



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

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TO: Standing Committee on Transportation and Traffic
FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services
SUBJECT: 2007 Pedestrian Study

INFORMATION

The General Manager of Engineering Services submits this report for INFORMATION.

COUNCIL POLICY

CityPlan (1995) set a number of broad directions for Vancouver which included creating a city of neighbourhoods, and putting transit, walking and biking ahead of cars. Since 1995, Community Visions have been developed for the city's single-family areas and each Vision includes directions to strengthen 'Neighbourhood Centres' by improving the pedestrian environment. The Neighbourhood Centre's Program is now delivering detailed public realm improvement plans to follow-up on Vision directions.

Key elements of Vancouver's 1997 Transportation Plan included creating pedestrian priority areas in commercial centres, providing additional facilities to improve pedestrian comfort and safety, providing a better transportation balance downtown and improving monitoring. Major Initiative NP8 notes that "Pedestrian Space will be given high priority when analyzing the impacts of roadway changes".

In June 1999, Council approved an improved transportation monitoring program to assist with implementation of the Transportation Plan, including staff reporting back on a commercial/retail pedestrian study.

At its meeting on April 10, 2001, Council approved a recommendation to carry out a 2001 Pedestrian Study, which included both expanded pedestrian counts on commercial and retail streets and a new pedestrian opinion survey. At this meeting, Council also passed a recommendation that staff carry out a Pedestrian Study every five years.

The City's Downtown Transportation Plan (2002) included as one of its main goals, improving the pedestrian environment such that walking becomes a more attractive, safe, efficient and comfortable way to experience the city.

Vancouver's Community Climate Change Action Plan (2005) also recognized the importance of supporting initiatives that increase walking, to help meet City targets for reducing transportation related greenhouse gas emissions.

SUMMARY

Vancouver as a whole, and particularly many areas in the downtown have shown continuing growth in pedestrian activity. Growth in walking throughout Vancouver must continue if the City is to meet its transportation and greenhouse gas reduction objectives. Council has approved carrying out Pedestrian Studies on a 5-year cycle. The studies collect pedestrian volume data for commercial and retail streets, as well as information on pedestrian travel patterns and opinions on pedestrian services. This data is valuable for monitoring how the City is meeting its pedestrian objectives, as well as assisting City staff and businesses with pedestrian related planning. Accordingly, the 2007 Pedestrian Study will provide an update on pedestrian activity in the City from the previous study, which was completed in 2002.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of plans for a 2007 Pedestrian Study.

BACKGROUND

Walk Mode in Vancouver

Increasing the amount of walking within Vancouver forms a fundamental part of Vancouver's transportation and climate change plans. Vancouver has the region's highest percentage of walking and one of the highest walk to work mode shares in North America. Walking is the second fastest growing transportation mode in Vancouver (next to cycling). Pedestrian activity is also one of the key indicators of the vitality of our business districts.

An important context for walking trips is that other non-auto trips such as transit and cycling also begin and end with walking. The table below shows that a majority (60%) of trips in the Downtown are made by either walking all the way or by the combination of transit or cycling plus walking. In Vancouver as a whole, over one-third of trips (37%) are made by these three modes. The table also shows that walking, transit and cycling play a significantly stronger role in Vancouver than in other municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD).

Mode Shares - 24 hours (2004 Trip Diary)				
	Downtown	Central Broadway	Vancouver (all)	Rest of GVRD
Walk	27%	12%	17%	9%
Bike	3%	3%	3%	1%
Transit	<u>30%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>6%</u>
TOTAL	60%	35%	37%	16%

Although the City has made progress in increasing its walk mode share, walking trips will need to continue to increase if Vancouver is to meet its liveability and greenhouse gas reduction objectives.

Pedestrian Studies

The City carries out periodic pedestrian volume counts for sidewalks on its commercial and retail streets. The last three pedestrian studies were carried out in 1977, 1991 and 2002. The pedestrian volume data collected provides valuable information on how well the City is meeting its objectives for walking trips. Uses of the data include:

- Helping to supplement survey based transportation mode share data (i.e. TransLink Trip Diaries, Canada Census Journey to Work),
- Tracking trends in pedestrian activity in sub-areas of the City and on individual blocks,
- Assessing the pedestrian level of service (crowding) on sidewalks,
- Comparing pedestrian activities in different geographic areas of the City,
- Assisting City staff in street and building design,
- Assisting with modelling (forecasting) pedestrian activity, and
- Assisting BIAs and businesses in their marketing and planning efforts.

The 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study significantly expanded the number of locations where pedestrian volumes were counted, including Business Improvement Areas and Neighbourhood Centres outside the Central Business District. In total, pedestrian volumes were recorded on approximately 250 blocks of sidewalks. Most counts took place from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Control locations on Robson Street and Water Street were used to monitor seasonal and weather variations in pedestrian activity, as well as evening and weekend volumes. The 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study also included an opinion survey of over 1400 pedestrians, asking them about their origins and destinations, trip purposes, travel modes, route choices and satisfaction with pedestrian facilities and services. A summary and the main 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study report are available on the City's website at <http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/transport/pedstudy/index.htm>.

Some of the main findings of the 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study were:

- On the 100 blocks counted in the previous 1991 Study, pedestrian volumes increased by over 100,000, from 676,000 to 779,000, and grew at annual rate almost three times faster than between 1977 and 1991,
- Results on individual blocks varied, with the downtown core being the busiest,
- On several of the busiest pedestrian streets, walking volumes exceed vehicle volumes,
- Saturdays are generally busier than weekdays and Sundays are generally less busy,
- 74% of those surveyed started their trip in Vancouver, including 48% who started their trip downtown, and

- Pedestrian survey respondent concerns included crossings at unsignalized intersections, the amount of sidewalk amenities, behaviour of drivers and cyclists, and personal security.

