

# Report

Date June 4, 2024

File: 5180-20

Subject Adoption of the 2024 Master Transportation Plan

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## **PURPOSE**

To present the May 2024 Master Transportation Plan (MTP) prepared by Watt Consulting Group for approval by Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Master Transportation Project, initiated at the outset of 2021, began with its first phase, gathering information and background data. This initial phase was followed by the second phase, focusing on network analysis and the plan's development. Phase 3 of the plan was an extensive document building on the work from the previous phases.

The data collection process prioritized major transportation routes, from collector to arterial roads. Minor roads received consideration primarily when they played a critical role beyond merely facilitating access to residential and commercial areas. This strategic focus aligns with the high-level vision characteristic of a comprehensive MTP. The first phase also included diverse engagement strategies, encompassing an online survey, targeted interviews with key stakeholders, and proactive outreach to and involvement of local First Nations communities. The stakeholder group encompassed a wide array of participants, including other local government bodies, youth represented through the school district, business communities, and organizations for seniors. The North Cowichan website also played a role in enabling continuous public engagement throughout the planning stages.

Formal reports summarizing the outcomes and insights from Phase 1 (June 2021) and Phase 2 (June 2022) were presented to Council. The Phase 2 report was also circulated to the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) for comment.

The growth projections for the Phase 3 draft plan were significantly changed, shifting from the 30-year targets set in the Official Community Plan (OCP) to a broader build-out growth model. This adjustment was influenced by new information from recent census data and growing concerns about infrastructure, especially in the Berkey's Corner and Bell McKinnon areas.

Staff and the consultant from Watt Consulting Group presented the Phase 3 plan to the Committee of the Whole on December 19, 2023. The motions carried at the meeting are reprinted below in Figure 1.

Transportation Plan] at this point in the agenda.

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to remove the proposed Stamps Road to Bazett Road Connection Multi-Use Pathway from the Master Transportation Plan.

CARRIED

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT Council take the draft Master Transportation Plan Motion from the table. CARRIED

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED:

THAT the Committee of the Whole directs staff to:

- (1) Publish the draft Master Transportation Plan (MTP), prepared by Watt Consulting Group, on our social media platform in advance of an open house hosted by the Consultant in January;
- (2) Forward the draft MTP to the Environmental Advisory Committee for feedback;
- (3) Work with the consultant, Watt Consulting Group, to prepare a 'What We Heard' report during the first quarter of 2024, for Council's consideration before receiving the final MTP;
- (4) Seek early engagement and consultation with:
  - (a) First Nations where projects may have a mutual and/or direct benefit, including alignment with Cowichan Tribes' Active Transportation Plan;
  - (b) Other government bodies where projects may impact the level of service or physical infrastructure within those jurisdictional boundaries; and,
- (5) Prioritize the recommendations in the MTP:
  - (a) Related to bylaws, policies and budget updates within the existing engineering studies budget; and,
  - (b) To incorporate the recommendations into a multi-year capital plan and annual roads capital budget.

AND THAT the Master Transportation Plan, including revisions based upon feedback received, be brought forward to a future Council meeting for consideration of adoption.

CARRIED

Figure 1 – Motion from December 19, 2023, Committee of the Whole

The Phase 3 plan was presented to the EAC on January 26, 2024, and Council approved the recommendations noted below in Figure 2 at the February 7, 2024, Council meeting.

#### 4.1 Draft Master Transportation Plan - for Environmental Advisory Committee Review

David Conway, Director of Subdivision & Engineering Projects, introduced and provided background on the Master Transportation Plan. Nadine King, Watt Consulting, provided the Committee with an overview of the Master Transportation Plan process to date, addressed concerns and answered questions.

