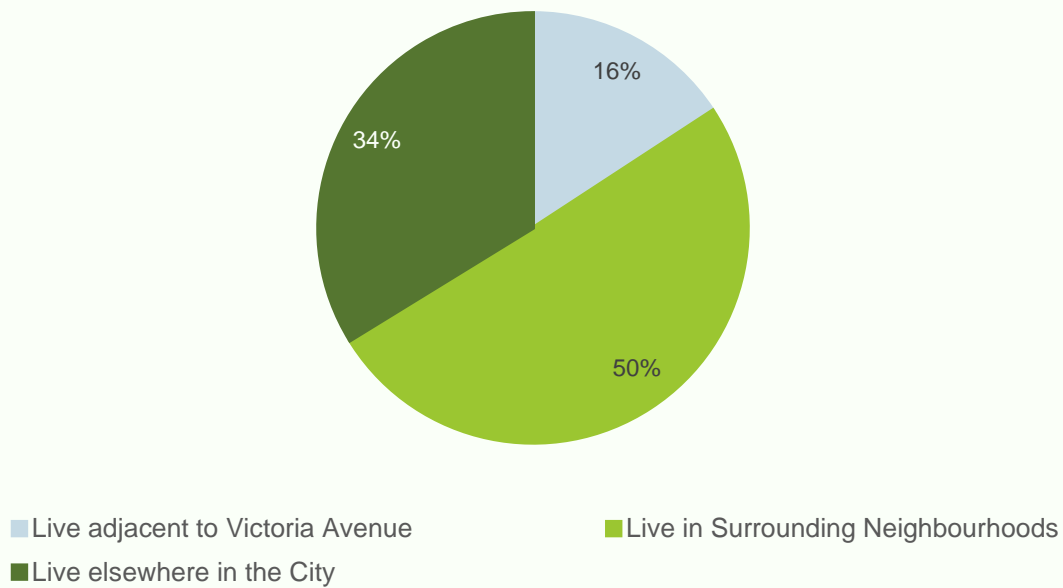*Figure 2-2 Responses by Homebase*

Responses were received by residents of all ages, illustrated in **Figure 2-3**. The largest cohort were respondents aged 35 to 44.

Responses by Age

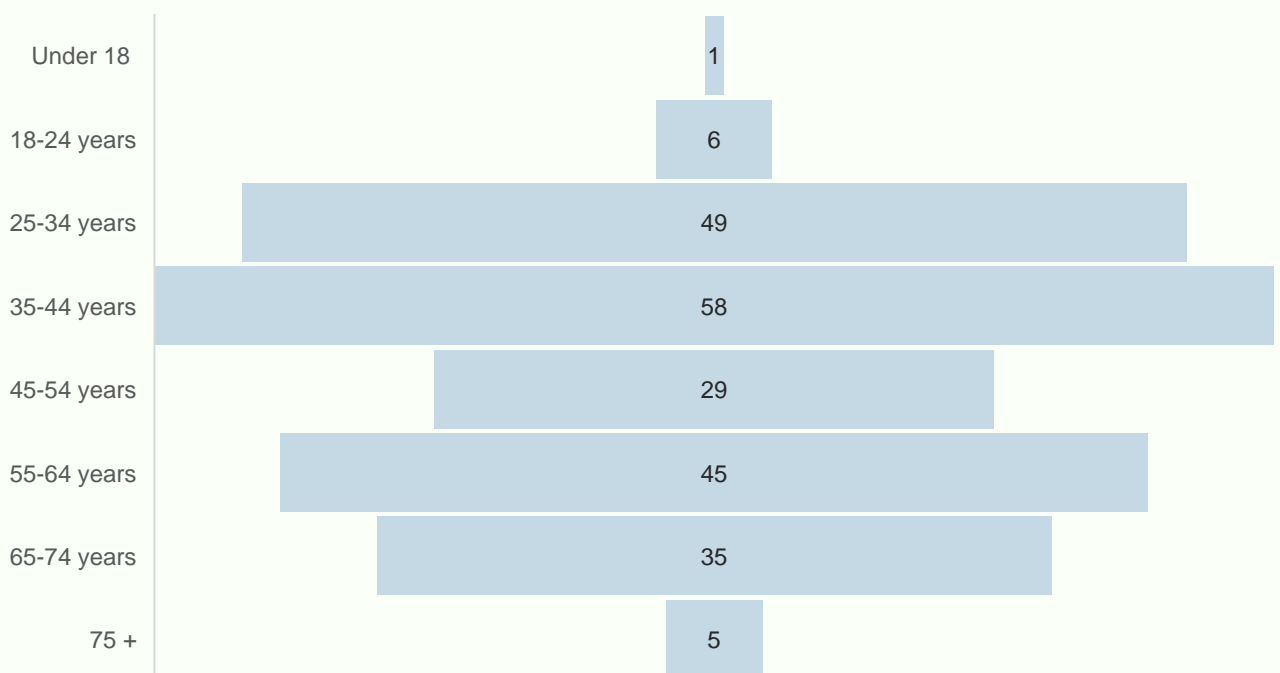| Age	Count
Under 18	1
18-24 years	6
25-34 years	49
35-44 years	58
45-54 years	29
55-64 years	45
65-74 years	35
75 +	5

