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East-West Bikeway – Alternative Alignments Information Report

Report Number: 2018-23

Department(s): Engineering Services

Author(s): Director, Engineering Services

Date: June 22, 2018

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Executive Summary

Council directed Town staff to review options for the relocation of the East West Bike Route that might eliminate the Park Avenue advisory lanes currently on Park Avenue from Main Street to Lorne Avenue. Staff studied relocation options that included Timothy and Botsford Streets, and Park and Millard Avenues. In all cases that were studied, due to narrow pavement widths, relocating the bike lanes would result in signed routes only, or signed routes with sharrows in the centre of the road, and loss of street parking. The only way that proper bike lanes plus parking could be accommodated is if Millard and Park Avenues were changed into one-way streets to accommodate parking on one side of the road and bike lanes on the other, with a travel lane along the middle. This would require agreement by a majority of the residents and would trigger further study on a broader scale to determine the effects on overall traffic flow through the downtown area. A further report will be done in the fall of 2018 to evaluate the entire East-West Bikeway.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to respond to Council's request to review potential modifications to the East-West bicycle route.

Background

At its regular meeting of October 2, 2017, the Town Council adopted a recommendation from the Committee of the Whole of September 25, 2017, which stated:

That staff review potential modifications to the East-West bike route and report back in the Spring of 2018.

The intent of the recommendation was to review the potential relocation of the Park Avenue advisory lanes from Main Street to Lorne Avenue, to paralleling streets (namely: Church, Botsford and Timothy Streets). Please see Appendix A for a map of the area.

Discussion

According to the Town's Active Transportation Plan (Official Plan Amendment #11), which was approved by Council on June 23, 2014, cycling facilities are to follow Park Avenue from Main Street westward. However, the route east of Main Street, which runs through the Community Centre lands, is designated as an off-road trail. The off-road trail continues over the CNR railway tracks and the Holland River, and it eventually connects to Srigley Street at Prospect Street. When it came to constructing the East-West bikeway, the off-road section was re-routed to Timothy Street.

During the design of the East-West bikeway, there was an extensive review of the route selection between Main and Church Streets, given that the connection point east of Main Street was Timothy Street. Ultimately, and as per OPA 11 of the Town's Secondary Plan, Park Avenue remained the preferred route.

Town Staff and its consultant, who specializes in designing municipal and provincial cycling infrastructure, examined several alternative route options, but concluded that using Park Avenue for the East-West bikeway would allow the Town to abide by the requirements of OPA 11, while still providing strong, dedicated cycling infrastructure. Any deviation from OPA 11 would have required either a new Official Plan Amendment, or at least a Class EA and support from the public through broader consultation than just the neighbouring area.

Two of the alternative routes that were considered for the East-West Bikeway are presented below:

Option 1: Timothy/Botsford pairing: Timothy Street is a westbound one-way street, and Botsford Street is an eastbound one-way street. The Timothy/Botsford alternative could have been a viable choice, but only as a "signed route" or as a "signed route with sharrows". As a signed route only, there would have been no markings on the road to delineate a defined bikeway. Therefore, this type of route would not have enhanced cyclist safety. As a "signed route with sharrows", the only design alternative would have been to place the sharrows in the centre of the road, where cyclists travel (similar to the sharrows that currently exist on Main Street). Sharrows do not improve cyclist safety, and, in fact, according to experts, they could increase cyclist risk of injury as a result of "dooring" from parked cars. There is also the constant risk from impatient motorists driving behind slower moving cyclists, pressuring them to accelerate, or trying to bypass them altogether on a road that is too narrow for both cyclists and vehicles. Although this option might still work (a single bike lane on both Timothy and Botsford Streets) all

parking would need to be removed on both streets to accommodate the design. In addition, there is an added challenge for cyclists on both Timothy Street and Botsford Street requiring them to cross Church Street, which is a residential collector, at an uncontrolled and difficult intersection. It should be noted that the Timothy/Botsford route has been designated as the temporary cycling detour route during the reconstruction of Park Avenue, which is scheduled for this summer. This does not meet the Town's requirements under the agreement for the East-West Bikeway funding, but it is a temporary situation. The detour section through Timothy and Botsford will be a signed route only, without any sharrows. This will allow parking to remain unchanged on both streets during the period that the cycling facilities are re-routed.