DISCUSSION

2007 Pedestrian Study

As per Council's direction that Pedestrian Studies be carried out on a 5-year cycle, staff are proceeding with plans to update the 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study in 2007. The cost of repeating the previous study is included in Engineering Services' proposed 2007 Operating Budget. Time for project management of the 2007 Pedestrian Study has been included in the 2007 work program for staff in Engineering's Strategic Transportation Planning Branch. Preliminary consultation work has included notifying Vancouver's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) of the City's plans to carry out a 2007 Pedestrian Study, and requesting their feedback on planning for the study.

Based on input from City Engineering and Planning staff, and responses received from BIAs, the need to further expand the scope of the study has been identified in several areas:

1) Downtown Counts

Although a majority of commercial and retail streets in the downtown were covered by the previous Pedestrian Study, there are still some significant gaps for streets in the southeast end of the Downtown. These include streets in the vicinity of BC Place and GM Place stadiums, streets north of Granville Bridge and streets in the vicinity of and including Carrall Street (proposed Greenway). Approximately 60 additional count locations would be desirable on these streets. Staff are pursuing external funding from senior governments and other agencies for these extra count locations.

2) City Planning in Shopping Areas Outside of Downtown

The 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study provided five counts in planning areas such as Neighbourhood Centres outside of the downtown. Planning staff have identified the need to expand the number of counts by approximately thirty-five, to cover new and emerging planning areas outside the downtown. For the 2007 Pedestrian Study, the additional cost of these extra planning area counts would be funded by the Planning Department.

3) Business Improvement Areas

Similar to the previous Pedestrian Study, Business Improvement Areas outside the downtown core have been offered the opportunity to pay for extra counts (in addition to City funded counts) for streets within their areas. For the 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study, only one BIA ordered extra counts. For 2007, six BIAs have expressed interest in ordering additional counting on their streets (as of January 25th, 2007).

As part of the feedback received on the 2007 Pedestrian Study, some BIAs have commented that the City should fund more counts in their areas. Staff propose to try and accommodate this concern, while still keeping within the existing study budget, by including an extra City funded count for all BIAs that have over 10 blocks of frontage.

Other changes being proposed for the 2007 Pedestrian Study include:

- Adding an additional control location (if additional senior government or external agency funding is secured to cover the cost),
- Decreasing the total number of counts done at each control location, to allow for some additional counts to cover the 7am to 10am period,
- Developing a database of temporary sidewalk closures for construction work, to help schedule counts and interpret the data at locations where temporary closures were longer term (i.e. Canada Line construction), and
- Displaying data related to the 2002 and 2007 studies on the City's VanMap websites.

Data collected through the Pedestrian Study is separate from, but will complement existing large special events pedestrian planning and management efforts, including Olympic transportation.

Addition of Bicycle Counts

The equipment used for counting pedestrians has some excess capacity for recording additional transportation data. Accordingly, it is proposed to also collect bicycle volume data at most count locations. This data will provide valuable information for monitoring and planning bicycle facilities, at minimal additional cost to the Pedestrian Study and the City. Staff will consult with the Bicycle Advisory Committee on the City's plans for collecting the bicycle data.

2007 Schedule

The following schedule is proposed for the 2007 Pedestrian Study:

February to March	- Complete consultation and planning for study
March to April	- Hire and Train temporary counting staff
April to June	- Carry out volume count data collection
September	- Conduct opinion survey and final volume data collection
October to November	- Compile and analyze data
December	- Report back to Standing Committee on Transportation and Traffic and distribute copies of the 2007 Study report

Emerging Pedestrian Counting Technologies

New electronic technologies are beginning to be used to automatically count pedestrians in locations such as Europe and Australia. As part of the report back on the 2007 Pedestrian Study, staff will include a summary of their assessment of these new technologies, and whether they could play a role in improving pedestrian data collection in Vancouver.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding of \$55,000, sufficient to cover repeating the 2001/2002 Pedestrian Study has been provided in Engineering Services' proposed 2007 Operating Budget. The Planning Department, has agreed to cover the estimated cost of 35 additional counts in planning areas (approximately \$4400) from their 2007 Operating Budget. Accordingly, subject to approval of the 2007 Operating Budget by City Council, there should be sufficient funding to cover the City's total cost of \$59,400. Additional counting will be done for business areas and possibly in the southeast area of the downtown, on a cost recovery basis for field counting staff time. BIAs would be responsible for the additional costs in their areas, while funding for the southeast downtown counts are being pursued from senior governments or external agencies.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

Between six and eight temporary Traffic Assistants will need to be hired to carry out field count and opinion survey data collection. The number of temporary staff will depend on the amount of external funding that is received. Project management for the 2007 Pedestrian Study will be carried out by existing Engineering Services staff.

CONCLUSION

Increasing walking is a fundamental part of City transportation and climate change plans. Having sufficient pedestrian data is vital for understanding whether the City is making progress towards the objectives of these plans, and for designing and maintaining pedestrian facilities. Pedestrian data also provides valuable planning and marketing data for Vancouver's Business Improvement Associations. Consistent with Council Policy, the 2007 Pedestrian Study will continue the collecting of pedestrian volume and opinion data on a 5-year cycle.

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