Figure 2-3 Responses by Age

Respondents were asked to indicate their mode choice – driving, cycling, walking, micromobility, and other – when travelling along Victoria Avenue by frequency of use – daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally, only in the summer, and never. Responses were grouped into regular use (daily and weekly), occasional use (monthly and occasional) and seasonal use (only in the summer), illustrated in **Figure 2-4**. Driving was the predominant mode choice among respondents (71%); however, 47% of respondents regularly biked and 53% regularly walked along the corridor. Because respondents could choose multiple modes of travel, responses to this question do not add up to 228.
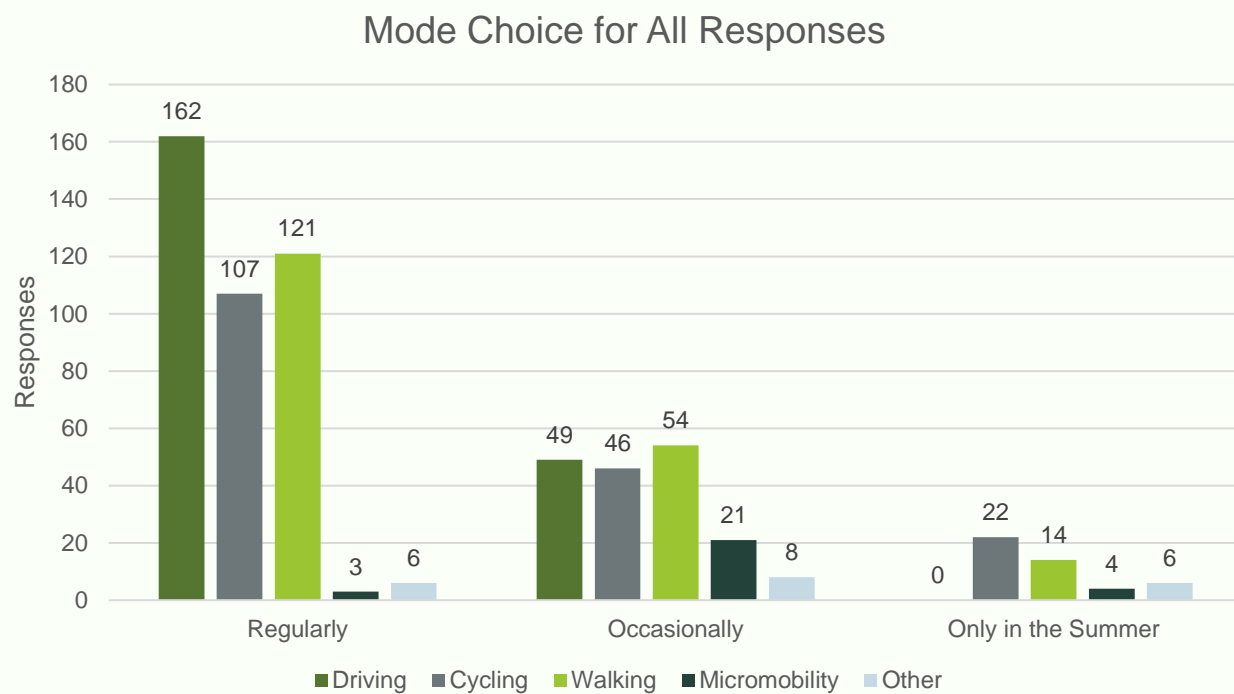

