



## **Committee of the Whole Report** **For the Meeting of January 26, 2017**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 19, 2017  
**From:** Fraser Work, Director of Engineering and Public Works  
**Subject:** Accessibility Working Group Report

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

- 1) Direct staff to define the plan and resource implications (scope, schedule and budget) to develop an accessibility framework, for consideration as part of the 2018 Financial Plan process.
- 2) Approve amendments to the 2017 Financial Plan for new capital projects to be funded from the Accessibility Capital Reserve:
  - a. "Truncated Dome Pilot Project" with a budget of \$30,000.
  - b. "Accessible Pedestrian Signals Pilot Project" with a budget of \$30,000.
- 3) Update the Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Working Group to become an Advisory Committee as defined in the Council Procedures By-law 16-011.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Accessibility Working Group (AWG) has worked together over the past year to better understand physical accessibility issues across the City of Victoria, and to recommend actions to make improvements. This report represents staff's response to the AWG's recommendations, in support of developing a City of Victoria accessibility framework and progressing two pilot projects as an addition to the approved 2017 Financial Plan to better understand and develop the City's required accessibility standards. The two pilot projects were not put forward for Council consideration during development of the 2017 Financial Plan because the projects were identified through discussions with the AWG in the fall of 2016. This report also recommends that the AWG be changed to an Advisory Committee until the end of this term of Council, in accordance with the Council Procedures By-law.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with staff's recommendations pertaining to the AWG recommendations to Council dated December 9, 2016 and to seek Council approval.

## BACKGROUND

### Accessibility Working Group

The AWG was formed in the fall of 2015 to provide Council with physical accessibility improvement recommendations, using the group's expertise and experiential knowledge. The AWG was formed to help the City improve the accessibility standards for its infrastructure and facilities. The AWG Terms of Reference are provided in Appendix A.

The AWG is currently comprised of seven voting members from the community, two City Councillors who are non-voting (Councillor Alto and Councillor Loveday) and a City Staff liaison who is non-voting (Manager of Transportation). The City's Manager of Facilities also attends the meetings. Administrative support is provided by City Staff from the Engineering and Public Works Department.

The AWG has met monthly since November of 2015 and has also held two special meetings at the call of the chair. Since formation, the AWG has completed a number of reviews and provided valuable input to a number of projects.

In December 2016, the AWG summarized their work to date in a report to Council, which is attached at Appendix B. The AWG report includes the following recommendations to Council (recommendations 1 through 4 are addressed in this report and recommendation 5 is complete):

1. An individual be contracted/hired to work with the AWG in identifying barriers for persons with disabilities, examine existing City accessibility policies and procedures, make policy recommendations, develop an accessibility framework, and provide on-going staff training and support.
2. That Council instruct staff to research, develop, codify and publicize a robust disability accommodation process for recreation facilities and programs.
3. That scent reduction and pet restriction policies be developed and implemented for City Hall.
4. The Accessibility Working Group become a standing committee of City Council.
5. Accessibility funding be allocated annually.

### Accessibility Legislation in British Columbia

In British Columbia, there is currently no federal or provincial legislation on accessibility. The Federal Government is currently consulting with Canadians on planned accessibility legislation (July 2016 to February 2017). The Province of British Columbia has a 10-year action plan "Accessibility 2024" aimed at making B.C. more accessible for people with disabilities, however the plan does not include new legislation. Barrier-Free BC is a volunteer organization that has developed a "non-partisan campaign advocating for the enactment of a strong and effective British Columbians with Disabilities Act, providing a barrier-free province for all persons with disabilities."

Accessibility is an important objective of the British Columbia Building Code. The code ensures that buildings are designed and constructed so a person with a physical or sensory limitation can reasonably access and move around within the building and use the building facilities.

### Accessibility Legislation in Other Jurisdictions

Ontario is currently the only province with accessibility legislation. The *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005 to allow the provincial government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them through regulations. The purpose of the accessibility standards is to move organizations in Ontario forward on accessibility. The standards set requirements in a number of key areas and will be reviewed at least

every five years. The goal of the Act is to make the Province of Ontario completely accessible by 2025.

