

NO: R046

COUNCIL DATE: March 14, 2011

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **March 10, 2011**

FROM: **General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **8630-40 (Ped)**

SUBJECT: **Surrey Walking Plan**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Approve the Surrey Walking Plan, which is attached as Appendix I to this report, as a subordinate plan to the Surrey Transportation Strategic Plan.

## INTENT

This report summarizes the key elements of a new Walking Plan for the City, describes the consultation process related to the development of this new Plan and seeks Council's approval of the proposed new Plan, which is attached as Appendix I to this report.

## BACKGROUND

This Walking Plan sets out the vision for the expansion of walking as a safe and convenient transportation choice for the citizens of and visitors to Surrey. The Plan builds on the 2008 Transportation Strategic Plan that identified the importance of walking in achieving broader transportation and City objectives in the areas of safety, health, accessibility, sustainability, environmental protection, and developing a successful Surrey economy. The development of a new Walking Plan was identified as a priority with a view to providing clear direction, new strategies and increased focus on this most fundamental of transportation modes. This Plan uses the term "walking" in its broadest sense, including those using scooters, wheelchairs, strollers, and any other similar mobility device.

## DISCUSSION

In the fourteen years since the Pedestrian Master Plan was adopted, much has changed in Surrey. There has been continued rapid growth, an increased recognition of the importance of sustainability in the services that are provided, a diversity of neighbourhoods, an increased awareness of the relationship between car dependency and obesity, changing demographics, and increasing demands on the transportation systems that collectively require a responsive, flexible

and innovative approach in relation to building infrastructure for and promoting walking as a viable and significant transportation choice for more people. This is evident in the number of City policy documents that touch on walking including:

- Transportation Strategic Plan;
- Official Community Plan;
- Sustainability Charter;
- Plan for Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents;
- Parks, Recreation and Culture Strategic Plan; and
- Child- and Youth-Friendly City Strategy.

These plans, either directly or indirectly, promote walking as a viable, sustainable and growing alternative to the private car for many trips and in turn increase access to health services, education, shopping, employment, cultural events, and recreation. To do this, the Walking Plan delivers policies and strategies that recognize that walking is about more than just building sidewalks and, as a result, examines the full spectrum of considerations that make walking an attractive alternative.

In addition to the strategic input from other City policies, consultation with stakeholders including community and business associations, advocacy and environmental groups, the School District, Health Authority and transportation agencies was undertaken. Organizations with a focus on accessibility were also consulted, including the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities, Surrey Access for All Committee, Surrey Seniors Planning Tables and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. An online survey, which received 400 responses, was conducted to solicit opinions and comments from those that live and work in Surrey. An advisory group of City staff provided input at various stages, including reviewing the draft Plan.

This comprehensive approach covering all aspects of walking was reflected in the comments received from the public and external stakeholders, which can be summarized into three themes:

- The details matter.
- Distances matter.
- The walking environment matters.

Expanding on these themes and the direction established through other City policies, the Plan has been organised around four principles, each of which is supported by a strategic objective:

- **Making Connections:** Achieve a continuous and connected network of walking routes that connect people to services, goods, health, education, employment, recreation, and other people.
- **Walking for All:** Promote and support access for all.
- **Shaping Surrey:** Integrate walking with strategic land-use planning to reduce the need to travel by car, and facilitate development that supports walking and transit.
- **Streets for People:** Create a pedestrian environment that is safe, comfortable, and interesting.

These principles and strategic objectives will help to build a City:

- That has a network of walking routes;
- Where walking is a realistic transportation choice for everyone;
- Where walking is the first choice for all in the City Centre and Town Centres; and
- That is safe.

Within the Plan's four principles, over seventy Actions for Change have been identified to help Surrey create more walkable neighbourhoods. The City is already doing some of these Actions, but it is important to acknowledge them so that we can continue on this positive track. Some Actions can begin immediately. Others are discrete tasks that will be accomplished in the next five years. Some of the Actions will provide small-scale solutions, and some are big-picture changes. While the big-picture issues such as budget allocation are important, the importance of little things should not be underestimated including such things as the size and shape of a single sidewalk letdown. These seemingly inconsequential details can have a great effect on accessibility, walkability, and public satisfaction.

To ensure that the City achieves the objectives of this Plan, it is important that the Plan remain relevant and be applied as well as regularly updated. As a result, the Plan contains several performance indicators that will help us determine whether:

- We are achieving our goals.
- We need to revisit our Actions for Change.
- We need to change our approach.

## **SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Surrey has placed sustainability at the centre of all of its decision-making and the Walking Plan recognizes that creating and shaping a healthy and sustainable city means building a city where people can walk, cycle and use transit as their preferred ways to get about.

## CONCLUSION

The Walking Plan will support walking in Surrey through its multi-faceted approach that will:

- Promote walking as a viable, sustainable, and growing alternative to the private car for many trips, in turn increasing access to health services, education, shopping, employment, cultural events, and recreation;
- Deliver policies and strategies that recognize that walking is about more than just building sidewalks;
- Create a culture within the City that integrates and expands walking with both strategic and “street-level” decision-making and planning across multiple departments;
- Align with the support other City strategies, including the Transportation Strategic Plan, the Sustainability Charter, and the Plan for Social Well-Being; and
- Create more walkable neighbourhoods.

Based on the above discussion, the Engineering Department recommends that Council approve the Surrey Walking Plan, which is attached as Appendix I to this report.

Vincent Lalonde, P.Eng.  
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JB/KT/brb

Appendix I - Surrey Walking Plan