Figure 2-4 Mode Choice for all Respondents

Trip purpose was examined by respondent homebase and illustrated in **Figure 2-5**. Trip purpose for residents who lived on Victoria Avenue within the study area were evenly distributed among the top destinations – access to the downtown, the river, work, and shopping – indicating that Victoria Avenue is a primary access road to the community and amenities for these residents. Trip purpose distribution for residents who lived in the surrounding neighbourhoods was more spread-out but the top four trip destinations were still ranked as highly as residents who lived on Victoria Avenue. Respondents who lived elsewhere in the City where more likely to travel on Victoria Avenue to access Prairieland / Diefenbaker Park or visit family and friends in the area.
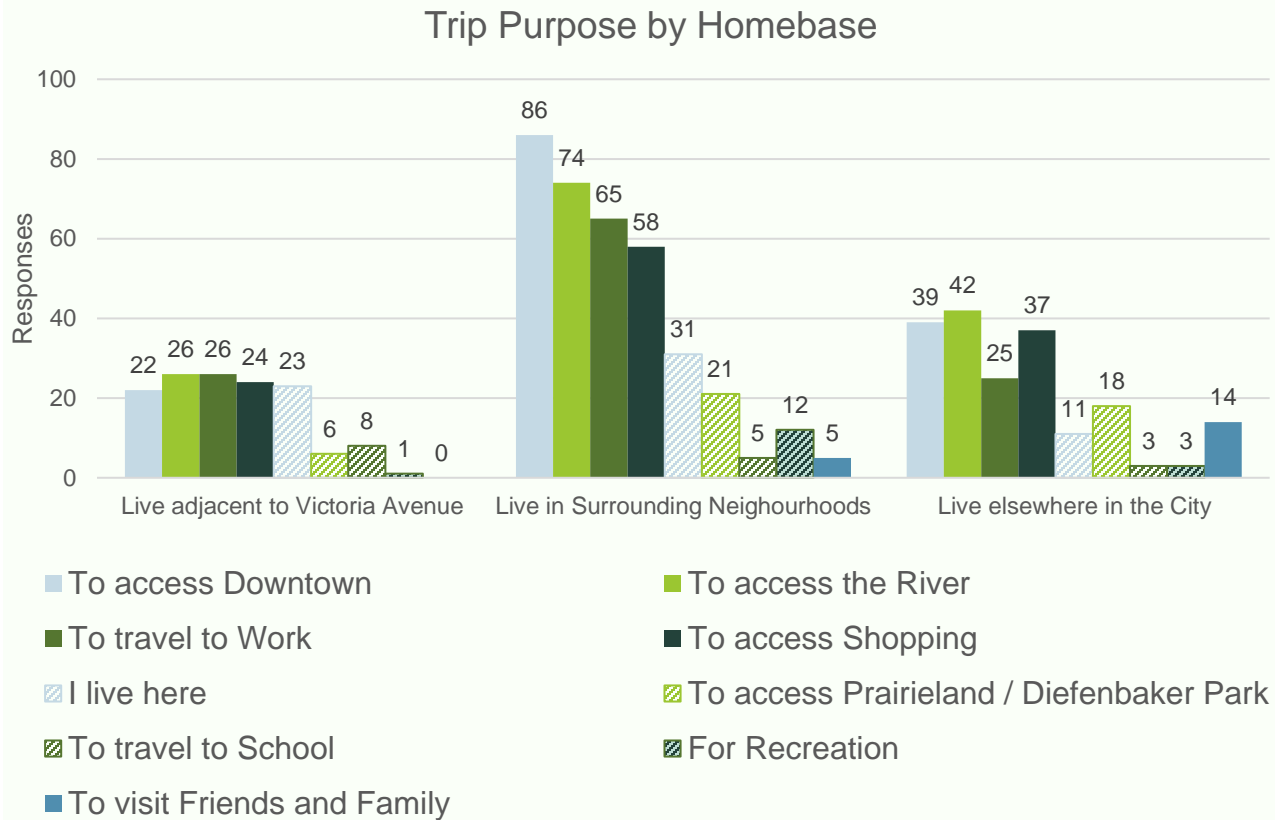
Trip Purpose by Homebase