In the U.S.A, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) was signed into law in 1990. The ADA prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life -- to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services. There are various regulations under the Act, including enforceable accessibility standards called the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

## ISSUES & ANALYSIS

### City of Victoria Accessibility

Through the Official Community Plan and Strategic Plan, the City of Victoria is committed to becoming an increasingly more accessible community for people with disabilities. The Official Community Plan establishes accessibility goals for services, amenities, buildings, facilities and public spaces, transportation options, and dictates full accessibility standards in the design, construction and improvement of City facilities, public rights-of-way and parks. The 2015-2018 Strategic Plan identifies the overall goal for City infrastructure, facilities and public transit to be more accessible for everyone, and for pedestrian travel to be safe, comfortable and enjoyable for all ages and abilities.

All municipal construction is designed and built in accordance with the B.C. Building Code's accessibility standards. Accessibility features have also been retrofitted to City facilities through past projects (e.g. Council Chambers hearing impaired upgrades, and wheelchair access). Similarly, the City's technology is regularly updated with accessibility features (e.g. website, Connect Victoria app).

In the public right-of-way development must meet the British Columbia Master Municipal Construction Documents Association drawings and standards, supplemented by City of Victoria special drawings, as set out in the Victoria Subdivision and Development Servicing By-law. The City is currently assessing improvements to these standards, including use of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) and truncated domes (refer to detail below).

The City has existing guidelines and practices related to accommodation of allergies (e.g. scents and pets) in City facilities.

Since the fall of 2015, City staff have worked with the AWG to resolve a number of accessibility issues raised in the attached report (Appendix B). In addition, the following actions are in progress:

- **On-line community accessibility issues survey:** The questions are complete and the survey is ready to be distributed. City staff will support the AWG with the release of the survey in Q1 2017. The community will be provided with several months to complete survey. Results will be reported to Council in the fall of 2017.
- **Curb cuts posing a safety risk to persons who are blind:** This report recommends that a pilot project be added to the 2017 Financial Plan to gather data on "truncated domes" for the development of a new City of Victoria standard for curb cuts. See below for more information.
- **Accessible Pedestrian Signals for pedestrians who are blind:** This report recommends that a pilot project be added to the 2017 Financial Plan to install and test an APS installation to help the City improve signalisation standards. See below for more information.

- **Accessibility of Royal Athletic Park (RAP) including washrooms:** The Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department is developing a plan to improve RAP washrooms, for consideration as part of a future Financial Plan.
- **Accommodation of allergies and Crystal Pool activities:** Staff will review options for updating existing policies and procedures in coordination with Recreation Integration Victoria (RIV), which is the City funded service that facilitates services for people with disabilities.
- **Rick Hansen Foundation Barrier Buster Grant:** City staff are preparing a 2017 grant application for the Cook Street Village Centre Accessible Door Refit project.
- **2017 capital projects:** The 2017 Financial Plan includes the following projects to improve the City's physical accessibility:
  - City Hall Council Chambers hearing loop (\$25,000)
  - Signal Upgrades at Pandora/Fernwood (\$10,000)
  - Cook Street Village Centre Accessible Door Refit (an application is to be submitted to the Rick Hansen Foundation for a Barrier Buster Grant for this project in 2017) (\$33,000)
  - Victoria Conference Centre Wheelchair Lift (\$100,000)

### Accessibility Framework

The AWG has recommended that the City obtain external support to work with the AWG in identifying priority actions, and examine existing City accessibility policies and procedures, make policy recommendations, develop an accessibility framework, and provide on-going staff training and support.

