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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
CC: ["City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"](#)
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Date: 4/28/2021 4:58:29 PM
Subject: Memo - Smithe Street Upgrades Project
Attachments: Memo - Smithe Street Upgrades Project.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Lon LaClaire. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- This spring, staff are inviting stakeholders and the public to provide feedback on proposed active transportation upgrades on Smithe Street (Richards Street to Thurlow Street).
- The proposed design completes an All Ages and Abilities cycling connection between the Cambie Bridge and the West End with safer intersections that address turning conflicts and maintains sufficient vehicle capacity with dedicated turn lanes and added turn phases.
- This project can be delivered later this year using a low-cost, quick build approach to provide more space for travel both during the pandemic and the recovery. Filling gaps between existing All Ages and Abilities cycling routes is an effective way to improve comfort, convenience and safety for people cycling and progress towards our Climate Emergency targets.

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

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməŋəm (Musqueam), lóóvú 7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

April 28, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications
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: Smithe Street Upgrades Project

RTS #: N/A

The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of the Smithe Street Upgrades project from Richards Street to Thurlow Street, and the plans for public engagement.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Council's 'Reallocation of Road Space to Support Shared Use During Pandemic' direction 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. This project is a key companion to other work, such as the Beach Avenue Room-to-Move project, 40km network of Slow Streets, hundreds of new patio spaces, and dozens of plazas and social service parklets.

Staff are planning another project that can be delivered quickly to provide more space for travel, both during the pandemic and the recovery. Upgrading active transportation on Smithe Street (Richards Street to Thurlow Street) using a low-cost approach will fill a key gap in the downtown cycling network and provide a comfortable east-west route between the West End and the Cambie Bridge. As a potential link in TransLink's Major Bike Network, staff are also applying for an additional TransLink BICCS contribution to fund the project.

Background

Smithe Street and/or Nelson Street have been identified for improved active transportation in a number of transportation plans, including successive five-year cycling priority maps since 2015. Staff have heard feedback from travellers about this gap over a number of years and during related project engagements in the downtown, including the 2016 Smithe Street Upgrades, 800 Robson Plaza Upgrades, the Cambie Bridge Interim Improvements, and through other

downtown bike network upgrades such as Richards Street, Drake Street, Haro Street, and Bute Street. Due in part to these nearby projects, cycling trips along Smithe Street and Nelson Street have doubled in four years, including west of Richards where people cycling remain unprotected from motor vehicle traffic.

In the existing All Ages and Abilities cycling network (as illustrated in Map 1 below), protected bike lanes from the Cambie Bridge on Smithe Street and Nelson Street end at Richards Street while the recently improved Haro Street local street bikeway ends at Thurlow Street. The Hornby Street protected bike lane lies in the middle. In the six blocks connecting these routes, people cycling mix with motor vehicle traffic, often changing lanes at intersections or using sidewalks. An extension of the Smithe Street protected bike lane would not only connect all of these routes, it would also create a more predictable street for all travel modes and reduce people cycling on sidewalks.

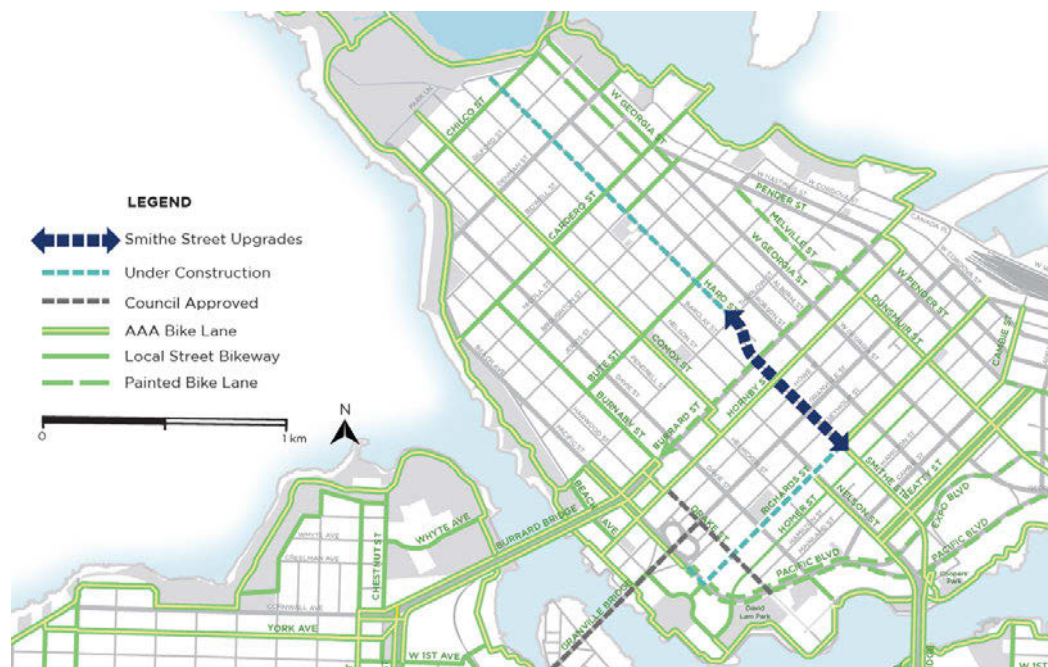


Figure 1 Map of downtown cycling connections

As outlined in the Council-approved Climate Emergency Action Plan, improving sustainable transportation networks will provide more comfortable and desirable walking, cycling and transit access to employment and other destinations. Many people are interested in cycling for their daily travel, but don't since they don't have safe or comfortable routes. Filling gaps between existing All Ages and Abilities cycling routes is an effective way to improve comfort, convenience and safety for people cycling and progress towards our Climate Emergency targets. Improved intersection treatments are also a benefit to people walking by reducing crossing distances and further separating modes of travel.

Proposed Upgrades

If engagement is successful, staff plan to build a protected bike lane on the north side of Smithe Street, including improving intersection treatments. The initial phase of construction, targeting early completion by fall 2021, implements a simple physical separation and the necessary signal changes such as separate phases for busy right turns. As soon as we are able, we will coordinate sidewalk curb ramp improvements where needed at corners impacted by the traffic signal changes, general street rehabilitation, relocation of a driveway from Smithe Street to

Howe Street, and potentially a fuller protected intersection at Hornby/Smithe, including significantly shorter crosswalks.

Recognizing that many people may still not want to take transit in the COVID recovery phase, the project will give many people a direct comfortable cycling route to destinations such as the West End and St Paul's Hospital. However, due to transit hesitancy, we expect we will also see heavier-than-usual traffic once COVID restrictions lighten and more people are vaccinated. Smithe Street is an important arterial distributing traffic (particularly from the Cambie Bridge) onto the downtown grid before ending at Thurlow Street and staff will ensure that sufficient vehicle capacity will be maintained with dedicated turn lanes and added turn phases, ensuring coordinating intersections with adjacent signals.

There is a limited amount of parking provided on Smithe Street, both because of existing restrictions and due to the shorter block length than intersecting streets. Staff are working to retain more than 70% of the 45 parking spaces and special zones along this section of Smithe Street, with limited change east of Burrard Street. We are prioritizing passenger and taxi zones within the limited curb space.

Public Engagement

Staff have met with key stakeholders in the project area including the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, the Provincial Courts, the Orpheum and Commodore. We received good feedback on local access, and have already made adjustments to locate passenger and taxi zones in the Granville Entertainment District, design around large vehicle movements, and maintain traffic circulation to support businesses. Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services are a key stakeholder in the project and we continue to refine the design near Fire Hall 7 with their guidance.

Local residents and businesses, as well as the broader public, will be invited to provide feedback on a proposed design in May 2021 on the Shape Your City webpage. Staff will also promote the engagement using on-street signage, social media and by sharing it with our Downtown Bike Network newsletter list. Staff are extending invitations to have one-on-one meetings with businesses and residential buildings who want to discuss the proposal in more depth.

In addition to modifying the design concept, the results of engagement will also help determine future coordinated upgrades beyond this initial quick-build phase of the project.

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

Sincerely,



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General Manager, Engineering Services
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