Live adjacent to Victoria Avenue: 22, 26, 26, 24, 23, 6, 8, 1, 0

Live in Surrounding Neighourhoods: 86, 74, 65, 58, 31, 21, 5, 12, 5

Live elsewhere in the City: 39, 42, 25, 37, 11, 18, 3, 3, 14

Legend:
- To access Downtown
- To access the River
- To travel to Work
- To access Shopping
- I live here
- To access Prairieland / Diefenbaker Park
- To travel to School
- For Recreation
- To visit Friends and Family

Figure 2-5 Trip Purpose by Homebase

2.1.4.2   Themes

Respondents were asked about current traffic safety issues on Victoria Avenue from Taylor Street East to Ruth Street, elements of the street they would like to see changed, and elements they would like to remain the same. Common themes within the responses were broken down into two categories 1) requests to improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities and 2) targeted priorities the project team should consider in the development and evaluation of alternatives.

Requests to improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities can be expressed in five categories, whether respondents:

- Explicitly requested sidewalk improvements (termed 'walkable' in subsequent graphs).
- Explicitly requested cycling infrastructure (termed 'bikeable').
- Generally supported a more walkable and bikeable environment (termed 'supportive').
- Displayed ambivalence or indifference (termed 'neutral'). This category was made up of respondents who stated they were confident cyclists and saw no issues with the current infrastructure or respondents who offered no comments at all.
- Explicitly rejected a walkable and bikeable environment (termed 'against').

Responses were coded to multiple categories where appropriate (ex. Requested both the installation of sidewalks and cycling facilities, or requested the installation of sidewalks but opposed cycling facilities). Requests for improvements to pedestrian and cycling facilities on Victoria Avenue are illustrated in **Figure 2-6** by responded homebase and in **Figure 2-7** by respondent mode choice. Because respondents could enter numerous safety concerns, aspects of the street they'd like to see changed, and aspects they'd like to remain the same, responses to this question do not add up to 228.
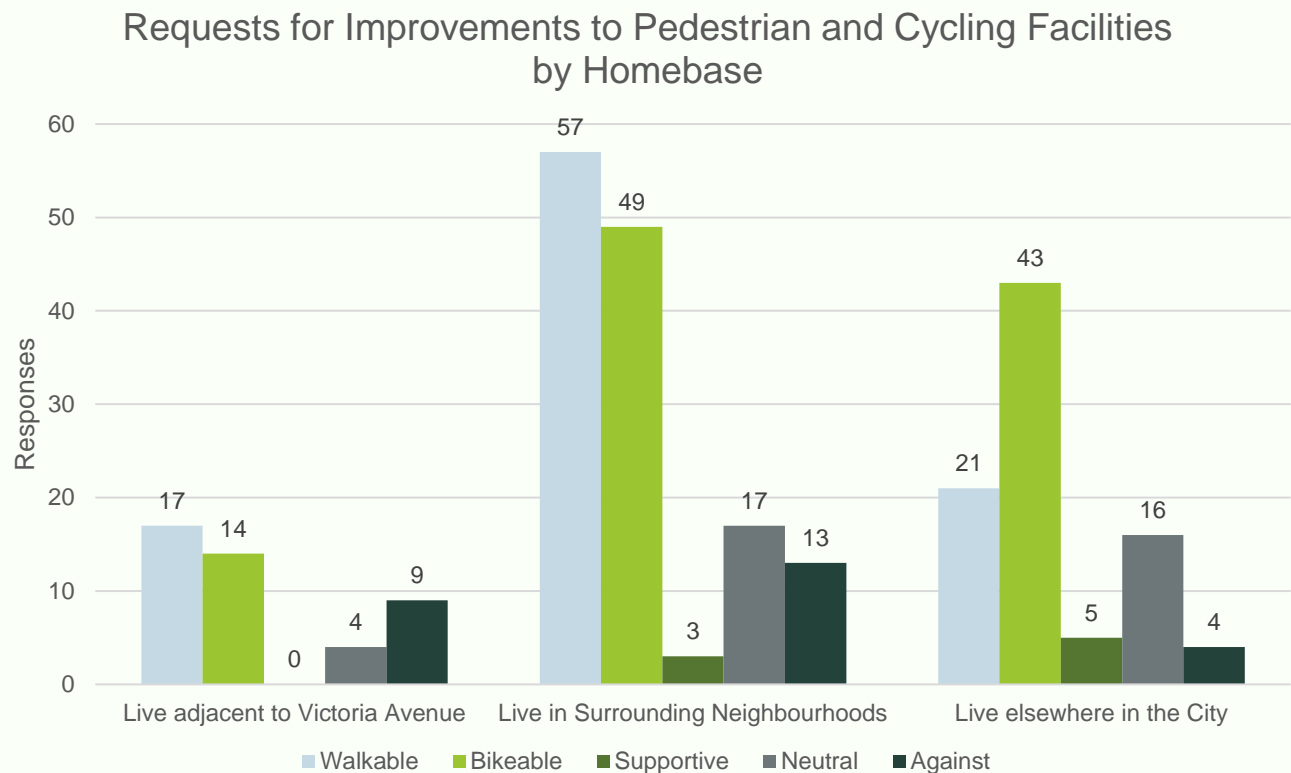

