

E00747A

MEMO 2

DATE : July 16, 2019
FROM : Henry Devos
PROJECT : City of Saskatoon, Circle Drive West – Functional Planning Study
SUBJECT : Public Engagement Report, Open House 1

Introduction to Study

Circle Drive is a core route (urban ring road) in the City of Saskatoon’s road network. It supports mobility not only for City residents, but for inter-regional traffic flows through the City. In response to increasing congestion levels and safety concerns, the City plans to continue upgrading Circle Drive to a freeway standard. The City recently constructed Circle Drive South to a freeway standard from Idylwyld Drive to 11th Street. The City has retained CIMA Canada Inc. (CIMA+) to complete a long-term functional plan for Circle Drive west, between Clancy Drive and Laurier Drive. The goal of this project is to remove the traffic signals at the Clancy and Laurier Drive intersections and upgrade to free-flow standards.

Public Engagement Activities

The public engagement process began by reaching out to the Community Associations in the study area to alert them to the study and invite their input concerning the study corridor. Their input intended to supplement the concerns and issues already identified by the communities through the City’s Neighbourhood Traffic Review program. Other stakeholders being contacted during the study process include relevant civic departments, emergency services, Saskatoon Transit, Neighbourhood Planning, Saskatoon Light & Power and CN Rail, among others.

Two public open house events are planned for the Circle Drive, Clancy Drive to Laurier Drive, Functional Planning Study. The first event took place on Wednesday, June 19, 2019. The open house was held at the City of Saskatoon’s Shaw Centre, 122 Bowlt Crescent, from 4:00pm to 7:00pm. In advance of the open house, invitations were mailed to all property owners abutting Circle Drive through the study area. The City advertised the open house on their website Engage Page to alert the general public.

The purpose of the first open house was to introduce the project and invite public input regarding existing conditions, constraints and the study’s objectives. The second open house is planned for winter 2019 to show the options considered and the preferred upgrading plan.

Comment sheets were provided for attendees to provide feedback on the open house format and information that was presented, and to collect general information on attendee’s location of residence, work, and travel patterns. Optional contact information was also collected from those who wished to receive notification of future open house events. Attendees were asked to respond by July 5th.

Open House 1 Attendance

Approximately 25 people attended the first open house. There were 14 written responses received at or following the open house (11 using comment sheets and 3 by email). The open house was an informal drop-in format, no formal presentation was made. Representatives from the City of Saskatoon and the CIMA+ project team were available to discuss the information presented and to answer questions.

The relatively low attendance at this open house does not necessarily indicate that the performance of Circle Drive through the study area is not a more broadly recognized public concern. Some attendees suggested that more should perhaps have been done to raise public awareness ahead of the open house event. In addition, portable roadside signs may have been used to improve public awareness and interest. To offset the effect of low attendance, the input that follows was correlated with the results of the Neighbourhood Traffic Reviews. The summary reflects both written comments and discussions with open house attendees.

Open House Feedback

- Was the information provided in a format that was understandable?
Yes (9); No (1), however, respondent did not attend the open house; and 1 – ‘Sort of’, respondent added that the information included details currently unavailable.
- Did the information help you understand study scope?
Yes (9); No (1), respondent added that the study is not sufficiently advanced to provide complete answers; and 1 ‘Sort of’, respondent added that the information included details currently unavailable
- Were the staff able to answer your questions?
Yes (8); No (3), one respondent added that the staff indicated details which are not yet available; another added that the study is not sufficiently advanced to provide complete answers; and the third did not attend the open house.
- How did you hear about the open house?
Notice in Mail (4); Community Association Notice (4); Friend/Neighbour (3); and Learned afterward (1).
- Live in the study area?
 - Mount Royal (4),
 - Meadowgreen (3),
 - Fairhaven (3),
 - Montgomery Place (2), and
 - Massey Place (1).
- Work in the study area?
 - Confederation Suburban Centre (4),
 - Pleasant Hill (3),
 - Hudson Bay Industrial (2),
 - Fairhaven (1),
 - Blairmore Suburban Centre (1)
 - Pacific Heights (1),
 - Airport Business Area (1),
 - Downtown (1),
 - Marquis Industrial (1), and
 - University Heights (1).

- How often do you travel on Circle Drive through the study area?
 - Most weekday peak times (3)
 - 2-3 times/week (3)
 - Occasionally (2)
 - Midday (Monday-Friday) (2)
 - Many different times (1)
 - Every day (1)
 - Weekends (1)
- How often do you travel on 22nd Street through the study area?
 - Most weekday peak hours (4)
 - Occasionally (2)
 - Midday (Monday – Friday) (2)
 - Every day/frequently (2)
 - Weekends (1)
 - 3-4 times/week (1)
 - Weekdays, off-peak (1)
- How did you typically travel through the study area?

Automobile (10), Walking (2) and Commercial Vehicle (1).

What We Heard

- Circle Drive Congestion Levels and Safety

Concern regarding traffic congestion and low travel speeds along this section of Circle Drive due to the traffic signals at Clancy and Laurier Drives. Strong desire to see the traffic signals removed and upgrading Circle Drive to free-flow standards.

