

CITY OF SASKATOON

Central Business District Neighbourhood Traffic Review Minutes

Date: Wednesday, August 12, 2020

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Location: Microsoft Teams Online Meeting

Attendees:

Name	Position
Mariniel Flores	City of Saskatoon Transportation Engineer Central Business District Neighbourhood Traffic Review Project Manager
Nathalie Baudais	City of Saskatoon Senior Transportation Engineer
Chelsea Lanning	City of Saskatoon Transportation Engineer
Councillor Cynthia Block	Ward 6 City Council Representative

Items:

Welcome and Introductions

Presentation from the Transportation Division

(Presented by Mariniel Flores – Transportation Engineer)

See Video – Online meeting video recording – August 12, 2020

Pedestrian Safety Concerns

1. **Comment:** Issues at 6th Avenue and 24th Street. Suggest corridor lighting. Most of the time, traffic ignores the flashing ambers at pedestrian crossings. Perhaps an education campaign is in order to educate drivers on traffic laws with a possibility of fines being issued.
2. **Comment:** At 26th Street and 3rd Avenue, there are often cars parked right up to the curb here which make visibility quite poor for those driving. Vehicles go through the stop sign. A solution is to not allow parking right up to the curb.

Mariniel: This intersection will be reviewed as part of the Neighbourhood Bikeways Project where five corridors have been identified to develop neighbourhood bikeways.

3. **Comment:** Vehicles do not stop for pedestrians at the crosswalk near City Hospital. The crosswalk should be more visible.
4. **Comment:** The corner of Queen Street and 3rd Avenue is difficult to cross as a pedestrian. It used to be a four-way stop which was preferred. Vehicles travelling along Queen Street race through without stopping. If a stop sign can't be installed, the crosswalk should be more visible.
5. **Comment:** The Downtown should be a pedestrian focused area. It should not be a place that is easy to drive through. It should be slow. There should be plenty of street parking available as a visual and physical buffer between traffic and pedestrians. Transportation for businesses should be top of mind for deliveries. In the downtown, consideration for the movement of personal vehicles should be considered lowest on the priorities for transportation. It should not be a neighbourhood that is easy to pass through.

Traffic Signal Concerns

6. **Question:** Are the traffic signals all pre-programmed or do they change based on time of day like heavy traffic, business hours versus late at night? Do the operations change?

Mariniel: I believe in the downtown, they are pre-timed based on the peak hour.

Nathalie: Right now, everything's a little bit different because of COVID. Everything is on Pedestrian Recall mode. The cycle lengths are a little bit shorter so pedestrians always get the walk light. We can check with our traffic signal timing technicians regarding how much they change for peak business hours versus late at night.

Additional information: There are changes to the signal cycle lengths downtown based on time of day. They are, however, not drastic because of the need to accommodate the numerous pedestrian crossings.

7. **Comment:** Traffic signal at 5th Avenue and 24th Street does not warrant operating all hours all day. In previous years, it operated flashing red/yellow from midnight to 6am/7am.
8. **Question:** Don't many lights go to flashing red or amber after a certain hour?

Nathalie: I believe the only time our lights go to flashing red is when there's a technical issue or it's a new traffic signal that we're testing the equipment on. I don't believe we go to flashing red at night. That may have been done in the past.

Mariniel: I recall flashing red really early in the morning in the past but I'm not sure if that's still how it is. We'll check with our traffic signal technicians.

Additional information: Amber/red flash timings have been eliminated to prevent driver confusion. Normal operations were implemented overnight.

9. **Question:** At 3rd Avenue South and 19th Street by the new River Landing development, will there be real traffic lights or standards there? Right now, it's all on the overhead wires.

Chelsea: That project is going to be under construction for the next year or two and the full re-design of the intersection is intended to be a part of the Bus Rapid Transit Project. The signals will be upgraded to your typical light standards. This is dependent on the timing of the Bus Rapid Transit Project.

10. **Question:** If the audible pedestrian tone is quite loud at night and bothers people who are trying to sleep. Who do they contact to get those looked at? We have to remember that this is a residential neighbourhood too and sometimes, they are very loud and make it difficult for residents or hotel guests to sleep.

Nathalie: That is our group. They often need to be loud because of the traffic during the day and when the traffic's slower at night, you will notice them more. If they're turned down too much, people who are visually impaired won't be able to navigate through the intersection so it's a very delicate balance. Please submit the locations and we'll take a look at it.