Figure 2-6 Requests to Improve Pedestrian and Cyclist Facilities by Homebase

An improved pedestrian realm was the top theme, specifically filling current gaps in sidewalk infrastructure. This was followed by requests for cycling infrastructure, specifically separated infrastructure. When considered as a percentage, respondents who lived on Victoria Avenue were most likely to oppose to cycling infrastructure (20% of responses) compared to those who lived in the surrounding neighbourhoods (9% of responses) or elsewhere in the City (5% of responses). Understandably, the day-to-day lives of these residents would be most affected by any changes to the street. Opponents felt changes would impact their ability to enter and exit driveways or that cycling infrastructure was a "waste of taxes".

Requests to Improve Pedestrian and Cycling Facilities by Regular Mode of Travel
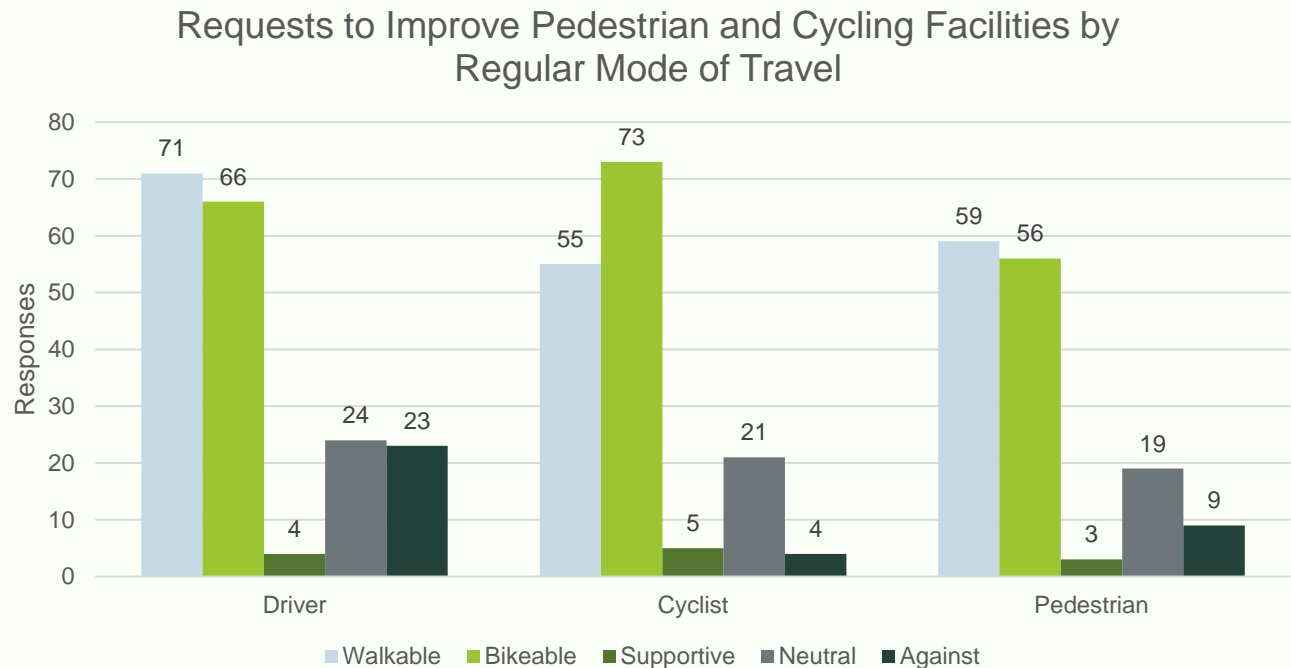