Staff support this recommendation, and will develop project scope and resource requirements, and report the budget and resource implications for Council's consideration as part of the 2018 Financial Plan process. In order to develop the plan, staff would connect with municipalities in jurisdictions with 'best practice' accessibility standards and accessibility experts to gather information on scope, budget and resources for developing an appropriate framework for the City of Victoria. The plan would address the recommendations of the AWG, including:

- Identify barriers for persons with disabilities, examine existing City accessibility policies and procedures, make policy recommendations, and provide on-going staff training and support.
- Research, develop, codify and publicize a robust disability accommodation process for recreation facilities and programs delivered in City facilities.
- Recommend improvements to existing City scent and pet guidelines and practices and formalize policies.

### Disability Accommodation Process for Recreation Facilities and Programs

The AWG has recommended that a disability accommodation process be developed to improve the accessibility of recreation facilities and programs. In close collaboration with RIV, City staff are committed to evaluating opportunities for improving physical accessibility of recreation facilities and programs, and this is a focus of current projects, including the renewal of Crystal Pool.

The majority of public recreation services in the City are delivered through agreements and funding support for local non-profit organizations operating in City facilities, including neighbourhood community centres. Staff will engage further with RIV, representatives of community / seniors centres, and members of the AWG in 2017 to discuss specific opportunities for improvement, and then integrate this into the accessibility framework development (refer to detail above).

### Truncated Dome Pilot Project

The AWG has identified that existing curb cuts within the City of Victoria pose a safety risk to persons who are visually impaired. The City's standard has changed from a 'no-lip' curb to a "10 mm lip' curb, which is safer for people with visual disabilities and acceptable for wheelchair accessibility. In addition, other jurisdictions are now using tactile surfaces or 'truncated domes' at curb cuts to aid visually impaired people in identifying the approach of a curb. Staff have completed an industry scan and recommend that types and configuration of 'truncated domes' be trialled in 2017 to help develop a City standard. It is recommended that a budget of \$30,000 be allocated for the pilot project. This amount of funding would allow retrofitting of approximately eight existing intersections with truncated domes of select materials, designs and colours. The test locations would be determined in partnership with the Visual Victoria project team and the AWG. Staff would report back to Council after one year (or sooner) of monitoring on the results of the pilot.

### Accessible Pedestrian Signals Pilot Project

The AWG has requested a review and recommendations for implementation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS). The City has been installing audible crossing signals for over two decades, which have an audible tone to help visually impaired pedestrians determine when it is safe to cross. APS is a new type of with additional features including a pushbutton locator tone and vibrotactile surfaces. Staff have completed an industry scan and recommend that suitable APS units be trialled in 2017 to help develop a City standard. It is recommended that funding of \$30,000 be allocated for the pilot project. This amount of funding would allow installation of APS at approximately three test locations. The test locations would be determined in consultation with the AWG. Staff would report back to Council after one year of monitoring (or sooner) on the results of the pilot project.

### Resources to Support the AWG

When the AWG was formed in 2015, staff resources were not identified to support the group. Currently, regular support is provided by two City Staff from the Engineering and Public Works Department and one City Staff from the Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department, with other staff providing information and input as requested by the group. At the January 19, 2017 meeting of the Committee of the Whole, the City Clerk presented a report to Council recommending that staff bring forward policy options to address process enhancements for advisory bodies to Council, including the AWG. Any relevant recommendations will be made through the governance discussion led by the City Clerk.

## **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

### 2018 Financial Plan Process

**Option 1:** Direct staff to define the plan and resource implications (scope, schedule and budget) to develop an accessibility framework, for consideration as part of the 2018 Financial Plan process. **(Recommended)**

**Option 2:** Council could choose to direct staff to come back with a plan and resource implications (scope, schedule and budget) to develop an accessibility framework in 2017. This is not recommended as time and resources are required to gather information from other municipalities and accessibility experts and develop an appropriate plan.

## 2017 Pilot Projects

**Option 1:** Approve amendments to the 2017 Financial Plan for new capital projects to be funded from the Accessibility Capital Reserve:

- a. "Truncated Dome Pilot Project" with a budget of \$30,000.
- b. "Accessible Pedestrian Signals Pilot Project" with a budget of \$30,000. **(Recommended)**

**Option 2:** Council could choose to defer this work for consideration through the 2018 Financial Plan process. This is not recommended because there are projects planned for 2017 that would be suitable for testing truncated domes and APS, and by gathering data starting in 2017 staff will be in a position to report back to Council in 2018 with results and recommendations.