11. **Comment:** Coordinate the traffic signals and consider designating three lanes on the University Bridge for vehicles travelling into the Downtown in the morning and three lanes for vehicles travelling out of the Downtown in the evening.
12. **Comment:** Support the idea to have three outbound traffic lanes on the University Bridge at certain times of the day. Lions Gate Bridge does this for vehicles entering and exiting Downtown Vancouver.

Speeding/Noise Concerns

13. **Comment:** Spadina Crescent is a very busy street and is used as a joy riding street for lots of people with loud cars and motorbikes travelling from the Victoria Bridge and the Broadway Bridge.

14. **Comment:** There should be more enforcement on the bridges.

15. **Comment:** Reduce noise from vehicles with modified mufflers.

Response: See update on vehicle noise study below.

Sightline Concerns

16. **Comment:** Eastbound vehicles turning right at high speeds at 25th Street and 5th Avenue. It is difficult for vehicles on 5th Avenue to see cross traffic exiting out of the driveways along this block.

17. **Comment:** It is difficult to see eastbound traffic at 5th Avenue and 23rd Street due to parked vehicles and the bike lanes.

Cycling Concerns

18. **Comment:** Traffic in the downtown is too slow. Traffic lanes are tied up for bike lanes.

19. **Comment:** Bike lanes should be added so bikes do not disturb the flow of traffic.

20. **Comment:** Concerned with cyclists on sidewalks rather than the bike path along Spadina Crescent between Broadway Bridge and University Bridge.

21. **Comment:** Frustrated and startled with the amount of bikes on the sidewalks even when there is a bike path right beside them.

Mariniel: We have an education campaign that will remind cyclists to be courteous when riding on shared pathways with pedestrians, and to use their horn or bell to warn pedestrians when they are passing.

Nathalie: There is also messaging for cyclists to slow down when passing pedestrians but cyclists are allowed to be in that space even if there is a bike path. Some cyclists just are not comfortable in the street and that's why the shared pathways are there so that people of all ages and abilities can still cycle.

Maintenance Concerns

22. **Comment:** Repair sidewalks at 24th Street and Pacific Avenue.

23. **Comment:** Snow removal should be more frequent on 5th Avenue.

24. **Comment:** Sidewalks in the 200 block of 5th Avenue are in need of repair.

Nathalie: These concerns will be passed on to our Asset Preservation group.

25. **Comment:** The streets get noisy on 3rd Avenue, especially at night but our main concern is the condition of the road and sidewalks.

26. **Comment:** Sidewalk on the west side of Spadina Crescent between the Broadway Bridge and Traffic Bridge needs to be repaired.

27. **Comment:** Concerned with the amount of graffiti in our city.

28. **Comment:** There is a foul odour beneath the Broadway Bridge.

20th Street and Spadina Crescent

29. **Comment:** 20th Street and Spadina Crescent is problematic for pedestrians. Suggest traffic signals or all-way stop.

30. **Comment:** Don't put a three-way stop at 20th Street and Spadina Crescent. There are only high volumes of traffic a couple of times a day. Otherwise, let the traffic flow on Spadina Crescent.

Nathalie: That's why we really enjoy having these meetings. We hear both perspectives. When residents give their thoughts, it's nice to get the balance of opinions so thanks for letting us know.

31. **Comment:** I agree that turning onto Spadina Crescent can be difficult but I would be concerned that putting a three-way stop would cause congestion on Spadina Crescent.

Nathalie: We do have a Stop and Yield Policy that we have to double check. We would check the traffic volumes and the traffic splits during the peak hours to verify if that would warrant an all-way stop.

32. **Comment:** Visibility at the corner of 20th Street and Spadina Crescent. Since the re-opening of the Traffic Bridge / Victoria Bridge, this intersection has become quite busy – busier than when the bridge was open. Parked vehicles on the west side of Spadina Crescent obstruct visibility for vehicles turning left onto Spadina Crescent. It is also a fairly busy area for pedestrians. The speed of some of the traffic tends to be excessive as well. Three-way stop suggested or parking prohibitions on the west side of Spadina Crescent on the north and south legs.