Figure 2-7 Requests to Improve Pedestrian and Cyclist Facilities by Mode Choice

Improvements to pedestrian and cycling facilities were requested regardless of mode choices. Considered as a percentage, drivers were most likely to oppose improvements (12% of responses compared for 3% opposition by cyclists, and 6% opposition by pedestrians). Quotes calling for improvements include:

"I do not feel safe [cycling] until I can get on the bike path that begins at 8th Street East and Victoria Avenue. Victoria Avenue is the street we use most to navigate around our area and to go to work daily."

"I live very close to Victoria Avenue, and I stopped walking it daily since I had a baby. I do not feel safe walking along Victoria Avenue with a stroller as there is not sidewalk the whole way."

"Every day in the summer we see many young families walking or cycling on Victoria Avenue. I worry that someone is going to be badly hurt or killed due to the poor design of the stretch of Victoria Avenue."

Respondents commonly identified six targeted priority areas that should be considered in the development and evaluation of alternatives:

- Requests to reduce speeding (27 total) vs. maintain current speed limits (9 total),
- Requests to remove vs. maintain on-street parking (respectively, 12 and 8 total),
- Maintain vegetation (26 total),
- Improve pedestrian crossing control (15 total),
- Resurface the street (12 total), and
- Review traffic control at the intersection of Victoria Avenue and Ruth Street (6 total).

