

**From:** "Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>  
**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"  
**CC:** "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"  
"LaClaire, Lon" <lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca>  
**Date:** 2/26/2021 4:06:34 PM  
**Subject:** Memo - RTS 14328 - COVID-19 Response: Slow Streets Update  
**Attachments:** Memo - RTS14328 - Slow Streets Update.pdf

---

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Lon LaClaire providing an update on the Slow Streets initiative **RTS 14328** as requested by Council on February 9th, 2021. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- The Slow Streets initiative is being implemented in three phases and we anticipate keeping the initiative in place at least through Fall 2021, given the need for opportunities for outside activity and strong public support.
- As part of the second phase of the Slow Streets, staff are maintaining the 40+km designated Slow Streets network and improving select routes with additional temporary traffic calming. We have been monitoring the changes, gathering feedback and adjusting based on what we are hearing.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lon LaClaire at 604-873-7336 or [lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca](mailto:lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca).

Best,  
Paul

**Paul Mochrie** (he/him)  
Acting City Manager  
City of Vancouver  
[paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca](mailto:paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca)



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθəm (Musqueam), lóóvú 7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

## MEMORANDUM

February 26, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, Acting City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications  
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk  
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office  
Paul Storer, Director Transportation

FROM: Lon LaClaire  
General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: RTS 14328 - COVID-19 Response: Slow Streets Update

---

This memo provides an update on the Slow Streets initiative as requested by Council on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### Background

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Council's 'Reallocation of Road Space to Support Shared Use During Pandemic' Motion in May 2020, staff have been re-shaping how we use our streets and public spaces to help residents physically distance and provide opportunities to exercise and travel more comfortably.

The Slow Streets initiative is being implemented in three phases and we anticipate keeping the initiative in place at least through Fall 2021, given the need for opportunities for outside activity and strong public support.

#### Phase One- "Designate"- Spring/Summer 2020

- 40+km of Slow Streets designated across the city using simple traffic barriers and signage.
- Routes are designated based on several criteria including traffic volumes, existing traffic signals to cross busier streets, equity and access to green spaces.

#### Phase Two- "Maintain and Enhance"- Fall 2020-Summer 2021

- Staff monitor and maintain designated Slow Streets and gather feedback about the initiative.
- Add temporary traffic calming measures along select Slow Streets routes.
- Additional details about Phase Two implementation, challenges and success are provided below.

### Phase Three- “Transition”- Summer/Fall 2021

- Staff will review the Slow Streets initiative within the City’s COVID-19 response.
- Review how temporary traffic calming measures and designated routes can become permanent and/or inform future greenways, bikeways and traffic calming projects.

### **Public Engagement**

With the onset of the pandemic, staff mobilized quickly to respond and support public health guidelines, we shifted our engagement on response projects to a ‘try, learn and adjust’ approach. We are installing changes using temporary materials and focusing on hearing feedback from the public and being responsive in making adjustments.

Since we began implementing Slow Streets in Spring 2020, we have been gathering and responding to feedback through email, 3-1-1 and the VanConnect App. Additionally, we created two online surveys, a first survey to capture general feedback about the initiative and a second survey for specific feedback about the temporary traffic calming upgrades. Both surveys have been promoted with on-street signage, mailed notifications, on Shape Your City ([shapeyourcity.ca/slow-streets](https://shapeyourcity.ca/slow-streets)) and social media.

#### General Feedback Survey

Between August and October of 2020, we heard from 1,942 people through the first online survey. Overall, Slow Streets have a high level of support with more than 70% of survey participants ‘Liking or Really Liking’ the initiative. A number of suggestions were made to improve the program including adding traffic calming measures to lower motor vehicle volumes (70% of participants supported) and lowering motor vehicle speeds (75% of participants supported). The main concerns that survey participants reported while using Slow Streets were non-local traffic using the street (41% of participants), higher motor vehicle speeds (30% of participants) and damaged/missing signs and barriers (26% of participants). The full Phase One Engagement Summary can be reviewed [online](#).

#### Temporary Traffic Calming Survey

As we added temporary traffic calming measures along select Slow Streets, we wanted to hear how the changes are working for the local community through a targeted location-specific survey. We continue to review and collect feedback through 2021.

### **Implementation**

Staff have been learning through quickly rolling out a number of coordinated COVID-19 mobility and public life initiatives. We balanced selecting appropriate materials for different initiatives (Room to Queue, Room to Move, Pop-Up Plazas etc.), procuring sufficient materials for different scales of interventions and continually reviewing how long interventions will be in place during the pandemic.