Spadina Crescent

33. **Comment:** A three-way stop at Spadina Crescent and 23rd Street is suggested.
34. **Comment:** A three-way stop at Spadina Crescent and 22nd Street is suggested.
35. **Comment:** At Spadina Crescent and 24th Street, the westbound through lane on 24th Street is often blocked by left turning traffic because the street becomes very narrow at that intersection.
36. **Comment:** The speed limit along Spadina Crescent between 20th Street and 23rd Street should be reduced to 30 km/hr or 40 km/hr. There is a lot of pedestrian traffic and curves. A reduced speed limit would discourage racing/speeding.
37. **Comment:** Many people shortcut onto Spadina Crescent when 4th Avenue may be a better option anyway.
38. **Comment:** Do not supporting designating Spadina Crescent as a pedestrian and cyclist roadway.
39. **Comment:** Let Spadina Crescent flow as it is now.
- Mariniel:** Spadina Crescent is windier than 4th Avenue and there is a lot more activity.
- Nathalie:** It slows quite a bit through the Spadina Crescent and 21st Street intersection.
40. **Comment:** Disagree with stop signs along Spadina Crescent. It has to accommodate all modes of transportation. Many businesses serve customers from well outside Saskatoon, and they need to be able to get there.
41. **Question:** Is there a plan to replace any traffic lights with roundabouts or maybe some of those suggested stop signs on Spadina can be roundabouts?
- Nathalie:** I don't think there are any plans to replace existing traffic signals with roundabout or replace those suggested stop signs. We'll have to see what they warrant when we do the review.
- Mariniel:** We'll review the data and complete site visits to see how those intersections are functioning right now.

42. **Comment:** The off-ramp from Spadina onto 24th Street has two lanes but often the westbound through lane on 24th Street is blocked by people turning left onto Spadina Crescent because the street becomes very narrow just at that intersection.

Street Widths

43. **Comment:** There are a couple of intersections or roads Downtown that should probably be widened as they don't quite fit two cars side by side. In particular, Spadina Crescent and 24th Street East, and 25th Street and 3rd Avenue North. There are roads pre-existing but they're not quite wide enough to allow for two vehicles especially if it's a bus, a large truck, or a commercial vehicle.
44. **Comment:** Having the right turning lane at 24th Street slightly wider or with better line markings would allow cars to move through rather than backing up on Spadina Crescent.
45. **Comment:** On 24th Street and Spadina Crescent, it's an eastbound turn from Spadina Crescent to go under the University bridge and turning northbound onto Spadina along the river. For the 25th Street and 3rd Avenue intersection, it's turning westbound onto 25th Street from 3rd Avenue.

Nathalie: 3rd Avenue has a bit of an interesting configuration at 25th Street because it narrows quite a bit on the north side.

46. **Comment:** The turn lane under the bridge is not quite wide enough for two lanes and a bicycle.
47. **Comment:** I would like to see a plan that shows some downtown avenues made narrower. Perhaps one way streets. Some avenues are very wide compared to larger Canadian cities. Wide roads can give the impressions that it's easier to speed.

Nathalie: We can take a look. That might be a little bit beyond the scope of what we typically do in a neighbourhood traffic review but we can definitely pass some of that feedback along when there's road reconstruction to be done or sometimes, there are Urban Design projects that could narrow the streets.

48. **Comment:** Another section that's too narrow is 2nd Avenue turning east on 20th Street outside the Lighthouse. When cars are parked in the angled stalls, they sometimes creep into the eastbound turn lane. It's similar at 2nd Avenue and 22nd Street and people creep when they're parked. People are sticking out of the angle parking space making it narrow for northbound right turning vehicles. This is outside the Starbucks and the National Bank.

Other Comments

49. **Comment:** Concerned with the amount of learner drivers along 5th Avenue who are causing delays by parallel parking lessons. Disperse into other neighbourhoods.

50. **Question:** Is there a plan to reconfigure 4th Avenue and 19th Street? That's a funky intersection in all aspects – turning onto 4th Avenue off 19th Street, turning onto Broadway Bridge off 4th Avenue South.

Nathalie: There are definitely some intersecting manoeuvres happening at that intersection.

Mariniel: I know our team was looking at that intersection because it is part of the Bus Rapid Transit Project. They're looking at different configurations to improve safety and turning movements so I can definitely look into that and provide an update in the meeting minutes.

Nathalie: We don't have the timeline quite yet but I do recall seeing the configuration and it was different. You wouldn't have that median separating the east or north and south directions. It will look more like a typical three-legged intersection.