Individual respondents may have noted numerous concerns or no concerns, as a result priorities do not add up to 228. Priorities by respondent homebase and mode choice are illustrated in **Figure 2-8** and **Figure 2-9** respectively.
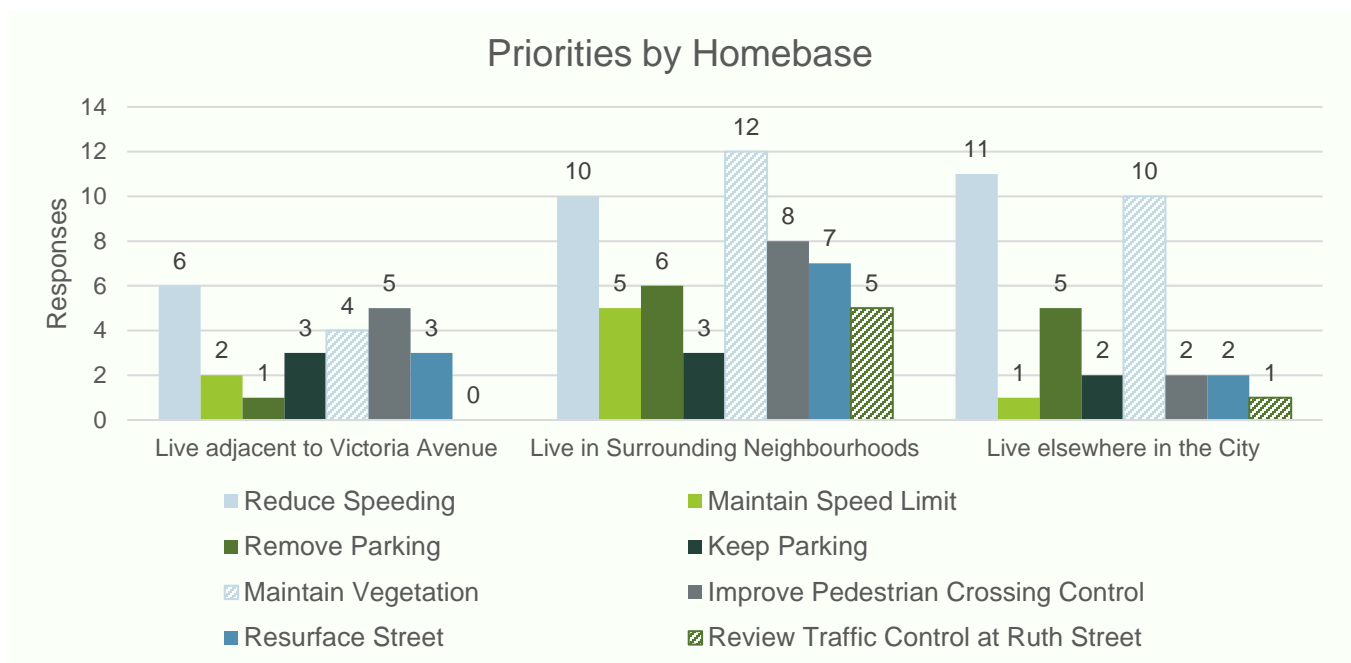
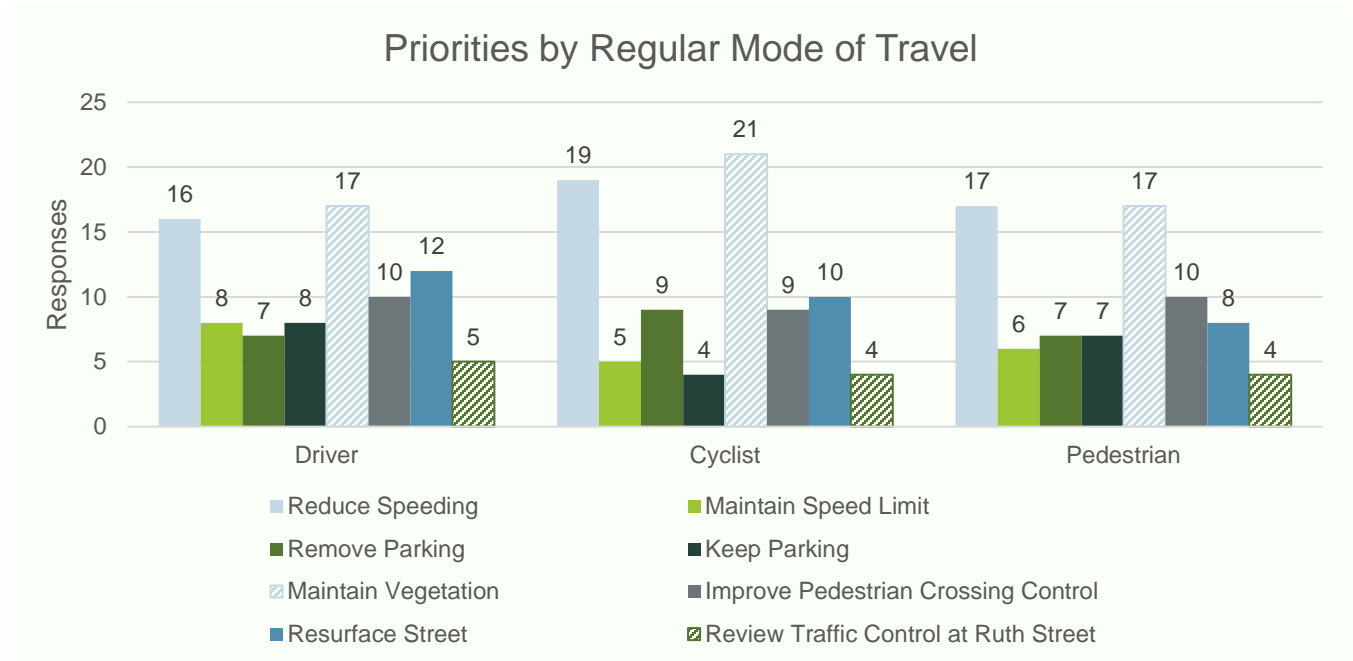

Figure 2-8 Priorities by Homebase

Priorities by Regular Mode of Travel

Figure 2-9 Priorities by Mode Choice

Vehicle travel speeds were cited as an issue for cyclists and pedestrians forced to walk on the street. Comments on speeding were typically combined with vehicles passing cyclists in an unsafe manner. There was an appetite for traffic calming devices including curb extensions, raised crosswalks, speed bumps / tables, and medians islands; however, the added burden on residents to provide winter maintenance at curb extensions was a concern.

Respondents identified that on-street parking was not well utilized along the study corridor and parking could be reduced (not eliminated) to accommodate other modes. Residents who lived on Victoria Avenue were more likely to request that parking be kept as-is, but this wasn't a unanimous sentiment.

Street trees and other vegetation were prioritized across respondent homebase and mode choice. Comments ranged from specific requests to keep existing vegetation to hopes to add more greenery to the streetscape.