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED:

THAT the Environmental Advisory Committee recommend that Council direct staff to consider the following in preparation of the draft Master Transportation Plan:

January 25, 2024, Environmental Advisory Committee Minutes

- Consider wording that speaks to the flexibility in uses and expansions of rights of way; considering alternative options in cross sections and methods of acquisition.
- Add statement articulating the plan horizon and the frequency for when the plan should be updated.
- To continue to support the implementation of active transportation solutions that consider safety and accessibility issues including: separation from vehicles and path users, eco-friendly firm surface pathways, electric charging for other non-vehicle users, public end of trip facilities for cyclists.
- Increase commentary and add to maps the potential future use of the E&N railway corridor as a transportation corridor.
- Consider addition of a scenic local cross-section to acknowledge road segments that do not fit into the arterials/collector categories.
- For multi-use pathway segments, to provide consideration of pathways on both side of the roads.

CARRIED

Figure 2 Motion from January 26, 2024, EAC

The following information was included with the staff report related to Phase 3 and is deemed useful to include in this report.

The 2024 MTP (Attachment 1) offers a high-level analysis of North Cowichan's road, pedestrian, cycling, and transit networks and examines parking and emergency mobility options. The report includes numerous recommended actions and strategies for each network. The plan aligns closely with the goals of the OCP and the Climate Action and Energy Plan, aiming to transition the community from being vehicle-centric to inclusive, as envisioned by Council.

Council's vision for the MTP is described as follows:

*"North Cowichan is a connected community where residents, employees, businesses, and visitors have various transportation options. Each mode of transport is backed by safe infrastructure, and vehicle travel in North Cowichan is electrified to minimize environmental impacts, reflecting the community's sustainability goals. With a diverse range of transportation choices, the network becomes resilient, supportive, and inclusive for all residents."*

Ongoing engagement with First Nations is crucial for transportation planning. Staff have recognized the importance of safe mobility without over-reliance on personal vehicles. Municipal and provincial roads, critical for connecting neighbourhoods to core services, sometimes present safety challenges (e.g., Boys Road and Tzouhalem Road). Prioritizing projects with users in mind is likely to yield positive outcomes.

The modelling of vehicle traffic volumes is based on business as usual, meaning no shift from the distribution of vehicles to other forms of transportation. This deliberate, conservative approach is necessary to protect right-of-way requirements for future generations. However, what will be needed and built will depend on future travel habits and needs, such as additional lanes, trees, and seating. This underscores the need to update studies that check in and measure changes in areas such as modal shift, traffic, and origin-destination trips over time and then adjust as needed.

In contrast to conventional network assessments where vehicle traffic is prioritized, this MTP focuses significantly on active transportation (pedestrian, cycling, emerging mobility), and many recommendations emphasize this aspect. The plan proposes changes to road cross-section elements for new roads and aims to retrofit existing roads to accommodate active transportation. There are over 40 recommendations in the plan, some with specific projects covering various aspects of movement and safety, including new corridors.

The MTP review has identified the necessity to update several policies and bylaws, such as a truck route bylaw and a traffic calming policy. Furthermore, the MTP is a key background tool for updating the Development Cost Charge bylaw, capital plans, and other budgets, ensuring well-informed asset management and contributions to development and improvements.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff and the consultant acted on the actions noted in the two sets of resolutions during the lead-up to a public open house held at the Aquatic Centre on March 7, 2024, and in preparing the final report. Comments from the online engagement have also been considered in the final plan.

The "What We Heard" reporting is embodied in the plan versus a separate report. The summary is included in Attachment 2.

Option one is to approve the 2024 MTP and direct staff to implement the plan by refining the prioritizing of the recommendations and presenting a capital program during the 2025 budget cycle. This would also include an allocation of funds for bylaw and policy updates. At this time, Council could consider the merits of the plan recommendation to fund the Priority Action Plan while maintaining the

current capital fund for roads (refer to page 110 of the MTP-Attachment 1). The recommendation reinforces the goals of engagement and consultation, especially with First Nations.

Option two allows Council to direct staff to emphasize issues commented upon in the “What We Heard” summary before bringing the MTP back to Council for adoption.

Option three is included if Council feels that one or more issues require additional emphasis in the plan, not necessarily from the “What We Heard” summary, before returning to Council for adoption.