#### Maintenance

A challenge that we’ve seen, more frequently during the winter, is moved, damaged or missing signs and barriers along routes. As we hear about maintenance issues, City crews are replacing damaged or misaligned materials but the temporary nature of the water-filled barriers requires ongoing maintenance. At the same time, the lighter material choice is what allowed staff to quickly roll out a network. Fixed barriers would require significantly more upfront investigation and installation effort, such as a more detailed review with emergency services, and would not

have been appropriate in as many situations – this is similar to why temporary traffic calming upgrades are only being installed on a portion of the overall network. Staff have been prioritizing maintenance and more robust materials for initiatives where safety is of greater concern along busier streets, such as the upgrading of social service response parklets.

Additionally, staff have historically avoided the use of signs such as 'local traffic only' as they have no regulatory power to change traffic patterns and may give residents an undue impression of effectiveness. These signs are most effective in advance of a temporary (ex. construction) or permanent diversion or closure, communicating to people driving that this route should only be used if accessing a destination on that street.

Concern about the level of effectiveness and support for additional measures were a key feedback themes through Phase One engagement. Existing programs, combined with an expansion of traffic diverters and new initiatives such as slow zones, are better able to address acute neighbourhood issues as identified by warrant analysis and speed/volume criteria. As a result, staff have shifted focus from the urgent response to tailored trial traffic pattern changes as explained below.

### Temporary Traffic Calming Upgrades

As part of the second phase of the Slow Streets, staff reviewed opportunities to improve the comfort of select routes by installing additional temporary traffic calming. Upgrades align with upcoming and long-term transportation projects such as existing and future greenways, parks and civic facilities, and where we've previously heard concerns about traffic volumes from a neighbourhood.

In 2020, traffic calming measures were installed at four locations- Ontario Street near Riley Park, Heather Street at 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Charles Street between Kamloops Street and Slocan Street and Wall Street near Cambridge and Oxford Park. Traffic calming measures include barriers that prevent motor vehicles from making some movements through an intersection helping reduce traffic volumes on a street. Additional details can be reviewed in the [Supplemental Design Guide](#).

At all of these locations our goal is to be responsive and we have been monitoring the changes and adjusting based on public feedback. At the Wall Street location, we heard significant concerns from the local community about the impact of the changes, and we removed the temporary closure in November 2020 until staff can return to have additional conversations about mobility in the neighbourhood.

### *Initial Results*

Overall, our goal with each traffic calming trial is to reduce motor vehicle volumes to meet/ approach the City's [All Ages and Abilities](#) (AAA) guidelines (target less than 500 motor vehicles/day) and maintain motor vehicle volumes on adjacent local streets within an acceptable range for the street context.

To provide time for people to adjust to the changes, staff are collecting preliminary data 1-2 months after traffic measures are installed. Our findings are showing reduced motor vehicle volumes on streets with temporary traffic calming measures, sufficient to consider the route AAA near the change:

- Charles Street: new volumes are down more than 70%
- Heather Street: new volumes are down more than 80%
- Wall Street: during the closure, volumes were down 90%
- Ontario Street: new volumes are down 50%.

Staff have heard concerns from people living on adjacent streets about the new traffic patterns. Preliminary results of data monitoring on surrounding streets in areas of public concerns are as follows:

- Area surrounding Charles: most streets see volumes that are close to AAA threshold, even if they are not bike routes.
- Area surrounding Heather: some streets still see volumes that are higher than AAA, and further targeted traffic counts will help further identify the travel patterns.

## Next Steps

Given current COVID-19 conditions, we anticipate continuing the Slow Street initiative through at least Fall 2021. Staff will continue to maintain and monitor designated Slow Streets and temporary traffic calming upgrades. Additional data collection is planned to capture more typical conditions for areas around Charles Street (impacted by Nanaimo Street construction), Ontario Street (resuming of community activities and programming) and Heather Street where we want to better understand traffic patterns at arterial street connections.

Two additional temporary traffic calming upgrades are planned for early Spring 2021 at Fir Street at W 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Glen Street at Broadway and E 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. On-street signs will be installed to explain the changes and area residents will receive mailed notifications prior to implementation. Staff will continue to monitor feedback through email and the online survey.

This spring, staff will pilot School Streets at three schools (Hastings Elementary School, Sir William Van Horne Elementary School and Lord Roberts Elementary School). This joint initiative between the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver School Board will use school volunteers to implement short-term (30 minute to one-hour) road closures during pick-up and drop-off, improving safety and providing parents, students and teachers more space for active travel and physical distancing.

In Summer 2021, we will shift into Phase Three of the Slow Streets initiative and start to think about how we transition routes and the temporary traffic calming upgrades to other City led programs like the Neighbourhood Traffic Management Program, Spot Improvements Program, and future greenways and bikeways like the Portside Greenway. In each case, staff will seek additional public input before making any changes permanent.

Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any further questions about these initiatives.

Sincerely,



Lon LaClaire, M.Eng., P.Eng.  
General Manager, Engineering Services  
604.873.7336 | [lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca](mailto:lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca)