



Date: March 12, 2015

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Stanley Park Causeway Safety Improvements

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the safety improvements to the Stanley Park Causeway proposed by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure as described in this report;
- B. THAT the July 12, 1999 Causeway Agreement with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, be amended to widen the surface maintenance area to reflect the proposed improvements to the satisfaction of the General Manager, Vancouver Board of Park and Recreation, and the Director of Legal Services; and
- C. THAT the environmental compensation for the use of park land be subject to approval by the Board.

POLICY

Park Board approves all use of lands under its jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND

The Stanley Park Causeway is an approximately 2.2 km long segment of provincial Highway 99, providing one of only two road linkages between Vancouver and the North Shore via the Lions Gate Bridge across Burrard Inlet. It and the adjoining sidewalks are under the management of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (the Ministry).

In September 1998, the Park Board approved the widening of the Causeway sidewalks from 1.2 to 2 metres to improve safety as part of the reconstruction of the Causeway. However, these dimensions do not meet current Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) guidelines for off-street walking and cycling pathways.

On October 15, 2012, the Park Board adopted the Stanley Park Cycling Plan and implementation strategy to realize its vision to improve the experience of Stanley Park for all park users, while maintaining or enhancing the park's ecology.

On June 24, 2013, Park Board directed staff to work with the Ministry and Engineering Services to develop strategies to minimize conflict in high volume pedestrian and cyclist interface areas of the Stanley Park Causeway, and to report back to the Board with immediacy as to what short-term measures can be implemented to improve walking and cycling safety in the interim, as well as provide possible longer-term solutions.

DISCUSSION

The death of a cyclist on May 25, 2013 on the Causeway raised concerns regarding the safety of the Causeway sidewalks which are shared between pedestrian and cyclist modes of travel. Consequently, the Ministry hired an engineering consulting firm to undertake a review to address pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Working closely together, staff from the Ministry, the Vancouver Parks Board and the City of Vancouver reviewed treatments developed by the consultants that could be applied to improve safety on the Causeway.

The work involved reviewing physical challenges to implementation and identifying potential mitigation measures to enhance the cyclist and pedestrian experience while protecting the park's ecology. There is consensus that the east sidewalk has the greatest potential for significant widening as there is a grass area adjacent to it, and the west sidewalk is severely restricted for widening by trees, grade changes and water ways. All agreed that priorities for the design are safety for pedestrians and cyclists and for protection of trees and the environment.

This collaboration resulted in a context sensitive design for the Causeway that balances the agreed upon priorities.

Design Solutions

The Ministry seeks Park Board approval and cooperation to proceed with the design and construction of a widened shared multiuse pathway on the eastern (northbound) side of the Causeway and a widened bicycle-only pathway on the western (southbound) side of the Causeway. The proposed improvement details include:

- The installation of a continuous safety railing between the existing pathways and vehicle lanes on both sides of the Causeway, except at the existing emergency vehicle pullouts. The railing posts will match the existing green site fixtures on the Causeway.
- The widening of the west side (southbound) pathway by 0.4 m to provide a 2.1 m clear pathway (including a 0.6 m offset from fence) for cycling to meet TAC guidelines for one-way bicycle travel, plus the provision of widening of 1.0 m to provide a 2.7 m width at the passing lanes.
- The widening of the east side (northbound) pathway by 1.9 m for the establishment of a shared cycling and pedestrian facility that is 3.6 m wide, with additional 1.5 m widening around obstacles, so as to meet TAC guidelines for one-way bicycle traffic shared with two-way pedestrian traffic.
- Pedestrian entry to the proposed west side (southbound) bicycle-only pathway can be effectively restricted through enhanced way-finding signage at the corridor entry/crossover points.
- Provision of a dashed line, stenciling and signage delineating approximately 2.4 m zone primarily for one-way northbound bicycle travel cyclists and approximately 1.2 m two-way pedestrians only zone on the east side furthest from the roadway.

These improvements are illustrated in Appendix A.

The Ministry considers that this approach meets the goals and objectives of improving safety and comfort for users of the Causeway with other beneficial aspects, including avoiding direct impacts to at least a dozen large trees. In addition, by avoiding a separate pedestrian facility around the trees on the west side, there is no need to increase the exposure and isolation of trees from the larger forested area, and impacts from retaining wall and pathway widening construction are reduced.

Engineering staff recommend that three passing lanes are needed on the western southbound side for enhanced safety. This is a downhill approach to Vancouver's downtown where the Ministry has documented cycling speeds upwards of 50 km/hour. Two passing lanes are already supported by stakeholders, and a third can be provided subject to additional engagement with First Nations and stakeholders. The Causeway Agreement can include a provision for this additional passing lane, so that if a satisfactory outcome of First Nations and stakeholder engagement is reached it can be included at the General Manager's discretion.

Archaeology, Trees and Environment

Professional archaeological, environmental and arboricultural assessments to measure the possible impacts of the proposed design are complete.

The archaeological impact assessment indicates that no archaeological sites are present and there is low potential for impact to archaeological resources.

The environmental assessment validates that 0.40 ha (1 acre) of green space will be permanently impacted by the Causeway widening, and much of the impact is in an area that is frequently mowed and contains invasive species such as Himalayan blackberry.

Independent and Park Board urban foresters reviewed the trees to be retained and removed. In total, 14 trees require removal and 122 trees will receive protection measures such as aeration, specialized soil removals and backfills to minimize the trees removed in this project. The trees to be removed have an age range of 30 to 60 years approximately, and a size range of 0.2 m to 0.64 m in diameter at breast height. One multi-stemmed western hemlock tree is 1.02 m in diameter at breast height.

The Ministry will provide funding for environmental enhancements in the park, subject to approval of the Board, and in consideration of Ministry input with regards to the project scope and budget, to offset environmental and tree impacts, and will remove invasive species in and proximate to the work area.

Engagement

Park Board staff worked with the Ministry to facilitate a community engagement process including stakeholder meetings and a public open house.

Meetings and correspondence with the Stanley Park Ecology Society, the City's Active Transportation Policy Council, and HUB: Your Cycling Connection, resulted in requests for the project. Specifically, these groups asked for a physical barrier between motor vehicle traffic and the sidewalks, for widened sidewalks to meet today's standards, for minimal impacts to

park trees and green space, and for improved way finding signage. These comments were incorporated in the designs and open house displays for information.

The Ministry undertook separate First Nations engagement and Parks Canada is informed and engaged in this process.

A well-attended and public information open house was held on December 2, 2014. Approximately 135 people attended the event held at the Coal Harbour Community Centre from 2:30 to 7:30 p.m. and 120 emailed comments were returned to the Ministry. The event generated multi-media coverage by news outlets. Of the comments received, 69% percent were supportive, 23% were neutral, and 8% were opposed to the proposed plans.

This community engagement process shows that the majority of the general public, organized groups and individuals feel the proposed balance of safety, pedestrian and cycling standards, and environmental protection and enhancement for this project is appropriate.

Stanley Park Cycling Plan

The Stanley Park Cycling Plan identified a number of access improvements along the Causeway sidewalks, to increase safety and to enhance the park experience by enabling better access to the park's interior trail network. The Park Board has received approval from the Ministry for these improvements. These connections are being designed by Park Board consultants in conjunction with the Causeway works, and will be constructed as soon as possible. Hanson Trail was designated for cycling to provide a safe, more direct access for cyclists to the Causeway closer to the bridge, and staff will work with Ministry staff to explore ways to increase the attractiveness of this route and its connection to the Causeway for cyclist and pedestrian use.

Signage

Enhanced way finding signage along the Causeway is required to increase safety by encouraging people to use paths within the park and directing pedestrians to the east Causeway sidewalk. Ministry, Park Board and City staff will work together on developing an appropriate way finding strategy associated with the project as part of the detailed design for the Causeway improvements. City staff are interested in working with HUB: Your Cycling Connection, who offered their ideas for improving way-finding from downtown to the Causeway and Lions Gate Bridge.

Trans Canada Trail Burrard Loop

The Ministry has been involved in recent discussions with municipalities and non-profits about the development of a designated loop route for the Trans Canada Trail, part of which would be via the Lions Gate Bridge and potentially some portion of the Stanley Park Causeway. To be designated as part of the Trans Canada Trail, improvements need to provide an accessible route that is safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities. The National Hiking Trail and Great Blue Heron Way Trail would also use the park and the Lions Gate Bridge to link to the North Shore. This would likely incorporate the connections to and from Prospect Point and/or Hanson Trail (or other trails to the east). Provision of an accessible sidewalk from the west Causeway sidewalk to Prospect Point was identified as a way to improve safety by drawing tourists and recreational visitors away from the Causeway. A new sidewalk would

be outside of the 1999 Causeway Agreement surface maintenance area so staff will report back on the implications of the proposed Trans Canada Trail Burrard Loop for Stanley Park. The Trans Canada Trail team hopes that the Burrard Loop can be in place for Canada's 150th birthday in 2017.

Timeline

With Park Board support, the Ministry will make a project announcement on the safety strategy for the Causeway. The Ministry believes the proposed improvements balance the need to increase safety for Causeway users with environmental considerations.

Staff recommends that the Park Board approve the proposed improvements. This will allow the Ministry to construct the improvements in 2015. The Ministry will be responsible for First Nations notifications and ongoing First Nations consultation.

It is also recommended that the Park Board approve in principle amending the July 12, 1999 Causeway Agreement to increase the surface maintenance area to reflect the proposed improvements, to the satisfaction of the General Manager, Vancouver Board of Park and Recreation and the Director of Legal Services, and that the environmental compensation for the use of park land be subject to approval by the Board (in consideration of Ministry input with regards to the project scope and budget). This represents the Park Board's contribution of the land requirements to the project and will ensure an appropriate level of compensation for the loss of park land.

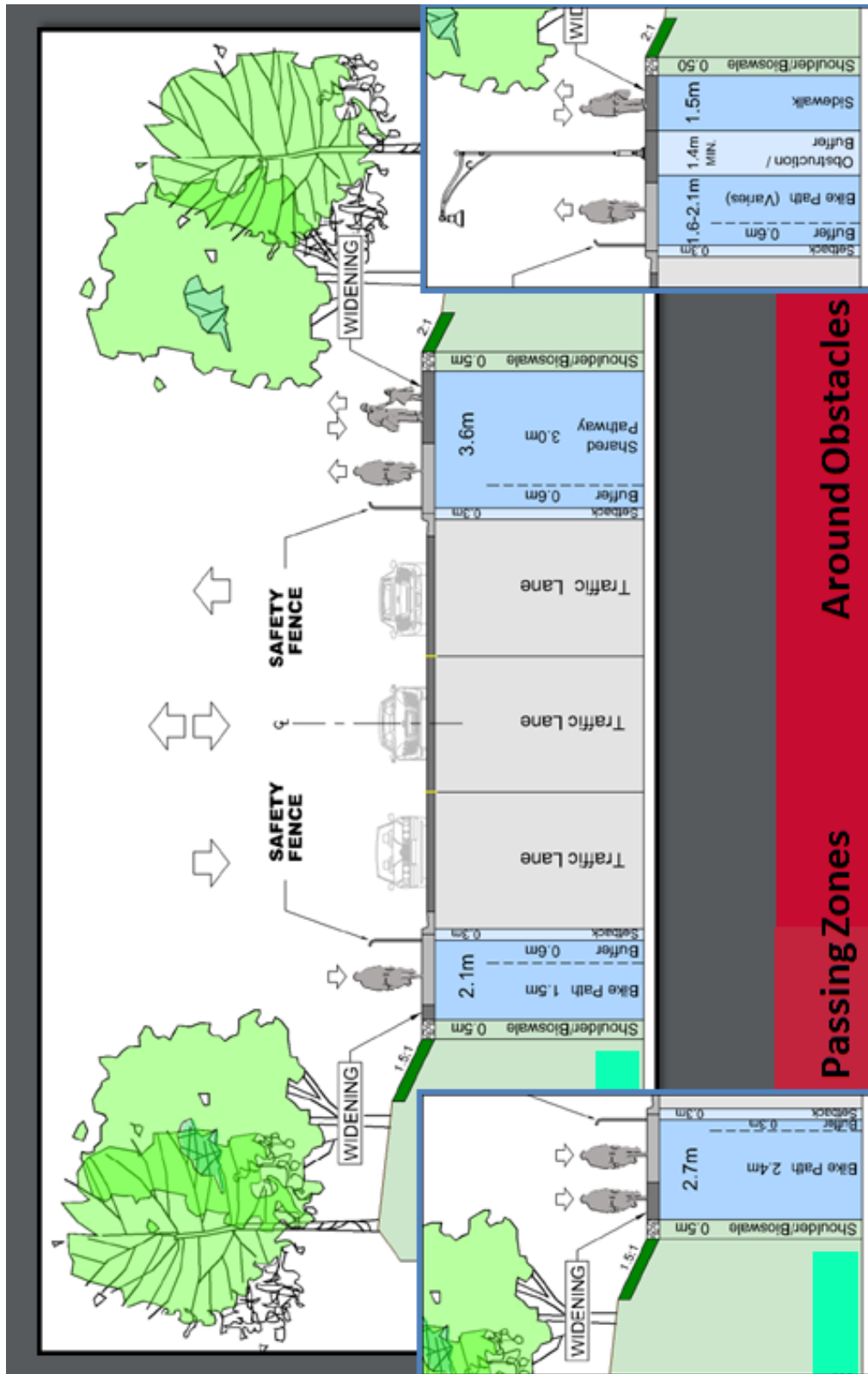
SUMMARY

It is recommended that the Board approve in principle safety improvements to the Stanley Park Causeway proposed by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure as described in this report. The July 12, 1999 Causeway Agreement needs amendment to increase the surface maintenance area to reflect the proposed improvements. Ministry, Park Board and City staff will work together to ensure Stanley Park Cycling Plan recommendations, the Trans Canada Trail Burrard Loop and an enhanced way-finding signage strategy associated with the project can be coordinated with the Causeway sidewalk improvements.

General Manager's Office
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Vancouver, BC

Prepared by:
A. Duncan, Environmental Planner, and
T. Mack, Manager of Park Development
AD/MA/TM/pab

Proposed Design



Proposed Safety Fence, Signage and Pavement Markings

