

locations. Accessibility performance will be revisited during any future capital improvements near the Centennial Square and Bay Centre frontage.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide financial details required to expedite implementation of various projects identified by the Accessibility Working Group for accessibility upgrades in 2018.

BACKGROUND

The City's Accessibility Working Group (AWG) identified a number of capital projects intended to improve accessibility in the City of Victoria. They include:

Proposed audible signals/accessible pedestrian signals at the following City locations:

1. Menzies/Superior
2. Government/Humboldt/Wharf
3. Quadra/Yates
4. Caledonia/Quadra
5. Fisgard/Quadra
6. Finlayson/Quadra

Proposed rebuilding of two bus zones sidewalks on the west side of Douglas Street to improve wheelchair access to and from transit buses (in order of priority):

1. Between Pandora Avenue and Fisgard Street (Centennial Square frontage).
2. Between View Street and Fort Street (Bay Centre).

For information, the AWG uses the following criteria to assess and prioritize issues:

1. Urgent safety and health issues,
2. Time Sensitive opportunities, and
3. Non-urgent accessibility.

ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

1. Audible Signals/Accessible Pedestrian Signals

Accessible Pedestrian Signals have both an audible tone, and include a pushbutton locator tone to help people find the pushbutton, along with a vibro-tactile surface plate to provide confirmation that the pushbutton has been activated. The City has 127 signalized intersections – of these, 74 have audible pedestrian signals. The goal of the City's annual program is to have this type of infrastructure (audible pedestrian signals or accessible pedestrian signals) in place at all signalized intersections.

The AWG has proposed outfitting these six City locations, which have been identified as priorities. The AWG has numbered these in order of their assessed priority.

The Burnside/Harriet signal is the responsibility of the District of Saanich. All other signals are the responsibility of the City of Victoria.

2. Access at Douglas Street Bus Zones

BC Transit's newest buses have ramps integrated with the floor of the bus, and are able to be lowered more than some older transit bus models. BC Transit are transitioning to these new units (45 of the 50 remaining older bus models are to be replaced by 2020), phasing out the buses with the older ramp design.

This issue of ramp grades was previously discussed at BC Transit's Accessible Transit Advisory Committee (ATAC) a number of years ago, in response to a rider complaint/concern about the bus zone in front of Centennial Square, however no action was recommended at that time. BC Transit does not have a recorded incident of a person falling out of or tipping over in a wheelchair, while entering/exiting a bus, at either location.

OPTIONS AND IMPACTS

1. Audible/Accessible Pedestrian Signals

Install all intersections in 2018, as requested by AWG (recommended): Adding six projects to the 2018 Capital Program is supported (note: this does not include the proposed Burnside/Harriet intersection, which is within the District of Saanich). Completing all installations is estimated at \$70,000, based on previous project costs.

No Action at This Time (not recommended): It could be considered prudent to wait to invest the \$70,000 based on the outcomes and priority work defined through the Accessibility Framework development, which intends to create a process for prioritizing and integrating accessibility capital improvements. It is considered highly likely that any future assessment would support this type of installation at this time, and while potential for higher priority programs could be identified in 2018 planning activities, the risks are considered low, and delay is not supported at this time.

2. Bus Wheelchair Accessibility (Douglas Street Bus Zones):

a. Centennial Square Frontage:

No Action at This Time (recommended): Upgrading the BC Transit fleet will reduce risks associated with the concern raised, as more buses with adaptable ramps come on-stream. Accessibility improvements along the Douglas Street frontage could also be included in a future redevelopment of Centennial Square.

Full Reconstruction (not recommended): Providing a standard, full-height curb and gutter, and raising the sidewalk elevations for the length of the bus zone on the Centennial Square frontage would reduce the elevation difference between the floor of the bus, and the sidewalk, when buses stop at this location. This reduction would lessen the grade of the bus ramp when deployed. A Conceptual/Planning-level estimate for this work is \$200,000 (see Annex).

Spot Improvements (not recommended): Raising the sidewalk to a standard height at select spots within the bus zone to align with bus doors was considered, however this would require that all buses stop at specific locations within the bus zones. The resulting variation between existing and proposed curb/sidewalk heights within the bus zone was considered to be a potential tripping hazard, and is not recommended.

b. Bay Centre Frontage:

No Action at This Time (recommended): Upgrading the BC Transit fleet will reduce risks associated with the concern raised, as more buses with adaptable ramps come on-stream.

Full Reconstruction (not recommended): Relocating the V-gutter/trench drain design in this block, and reducing the sidewalk grade adjacent the curb will require reconstructing roughly 50% of the sidewalk on the block. This would reduce the elevation difference between the floor of the bus, and the sidewalk, when buses stop at this location. This reduction would lessen the grade of the bus ramp, when deployed. A Conceptual/Planning-level estimate for this work is \$250,000 (see Annex).

Spot Improvements (not recommended): Raising the sidewalk to a standard height at select spots within the bus zone to align with bus doors was considered, however this would require that all buses stop at specific locations within the bus zones. Additionally, the resulting variation between existing and proposed curb/sidewalk heights within this busy downtown pedestrian area was considered to be a potential tripping hazard.

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

Objective 9: Complete a Multi-Modal and Active Transportation Network:

- Pedestrian travel is safe, comfortable and enjoyable for all ages and abilities.
- Improved quality of life, public safety, air quality, place-making, and pedestrian and cycling trips through implementation of neighbourhood-led transportation planning and “complete streets” lens for all transportation projects.

Accessibility Impact Statement

Providing additional information for pedestrians with limited vision at signalized intersections can enhance safety. Audible/accessible traffic signals provide cues when the ‘walk’ phase begins, and pedestrians are permitted to enter the roadway.

Fleet upgrades by BC Transit will reduce the number of buses with less-adaptable ramps, eventually eliminating risks associated with buses stopping at these types of locations.

Impacts to Financial Plan

The Accessibility Reserve Fund can be used for capital accessibility improvements to City buildings and infrastructure. The current unallocated balance in the Accessibility Reserve Fund is \$766,000.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

7.7.4 - Enhance physical access and routes to services, amenities and places of employment for people with mobility and other physical challenges.

7.17.6 - Enhancing the pedestrian experience including for those with mobility challenges, through improved pedestrian crossings, mid-street refuges, signalization, lighting, corner curb cuts, and other measures.

CONCLUSIONS

Staff conducted field visits to confirm existing conditions at the various intersections and locations noted in this report.

Estimated costs were developed for installing the audible/accessible pedestrian signals at the six identified locations. Based on our review, staff recommend allocating \$70,000 from the Accessibility Reserve Funds to complete these installations in 2018.

Staff have consulted with BC Transit on future bus fleet upgrades and complaints history relative to the two Douglas Street bus zones, and considered options and associated costs for infrastructure reconstruction on these frontages. Staff recommend no further action at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

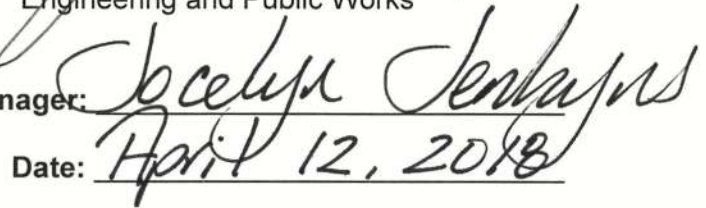


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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:


Date: April 12, 2018