## AWG Terms of Reference

**Option 1:** Update the Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Working Group to become an Advisory Committee as defined in the Council Procedures By-law 16-011. **(Recommended)**

**Option 2:** Council could choose not to change the Terms of Reference at this time, and to consider the future of the Accessibility Working Group as part of the development of a new Strategic Plan in 2018. This is not recommended as the term "Working Group" is currently not defined in the Council Procedures By-law resulting in a gap in clarity around governance.

## *2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan*

The 2015-2018 Strategic Plan identifies a desired outcome for City infrastructure and facilities to be more accessible for everyone (Objective 7: Facilitate Social Inclusion and Community Wellness, 2018 Outcome). The plan also identifies a desired outcome for public transit to be accessible for all and for pedestrian travel to be safe, comfortable and enjoyable for all ages and abilities (Objective 8: Complete a Multi-Modal and Active Transportation Network)

## *Impacts to Financial Plan*

If approved, the recommended new capital projects in the total amount of \$60,000 would be funded from the Accessibility Capital Fund, including \$30,000 for the Truncated Domes Pilot Project and \$30,000 for the Accessible Pedestrian Signals Pilot Project.

In 2016, the City established an Accessibility Capital Reserve with a contribution of \$250,000. In the 2017 Financial Plan, Council approved an ongoing annual contribution of \$250,000. Therefore, the current balance of the Accessibility Capital Reserve is \$500,000 and has sufficient balance to finance the recommended pilot projects in 2017.

The two pilot projects were not put forward for Council consideration during development of the 2017 Financial Plan because the projects were identified through discussions with the AWG in the fall of 2016. The two pilot projects are being proposed to be completed in 2017, instead of being included for consideration as part of the 2018 Financial Plan process, in order to accelerate gathering of information for the development of City physical accessibility standards. Staff resources are available within the approved 2017 work plan to complete the two pilot projects because the work will generally be added to existing planned projects.

*Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

The work of the AWG is supported by the Official Community Plan Section 7 "Transportation and Mobility" and Section 15 "Community Well Being", specifically through:

- Goal 7(C) "Services, amenities, buildings, facilities and public spaces are accessible"
- Policy 7.28 "Work with BC Transit, senior levels of government, and community and business partners to provide physically accessible transportation options to places of employment, community services and public facilities."
- Objective 15(b) "That facilities, services, places of employment and housing are physically accessible to users."
- Policy 15.4 "Establish guidelines for full accessibility for people with mobility challenges in the design, construction and improvement of City property, including facilities, offices, street right-of-ways, and parks."
- Policy 15.5 "Encourage senior governments, and community and business partners to improve the physical accessibility of public and private property, including places of employment, housing, transportation facilities and visitor-oriented sites."

**CONCLUSIONS**

The recommendations in this report have been developed through the work of the AWG to move the City closer to the goal of full accessibility for people with mobility challenges.

Respectfully submitted,



Brad Dellebuur, Manager of  
Transportation



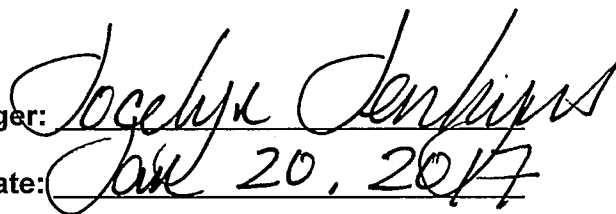
Fraser Work, Director  
Engineering and Public Works



Jacqueline Weston, Assistant  
Director Transportation

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:



Jocelyne Denpiper  
Jan 20, 2017

**List of Attachments**

Appendix A: Accessibility Working Group Terms of Reference (August 13, 2015)

Appendix B: Accessibility Working Group Report (December 9, 2016)