This concern is echoed in the Neighbourhood Traffic Review for Parkridge, identifying congestion at Clancy Drive during peak hours. Northbound left-turn traffic volumes often greater than the storage provided in the turn bay, extending queues into the through lanes, sometimes back to 11th Street. This is seen to cause unsafe driving conditions and regular near misses. Northbound through drivers passing Clancy Drive also need to be aware of traffic entering from Clancy Drive merging from the left. Is this movement adequately signed? There is support to remove the left turn movements on/off Circle Drive at Clancy Drive, or the complete closure of this intersection.

The Neighbourhood Traffic Reviews in Parkridge and Pacific Heights also echo open house feedback regarding the northbound exit from Circle Drive to 22nd Street westbound. Long delays during the peak hours suggest that a dual left turn may be warranted.

The Confederation Park Neighbourhood Traffic Review reported concern regarding congestion on both Laurier and Circle Drives, and similarly suggested removing the left turn from Circle Drive onto Laurier Drive, or the complete closure of the intersection.

- Sound Attenuation

From the Comment Sheets and Study Area Map notes gathered at the open house, as well as the Meadowgreen and Westview Neighbourhood Traffic Reviews, improved noise attenuation is a concern for these two neighbourhoods. Residents of Meadowgreen were concerned that upgrading Circle Drive (particularly the possibility of a raised collector-distributor roadway) may exacerbate noise levels.

- Safety of Pedestrian Crossings

There are three pedestrian tunnels crossing under Circle Drive in the study area, at 18th Street, Rusholme Road and 29th Street. Feedback through the comment sheets, the Study Area Map notes and the Neighbourhood Traffic Review for Massey Place, all indicate concern regarding the safety of the pedestrian tunnel designs. Residents note that criminal activity is enabled by the nature of these walkways and suggest converting to overpass structures for cyclists and pedestrians in the future.

- Merge Distances Entering Circle Drive Northbound from 22nd Street

Several attendees concerned about the length of the parallel entrance lane (to accommodate merging) from 22nd Street to Circle Drive northbound. The westbound-to-northbound acceleration lane is 250m long, 125m short of a 100 km/h design speed. The eastbound-to-northbound is 320m long and almost meets the desired standard. Some also reported difficulty making this entry and a subsequent lane change for a left-turn at Laurier Drive. It should be noted that the current laning configurations and markings attempt to prevent this movement from westbound 22nd Street.

- Safety of Eastbound Left-Turn onto Circle Drive at Clancy Drive

Concern here involves the left-hand merging maneuver from Clancy Drive eastbound onto Circle Drive northbound. The distance may not be sufficient at present for a safe merge onto a congested Circle Drive and drivers experience near-misses and often come to a full abrupt stop when unable to merge.

- 22nd Street

There is concern regarding recurring congestion for eastbound traffic on 22nd Street approaching the traffic signals at Confederation Drive to turn south onto Circle Drive. Drivers approaching the intersection with Confederation Drive will drive along (or even off) the shoulder to avoid waiting behind through traffic stopped at the signal. This also occurs in the westbound direction approaching Diefenbaker Drive. The right turn bays are too short during the peak hours.

This issue is aggravated in the eastbound direction by the right turn onto 22nd Street from Fairmont Drive, increasing driver frustration and gridlock. The barrier cones help prevent vehicles from changing lanes at this location, although they may not be adequately visible. Should the Fairmont Drive access to 22nd Street be closed? Should Fairlight Crescent (inside the south mall area) access 22nd Street instead of Fairmont Drive? Issues concerning Fairmont Drive were heard through open house feedback, the Fairhaven Neighbourhood Traffic Review and reported by the current review of traffic conditions. Finally, should there be a longer eastbound left-turn lane from 22nd Street onto Confederation Drive, with a barrier protecting this lane?

- Changes to Circle Drive Access

According to Neighbourhood Traffic Reviews for Montgomery Place, Meadowgreen and Parkridge, there is common desire to improve connections to Circle Drive from these areas. However, several comments expressed support for closing Clancy and Laurier Drives due to the congestion and often dangerous conditions they cause.

- 11th Street Interchange

There were concerns with the at-grade rail crossings affecting the 11th Street interchange ramps. Queues on the southbound off-ramp occasionally back up onto Circle Drive during a lengthy rail crossing. Although outside the study area, changes to the 11th interchange may be considered.

- Cost

One comment conveyed concern regarding the cost for potential upgrading along Circle Drive West. This may reflect concern over the tradeoffs to be made with upgrades to other existing municipal infrastructure.

Summary

Roadway performance and safety concerns have increased since the completion of Circle Drive South and increasing traffic volumes to/from west Saskatoon. The concerns heard both at and following the open house are largely consistent with the feedback from the Neighbourhood Traffic Reviews conducted in the study area and the traffic and collision data analyzed for this study.

Congestion at locations along Circle Drive and 22nd Street/Confederation Drive are increasingly leading to driver frustration and safety concerns for area residents. The identified concerns are being addressed by this study, and will inform the solution finding, including noise attenuation and pedestrian safety.

All open house respondents reported residing within the neighbourhoods directly affected by and included in this study, and most respondents travel through the study area several times per week. The majority of attendees found that the information provided at the open house was helpful in understanding the scope of the study.

Note: This report paraphrased the public input received, requiring some interpretation.

Recommendations

1. The City should consider circulating the public engagement report for Open House 1 to the relevant community associations and potentially posting on the engage website.
2. In addition to the efforts used to alert the public to Open House 1, portable roadside signs should be used to improve public awareness and interest for Open House 2.