Option 2: Park/Millard pairing: Both Millard Avenue and Park Avenue are two-way local roads, with the exception of a section of Millard Avenue from Main Street westward to Church Street, which is a westbound one-way street. Both streets are wide and they accommodate two-way traffic flow. However, if the East-West Bikeway were to be re-routed onto these streets, the results would be the same as they were on the Timothy/Botsford pairing. Both Park and Millard can accommodate signed bike routes, as well as signed routes with sharrows. In addition, Millard Avenue could accommodate advisory lanes, similar to what is currently on Park Avenue, with the exception of the section between Main Street and Church Street. As the Bikeway is two-way in nature, an eastbound bike facility would need to be implemented on Park Avenue. As there is insufficient road width for dedicated cycling infrastructure at the Millard Street planted island, any proposed cycling infrastructure at that location would need to have painted sharrows.

Under all options discussed above, parking would need to be removed from all alternative streets being considered. However, there is one design alternative that would allow both on-street parking to co-exist with dedicated bicycle lanes. This option would be to change Park Avenue and Millard Avenue to one-way streets only, in the areas where bike lanes would exist. This option would trigger the need for a larger "area study" along with thorough public consultation to determine the impact on traffic patterns and other consequences of changing these two-way streets to one-way only. Public support for such a change should be determined through the Town's Public Consultation and Support Policy prior to any study being undertaken. If there is no public support for this option, then the study should not be undertaken.

Finally, it should be noted that the preferred option, Park Avenue, still presented certain challenges due to its narrow road pavement width, which is insufficient to accommodate standard bicycle lanes. The options considered were to provide 1) a signed bike route, 2) a signed route with sharrows or 3) the new "Advisory Lanes" recently applied in Ontario to afford cyclists protection while maintaining 2-way traffic (but Advisory Lanes do require parking restrictions). Advisory Lanes were selected because they were strongly recommended by our expert cycling consultant, who have designed numerous cycling facilities for various municipalities as well as the Province.

Conclusion

Any combination of cycling facilities could be implemented as an alternative to the advisory lanes on Park Avenue, but street parking would be impacted in every option in order to maintain the level of safety provided by cycling facilities. The only option that would allow both on-street parking and increased cycling safety is the creation of one-way streets on Park Avenue and on Millard Avenue, between Main Street and Lorne Avenue. This option would need Council support and would require that a majority of the residents of Millard and Park Avenues be in favour of the change. Once Council and public support are in place, a larger area study would then need to be done to determine the impacts on traffic flow. Staff will only study the option of making Millard and Park Avenues one-way streets if Council directs staff to do so. A further report will be done in the fall of 2018 to evaluate the performance of the entire East-West Bike Route.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This report links to Newmarket's Strategic Plan direction, Well Planned & Connected, by protecting vulnerable road users and improving travel within Newmarket.

This report also aligns with Council's 2014-2018 Strategic Priority - Traffic Safety & Mitigation, by ensuring safe streets, improving traffic congestion, and supporting major transit service enhancements.

Consultation

No consultation was undertaken in the preparation of this report. The research is based on Ontario Traffic Manual #18, on advice from the Town's expert cycling consultant, and through experience gained through the development of the Active Transportation Implementation Plan study.

Human Resource Considerations

Not applicable to this report.

Budget Impact

Operating Budget – Not applicable to this report.

Capital Budget – Not applicable to this report.

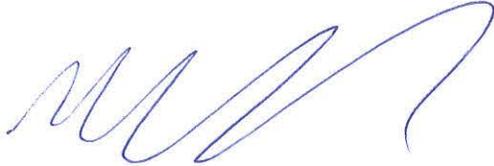
Attachments

None

Contact

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Approval



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APPENDIX A

Map of Area



..... Existing East-West Bike Route