## OPTIONS

### 1. (Recommended Option)

THAT Council:

- (1) Adopt the May 2024 Master Transportation Plan prepared by Watt Consulting Group, as attached to the June 4, 2024, report from the Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services.
  - (2) Seek early engagement and consultation with:
    - (a) First Nations where projects may have a mutual and/or direct benefit, including alignment with Cowichan Tribes’ Active Transportation Plan;
    - (b) Other government bodies where projects may impact the level of service or physical infrastructure within those jurisdictional boundaries; and,
  - (3) Prioritize and implement the recommendations in the Master Transportation Plan that includes five-year forecasting during the annual budget cycle:
    - (a) Related to bylaws, policies, and budget updates within the existing engineering studies budget; and,
    - (b) Related to an active transportation budget separate from the regular roads budget used for maintenance and upkeep.
- The MTP responds to Council's vision with a flexible document that can be used to plan active transportation objectives and safety improvements that will address all roadway users.
  - Modal shift is a relatively new approach to transportation in North Cowichan, so the plan should be refreshed to coincide with OCP reviews. The plan also recommends performing a travel survey again in five years. These actions in a few years will allow Council to adjust the direction as may be required.

2. THAT Council direct staff to emphasize and include the following from the “What We Heard” summary into the final Master Transportation Plan before bringing it back to Council for final adoption:

(1) *[Council to identify issues to emphasize and include]*

3. THAT Council direct staff to work with the consultant, Watt Consulting Group, to include the following revisions to the final Master Transportation Plan:

(1) *[Council to identify areas to be revised]*

AND THAT the revised Master Transportation Plan be brought to a future Council meeting for adoption.

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## IMPLICATIONS

Adopting the recommendation will enable staff to move forward with initiatives such as updating the Development Cost Charge Bylaw, subdivision servicing and engineering standards, and ensuring that maintenance and capital projects consider future growth and transportation needs. It will also set the direction that the Council wants to take regarding changing the transportation patterns in North Cowichan.

The financial impact depends on the development pace and how Council wishes to spend taxpayers' money and/or pursue infrastructure grants. This becomes more apparent in a 10-year capital plan where the priority projects would be listed with more detailed reasoning than expected from a high-level MTP.

Social impacts are widespread. Local government investments in active transportation could influence the public's choices in how they move about, what they invest in (e.g., bicycles, scooters) and even the choice of where to live. The recommendations are intended to balance the vision with improving safety and mobility without a complete breakdown of the conventional vehicle network. Council ultimately decides on the direction, as it could choose congestion to change patterns. This plan offers solutions to accommodate whichever direction our future takes. Council can monitor and adjust infrastructure investments to influence the direction of transportation demands continuously over time.

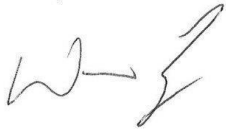
The MTP provides the basis for many objectives that staff will need to implement for this to be successful. A robust plan and distinct direction will give staff the starting point to research and propose works consistent with the plan, providing focus and goals to achieve.

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

- (1) Adopt the May 2024 Master Transportation Plan prepared by Watt Consulting Group, as attached to the June 4, 2024, report from the Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services.
- (2) Seek early engagement and consultation with:
  - (a) First Nations where projects may have a mutual and/or direct benefit, including alignment with Cowichan Tribes' Active Transportation Plan;
  - (b) Other government bodies where projects may impact the level of service or physical infrastructure within those jurisdictional boundaries; and,
- (3) Prioritize and implement the recommendations in the Master Transportation Plan that includes five-year forecasting during the annual budget cycle:
  - (a) Related to bylaws, policies and budget updates within the existing engineering studies budget; and,
  - (b) Related to an active transportation budget separate from the regular roads budget used for maintenance and upkeep.

Report prepared by:



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David Conway PEng  
Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services

Report reviewed by:



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George Farkas  
General Manager, Planning, Development and

**Approved to be forwarded to Council:**



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Ted Swabey  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

- (1) 2024 Master Transportation Plan May 2024
- (2) What We Heard summary