April 18, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Stakeholders Committee

Attending: Mei Ang; Natalie Bandringa, Paul Butterfield, Andrea Gleichauf, Don Gunn, Elsie Habbick, Jim Hemstock, Tim Hewett, Jean Newton, Tom Newton, John Schmuck, Peter Spurr, Harold Stanley, Ray Straatsma, Barb Tabata, Ray Travers, Alistair Wade, Elaine Weidner, Rob Wickson, Darrell Wick, Harold Wolf, Sandie Wood

1. Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the options, recommendations, and analysis of the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Transportation Study prepared by Urban Systems.

2. Opening Remarks

The facilitator, Harold Stanley, provided opening remarks where he reminded the Committee and guests that the Action Plan has two major components: the design of a balanced transportation network through the Valley and the creation of a land use plan with urban design guidelines for the densification of the Valley's centres and village.

This is important to keep in mind as land use changes and increases in density will have an impact on the future of transportation in the Valley. It's estimated that under the Valley's current zoning we could potentially see another 4,000 people added to the Valley's study area population of just over 11,000. The draft Land Use and Urban Design Plan, currently being reviewed by staff, explores the option of adding even more people and services to the Valley's centres and village.

The options analyzed and recommendations made in the transportation study will be further reviewed at public open houses, hopefully later this spring, along with those of the land use and urban design plan.

3. Review of the Options and Recommendations of the Transportation Study

Saanich Transportation Engineer Jim Hemstock began by reviewing the existing traffic volumes in the Shelbourne Corridor and the computer simulation modeling used to forecast future traffic.

The Transcad Modeling used for the Shelbourne study was also used for the Blue Bridge and Craigflower Bridge projects as well as BC Transit's rapid transit study. Transcad is a macro model that does a good job of predicting traffic on the network and can deal with land use changes and significant network changes.

Using existing and forecast traffic volumes, levels of service are measured and assigned variables ranging from "A", no delays, through worsening delays ranging from "B" to "F".

The consultant, Urban Systems, came to some general conclusions about traffic in the Shelbourne Corridor from Feltham Road to Hillside Avenue. Overall the corridor works

"pretty well", although turning onto Shelbourne outside of the major intersections is poor and several turning movements at major intersections are rated D to F. Shelbourne south of Cedar Hill X Road, which has existing daily traffic volumes of just over 25,000 vehicles, experiences significant congestion.

Shelbourne is a regional arterial with 60% of traffic originating outside of Saanich, the majority of which is through traffic.

Jim went over the 2 lane option (one lane in each direction with a middle left turning lane) and 3 lane option (one lane in each direction with a middle lane that reverses direction during the a.m. and p.m. peak travel times). Although the model does a good job with the 2 lane option with left turn lanes, it doesn't understand the 3 lane reversible option.

The 2 lane option while doable would, according to the model, result in significant congestion that in turn would affect transit and disperse traffic onto parallel routes such as Cedar Hill Road and Richmond Road.

The 3 lane reversible option isn't a good choice for Shelbourne because peak traffic flows are relatively balanced (60/40) with Shelbourne connecting the CRD's two main destinations; downtown Victoria and UVic. This option would also have difficulty with the high number of turning movements with accesses to side streets, private driveways, shopping centres etc. on Shelbourne. Reversible lanes work where there are few turning movements required such as on bridges, in tunnels, or beside waterways and rail lines.

Both the 2 and 3 lane options would severely limit the effectiveness of a proposed frequent transit system, with buses coming every 4 minutes during peak times, designed to serve projected growth in the Valley's centres and village. BC Transit, in its review of the study, indicated that they wouldn't consider frequent transit for Shelbourne if the number of lanes between the centres and village were reduced from 4. Truck traffic would also be diverted to other routes.

4. Questions and Comments

Jim, Harold and Paul Butterfield, engineering technologist with Saanich Engineering, answered questions and recorded comments.

Don Gunn noted that traffic is already diverting to Cedar Hill Road to avoid light delays on Shelbourne.

Does Transcad take into account future growth? Yes.

How much traffic can the 2 lane option manage? Two lanes, with a centre turning lane, might work at 15,000 vehicles per day but not 25,000.

Is a Transportation Demand Management plan being considered for Shelbourne? The CRD did a TDM study in 2010 and concluded that we are doing well with the carrot

(providing bike lanes, bike parking at new developments etc.) but we are not using the stick (road pricing and high parking charges). The CRD has recently undertaken a regional transportation study which will consider TDM measures.

How are we going to decrease Greenhouse Gas emissions by 30%? The recommended concepts do not take into consideration potential traffic generated by proposed population increases in the Valley's centres and village as well as areas outside the Valley that feed into the Shelbourne transportation network. The hope is that a sizable portion of the added population will opt for alternative modes of transport to the car, such as walking, cycling and transit. This will reduce per capita emissions.

How do we reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles? HOV lanes are a consideration (see below) as is car pooling. More research needs to be done to see how SOVs can be reduced.

Can we incorporate High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes onto Shelbourne? Saanich Engineering will analyze HOV lanes on Shelbourne and include them in an open house presentation.

Can we move the curbs to widen the roadway? This is very expensive to do. Interim concept can be done within the existing right of way.

How do we acquire the property to widen the right of way? Saanich doesn't have a history of expropriating properties. Land is normally acquired through rezoning. In the case of Shelbourne this normally means rezoning land from a single family residence zone to a zone that permits townhouses or apartment buildings. Rezoning gives the municipality the leverage to ask for additional lands for sidewalks, bike lanes, boulevards etc., in exchange the developer acquires the higher density rights. Examples of this can be seen on Cedar Hill X west of Shelbourne. Statutory rights of way that allow public access across private property (refer to Gardiners Green) can also be negotiated through the rezoning process.

Discussion of what the recommendations are for the major intersections. Right turn lanes would be removed to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance at intersections. Bus bays would also be removed, with the exception of McKenzie where they will be used by buses to wait and adjust their schedules.

The removal of bus bays saves buses time as they don't have to wait to get in and out of traffic and frees up land that can be used for sidewalks, cycle tracks and better bus stops (BC Transit wants to work with Saanich to "brand" the corridor with better, more aesthetically appealing bus stops). The removal of bus bays will also "calm" traffic as it has to slow down and wait behind the buses. Transit priority signals, in which green lights can be extended for on coming buses by the bus driver, are also proposed.

Treed medians are recommended for the approach to each major intersection and its corresponding centre/village. A pleasant environment that announces the approach of

something special, like a neighbourhood or village centre, calms traffic versus an ugly or uninteresting environment which drivers tend to want to get through as quickly as possible (refer to context sensitive solutions for calming traffic).

When can we expect these changes to occur, especially given the poor pedestrian environment for seniors? The decision is Council's based on available resources and capital budgets. Saanich has a strategic plan that has targets for the length of sidewalks and bus lanes to be built each year.

Macro Transcad versus micro models Staff believe that TransCad is a good tool for estimating shifts to transit and to other streets should Shelbourne be modified. Synchro does a good job on intersections. There are other micro simulation programs that bridge the gap between the regional forecast and the intersection, but these are only helpful when the regional network and demand have been determined.

Studies have shown that if we reduce traffic volume through road dieting then traffic will "disappear". In an area with streets laid out in a right angle grid system, which the Shelbourne Valley doesn't' have, this may occur as there are multiple outlets that vehicles can use to avoid congestion. In higher density areas well served by public transit and other modes of transportation people may choose to use transit, cycle, walk etc. This is one of the objectives of the Official Community Plan's centres and villages strategy to be implemented in the Shelbourne corridor.

Why would people want to live in centres with so much traffic? The land use and urban design plan, currently being reviewed by staff, will recommend ways to calm traffic and make the centres more walkable and people friendly.

There are push/pull factors associated with every living environment. In a compact mixed use environment you have the advantage of having greater accessibility to transit, stores and other services as well as the potential for other urban amenities. Low density suburban environments have the advantage of greater privacy, peace and quiet, yards for gardening etc. However they are more auto dependent which means residents have to use their cars for most errands and public transit is usually not as frequent or near to where they live so commuting times are lengthened. Several recent studies indicate that people in North America are changing their location preference from low density suburbs to more compact mixed use transit oriented environments.

Cyclists prefer to cycle on roads as cycle tracks that are only 1.5 m in width are too narrow to pass other cyclists. The design of the recommended cycle tracks needs to be very carefully considered.

Because completion of the proposed Bowker Creek Greenway is likely to be far less expensive and can be finished in far less time than the proposed cycle tracks on Shelbourne, it should be given priority when funding is made available. Saanich can pursue this opportunity.

Will there be special signal timing for seniors so they can cross the major intersections before the light changes? Extended time signals at key pedestrian crossings are being looked into by Saanich.

It should be noted that a number of people at the meeting were not in favor of the 4 lane options and a vote was held to have the 2 and 3 lane options presented at the upcoming Open Houses along with the 4 lane recommended concepts, which Saanich staff have agreed to do.

It was also suggested by Jean Newton that Saanich hold some of the upcoming Open Houses on Shelbourne St. so that Saanich staff can point out how the options will be constructed.