Mariniel: Performing the eastbound left turn where you have to wait at the yield sign can be uncomfortable.

Nathalie: We received concerns regarding pedestrian crossings there as well because of the one-way direction to the bridge.

Additional Information: [The Bus Rapid Transit Project](#) design work is underway. Construction is slated to start in 2022. Future engagement opportunities will be posted to the Engage webpage.

51. **Question:** This is at 1st Avenue South and 20th Street East when turning eastbound on 20th Street. Is there a plan to have a dedicated turn lane or at least an advanced turn light?

Chelsea: This intersection is also a part of the Bus Rapid Transit Project.

Comment: At 1st Avenue and 20th Street, it is the southbound left turn.

Nathalie: We'll have to double check the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) design because I believe the BRT is center running there.

52. **Question:** Where is traffic from the new Baydo development on 25th Street supposed to enter and exit?

Nathalie: I think it's off 5th Avenue. This is outside of our study area but we can check.

Additional information: Most of the traffic will be accessing the site to/from 5th Avenue.

53. **Question:** Coming into downtown off Broadway Bridge heading northbound, there's a small section that has the white lane still painted on to suggest not driving there but I don't understand why when traffic could be in that lane to be prepared to turn eastbound on to 20th Street. Can these lines be removed or is there a reason why they're there?

Nathalie: We can take a look at this. Again, this intersection is part of that BRT Project and will be reconfigured for that but maybe as a short-term change, we can check those pavement markings.

54. **Comment:** Close off 2nd Avenue completely to traffic and make it pedestrian and cyclist only and add some nice green space / common space. It's one of the narrower avenues anyways. It's could be two travel lanes in each direction from 23rd Street to 19th Street.

55. **Question:** Are you going to post how many people were signed on to the meeting?

Nathalie: We typically don't post the number in the minutes because we receive so many comments through other methods. The number of attendees at the meeting isn't reflective of the input that we receive. The number goes into the final report because the comments are attached to the final report.

Updates on other relevant projects

Vehicle Noise Study:

Vehicle noise has been an ongoing issue throughout the City.

The existing traffic noise sound attenuation program addresses traffic noise for very specific circumstances. Many locations are not eligible for traffic noise sound attenuation under the existing policy. To address noise for these other locations, we need to investigate traffic noise mitigation strategies that could apply to the entire City.

At its Regular Council meeting on July 27th, Council approved that funding for the vehicle noise study be requested through the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program. We will be looking for a vehicle noise mitigation specialist to conduct research, complete a jurisdictional review, engage key stakeholders, prepare cost

estimate, and recommend possible mitigation measures that could be presented for the next budgeting cycle.

We hope that these actions will help us make progress on the vehicle noise issue throughout the City.

Downtown All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Cycling Network:

The Downtown All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Cycling Network has been endorsed by Council as 3rd Avenue, 23rd Street and 19th Street.

Council deferred implementation decisions until additional engagement can be completed. We are planning to proceed with that work in 2021.

Sid Buckwold Rehabilitation Project:

The second and final phase of construction on the Sid Buckwold Bridge is well underway on the east half of the bridge and is proceeding on schedule. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of October.

We will organize data collection for the neighbourhood traffic review only after this project is complete.

Imagine Idylwyld Project:

Imagine Idylwyld is a design initiative to improve the function, safety, connectivity and quality of the roadway and public realm along Idylwyld Drive, between 20th Street and 25th Street East.

The preferred design minimizes travel time for the most drivers while supporting all modes of travel and enabling redevelopment opportunities. The concept design enables safer connections for people riding bicycles or walking, including better access to the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station near 22nd Street.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project:

Saskatoon City Council approved the final routing for the Bus Rapid Transit system. The corridors in the downtown include 1st Avenue, 25th Street and 19th Street.

Work on design is underway and construction is slated to start in 2022.

Next Steps

1. Continue monitoring traffic issues in your neighbourhood.
2. Mail-in or email comments no later than September 11, 2020.
3. Additional public input via Engage Page no later than September 11, 2020.
4. Traffic counts data collection and analysis. Due to COVID-19, we may have to wait to complete traffic counts. We are hoping to begin counting by fall.
5. Develop recommendations and prepare draft traffic plan.
6. Follow-up public meeting to provide input on draft plan.
7. Determine revisions and finalize traffic plan.
8. Present traffic plan to City Standing Policy Committee on Transportation.

Adjournment