



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 9, 2019
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Meeting Date: April 24, 2019

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services
FROM: Manager of Civic Engagement
SUBJECT: Presentation of False Creek Community Panel Report to Council

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receives the report of the Flats Arterial Community Panel (attached as Appendix A) for information.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- False Creek Flats Rail Corridor Strategy (2008) - To address the safety and traffic impacts of the rail corridor on nearby communities while supporting Vancouver's role in gateway trade, a strategy was developed to grade-separate the Burrard Inlet Rail Line. The need for grade-separated crossings for the arterial streets, including Powell Street (overpass was completed in 2014), and Prior/Venables Street was identified.
- In October 2015, staff received direction as part of the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts removal process as follows:

THAT Council approve downgrading of Prior Street to a local-serving street upon the completion of a new east/west arterial alignment to be determined through an accelerated planning process.

- False Creek Flats Area Plan (2017) – During the area planning process, staff worked closely with project partners to identify the grade-separated arterial route to replace Prior/Venables Street. Through extensive public and stakeholder engagement, it became clear that all of the alternate options presented challenges, and no route preference emerged. A process was identified for a deeper conversation of the alternate routes on William, Malkin, and National.

- In February 2018, staff received direction as part of the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts removal process as follows:

THAT Council reaffirm its decision to make Prior Street a “neighbourhood” street, its support for food production and distribution in the Strathcona Park/Malkin area, its commitment to working with the park board and its commitment to the process that was established by staff to create a community panel to provide recommendations on a new east-west arterial.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

Meaningful transportation planning involves residents and business owners, in particular those whose businesses, lives and communities are most affected by decisions related to large complex projects. This approach is critical when dealing with decisions that involve competing underlying values and trade-offs that are not easily resolved through economics or engineering alone.

In fulfilment of Council direction to seek further consultation on the arterial route, staff began new conversations about the best approach to balance multiple competing community and stakeholder interests, in addition to technical and economic variables.

Following the False Creek Flats Area Plan (2017), a cross-departmental team comprised of members from Engineering, Planning, Design & Sustainability, Park Board, Real Estate and Facilities Management, and Civic Engagement and Communications, began a Community Panel process, internationally known as a model of engagement at the highest level of the IAP2 (International Association of Public Participation) spectrum of public participation.

A Community Panel is a democratic engagement tool that deploys a jury-style model to educate a demographically balanced, randomly-selected group of residents and businesses to work toward a recommendation. This approach is similar to the Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly process, but the Flats Arterial Community Panel had a much more focused mandate and a condensed timeline. Sometimes called citizens' juries or citizens' assemblies, the format was developed in the 1970s and has grown in popularity around the world as a deep and meaningful engagement tool.

The Panel was initially comprised of 42 people (five dropped out during the course of the process), selected by randomized draw from the pool of about 200 applicants to ensure that a broad, representative cross-section of local residents, city-wide residents and local businesses were selected to participate. The Panel composition had an emphasis on participation from residents living in the study area and businesses sited along the arterial options and in light industrial areas of the Flats. A handful of city-wide residents

also served as members. The report appended here includes the final terms of reference.

The Community Panel's mandate or "charge" was clear:

"First, the Flats Arterial Community Panel will endeavour to represent local neighbourhoods, impacted businesses, and city-wide residents to recommend a preferred arterial alignment that best meets the needs of the community and businesses as a whole."

"Second, the Panel will develop a set of criteria to guide the evaluation and selection of a preferred grade-separated arterial alignment and recommend a route for the arterial, with rationale for the recommendation and suggestions for mitigating any concerns with the selected route".

Panel meetings were held from January to April 2019 as they considered 9 route options: Malkin Avenue (North, Central, and South variations), National Avenue (National-Grant, National-Charles, and National-Civic variations), Prior/Venables (overpass and underpass variations), and William Street.

Over the course of its seven meetings and one day tour, the Community Panel learned, deliberated and ultimately recommended an alignment for a grade-separated arterial. Panel members had briefings from City staff, stakeholders, outside experts and the broader community. The Panel also hosted 2 public workshops for non-panel members from the public to be engaged in this process.

After nearly four months of meetings, tours, presentations and deliberations, the Flats Arterial Community Panel have prepared a report for presentation to City Council and Park Board. The attached report covers the range of learning, deliberation, debates and trade-offs that led to the Panel's final ranking of the key learning factors to guide a final recommendation, including case statements on each route and the results of multiple rounds of ranked voting on the final day of deliberation. Wherever possible, the Panel endeavoured to reach consensus, but divergent views are also included in the report.

On whole, the Community Panel's Final Report contains a wealth of information to help guide staff and ultimately Council in understanding the values, priorities, and decision-making criteria that led to their recommendations. The final step in this process is to ensure that the Panel has a direct audience with Council, and later with Park Board, to deliver their report.

The Panel Chair, Susanna Haas Lyons and the Executive Director of the Jefferson Center, Kyle Bozentko, will present the report findings and answer any questions Council may have about the process or the contents of the report. A number of panellists will be present to answer questions, as required.

Staff were involved primarily to support the participation of the Panel, provide the necessary background and technical work, and to provide the Jefferson Center with logistics and related support where needed including ongoing transparency of the entire Panel engagement process to the wider general public.

Strategic Analysis

Well-designed civic deliberations can lead to better outcomes by opening up channels of local knowledge, experience, and dissent to guide decision makers. In this case, the complexity of the challenge begged an approach where a demographically representative group of residents and businesses could gain a deeper understanding of the issues and wrestle directly with the trade-offs in order to give transparent and complete input to Council.

However, a critical consideration is that the Panel's recommendation and prioritization of the key learning factors does not remove decisions from the hands of subject matter experts and elected representatives. Instead, it provides staff and decision makers with a deeper understanding of the concerns and values surrounding this major project, as well as some priorities for further investigation. It is the most robust form of public engagement and input available to staff and Council in the development of a solution.

City staff will be looking at the Panel's recommendation as a significant input to the overall strategy, and will conduct further learning and technical analysis before taking all input from the last 5 years of planning a grade-separated east/west arterial to Council in Fall 2019, complete with a recommended strategy and potential funding approach. In addition to learning from the final Panel report and related engagement process, Staff's next stage of planning is to continue dialogue and collaboration with adjacent partners like Providence Healthcare, and stakeholders related to goods movement and rail corridor traffic.

CONCLUSION

Given the challenges of understanding the opportunities and implications for communities and stakeholders, and weighing the trade-offs, this model was advanced as a fair, international best practice seeking deep collaboration from participants. Most engagement activities do not afford an opportunity for progressive and deep learning on challenging issues, among a truly diverse group of participants. We want to signal our gratitude to the Flats Arterial Community Panel participants for a significant investment of time, effort, creativity, and patience. The report is attached as Appendix A.

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