Improved pedestrian crossing control was expressed most often by residents of the corridor and pedestrians but echoed by other modes and homebase locations. One respondent articulated the problem by noting that current signed pedestrian crossing locations at Hilliard Street and Isabella Street are well positioned but driver compliance is lacking.

Residents who use Victoria Avenue to access nearby destinations noted that it was often difficult to find gaps in traffic at the two-way stop controlled intersection of Victoria Avenue and Ruth Street.

2.2   Round 1 - Open House

A come-and-go format Open House was hosted on July 23, 2024, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the Avalon Alliance Church to solicit feedback on public concerns and desires with the project corridor. Seventeen members of the public attended the session. Open House boards are provided in **Appendix B**.

2.2.1   Intended Audience

The Open House was planned as an opportunity for targeted stakeholder groups and the general community to attend an in-person event and have the opportunity to articulate concerns and desires for the project corridor. Display boards included information on the project background, existing road characteristics, AAA facilities and possible walking and cycling improvements.

The Open House also served as an opportunity for individuals with the inability to access internet information or who are unfamiliar with technology to engage with the project team and provide feedback in person.

2.2.2   Marketing Techniques

The Open House was advertised on the City's Engage page website and through the City's social media channels. The engagement was advertised on the City's Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram pages with a post on July 11th.

A mini billboard was also placed near Victoria Avenue to promote the engagement activities. Flyers were also distributed throughout the neighbourhoods surrounding the project area. The approximate limits of the flyer drop were from Lorne Avenue to Lansdowne Avenue as the east-west boundaries and Taylor Street East to Ruth Street East as the north-south boundaries. A total of 1638 flyers were distributed throughout this area.

Specific stakeholders identified in **Appendix C** were also emailed directly to advise them of the project, the Open House, and the online survey.

2.2.3   What We Learned

Attendees were presented with a series of boards documenting the study location, history and context as well as the project goals. Attendees were asked to provide their thoughts on street elements that should change and elements that should remain the same. A roll plan of the corridor was provided to support discussion and for attendees to markup with site-specific safety concerns and opportuities.

Comments are summarized as follows:

- It is difficult to make a southbound left turn from Victoria Avenue onto Ruth Street. Sightlines could be improved by removing a tree on the northeast corner and increasing parking restrictions near the intersection.
    - Additionally, pedestrians and cyclists had a hard time crossing Ruth Street.
- Add curb extensions to improve pedestrian safety without compromising parking supply.
    - Attendees resistant to curb extentions were concerned that the burden of winter maintenance will fall to residents who may already struggle to clear their walk.
- Attendees appreciated the sidewalks installed at the south end of the project area and indicated that additional sidewalks are needed along the entire corridor.
- The crosswalk at Hilliard Street is used to access the Hilliard pedestrian overpass and Meewasin Valley trail system.
- Vehicle compliance is poor at signed pedestrian crossing locations (Hilliard Street and Isabella Street). Active pedestrian crossing control is desired.
- Victoria Avenue is a popular cycling route to access downtown and an all ages and abilities facility was popular among attendees. Some attendees requested neighbourhood bikeways, some attendees requested directional bike lanes, and some attendees requested bi-directional protected bike lanes.
- All ages and abilities infrastructure must not overlook the 'abilities' portion of AAA design.
- Cyclists struggle with detection at Taylor Street East traffic signals. Some attendees suggested that signal phases and detection specific to cyclists would be ideal.
- Attendees noted that the speed limit could be maintained at 50 km/hr if separated / protected cycling facilities were constructed.
- Driveway access and on-street parking should remain.
- Keep vegetation, especially privately planted vegetation, and increase planting opportunities.

Five attendees left feedback forms. Four attendees rated the event 'Great' on a scale of 'Poor (1)' to 'Great (5)' while one attendee rated the event neutrally.

The attendees who rated the event highly were supportive of sidewalks and all ages and abilities cycling infrastructure. The attendee who rated the event as 'neutral' did not favour walkable and bikeable improvements and expected information typically available later in the design process such as alternatives and cost estimates.

3. Next Steps

The project team will begin developing alternatives and incorporate the findings from the public survey and open house into the design and evaluation metrics. A second open house is planned to present the recommended alternative to the public.

A

Appendix A
Survey Questions

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B

Appendix B
Open House Presentation Boards

C

Appendix C
Stakeholder List