

Report

Date

April 3, 2024

File:

Subject

Suspension of No Heavy Truck Route on Bell McKinnon Road

PURPOSE

To consider suspending the “no heavy trucks” restriction on Bell McKinnon Road during the construction of the Cowichan District Hospital Replacement and designating Mays Road from Herd Road to Bell McKinnon Road as a “no heavy truck” route.

BACKGROUND

On May 5, 2010, Council endorsed the Public Works Committee recommendation to designate specific roads as “no heavy truck routes” to prevent large vehicles from using shortcuts through North Cowichan roads that would avoid the weigh scales. A copy of the April 21, 2010, engineering report has been included as Attachment 1.

“Heavy truck” means a commercial vehicle having a gross weight, including its load, in excess of 10,900 kg (Highway Use bylaw 2261). Section 13(1) of Highway Use Bylaw No. 2261, states that “*Council may by resolution designate ‘no heavy truck routes’ and no person shall drive or use any heavy truck on them at any time.*”

DISCUSSION

The construction of the new hospital on Bell McKinnon Road requires the closure of Herd Road between the Trans-Canada Highway and Bell McKinnon Road for a few months. This is needed to lower the road by about 1.5 m, widen the road at the intersection, replace water mains, add new storm drainage works, and add underground primary hydro feed and related works. The nature and extent of this work can best be accomplished safely and timely with the closure of Herd Road.

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure supports the closure and creation of detour routes at Mays Road. Staff have been working with the project construction team to assess impacts to roadways in the area and concluded that motorists can get to their destinations with adequate signage, possible road repairs on Bell McKinnon Road, and traffic control personnel in place during working hours.

In general, traffic could travel with little interruption – other than trips would take longer. This is inevitable during construction but this situation warrants extra attention. Routing is described at a high level below:

1. Westbound traffic on Herd Road would be directed north at Bell McKinnon Road, then left onto Mays Road to the intersection with the Trans-Canada Highway. Options for northbound traffic exist at Osborne Bay Road and southbound traffic at Lakes Road.
2. Motorists eastbound on Highway 18 could turn left or right at the Trans-Canada Highway but not straight through the intersection. Signal timing would be adjusted for the change.

3. Eastbound traffic would be directed to Mays Road, where motorists would turn right, followed by another right turn southbound onto Bell McKinnon Road. Turning east at Herd Road would complete the detour.
4. Motorists travelling north or south on the Trans-Canada Highway will encounter signage to direct them to Mays Road if heading east of Bell McKinnon Road.
5. Signage on the minor roads would indicate local traffic only to reduce the short-circuiting on the otherwise low-volume roads. Bell McKinnon Road would be one way southbound for the construction of roads and utilities.

Five residences along the impacted section of Herd Road would be accommodated with some limitations based on construction activities. This would also apply to regular garbage, recycling, and compost collection.

While staff can approve detours as part of construction activities, the authority does not extend to the designation of the “no heavy truck” routes. Staff believe that suspending the no heavy truck route on Bell McKinnon Road between Herd Road and Mays Road will allow the intersection work to be completed safely and with the least disruption (disruption is inevitable). Single-lane alternating traffic that would otherwise be in place would completely disrupt the highway intersection signal timing, cause long wait times, motorist frustration, and reduce worker safety.

The no heavy truck routes referenced in the background section of this report were based on neighbourhood disturbance and bypassing weigh scales. This is evident by most roads not having the designation despite sometimes having a poor standard of construction. For example, Bell McKinnon Road, north of Herd Road, is a no heavy truck route, but Mays Road does not have the designation even though it is a chip seal road, nor does Bell McKinnon Road south of Herd Road. Bell McKinnon Road requires at least 130 t of level course asphalt to repair failures at this time. Staff believe that this repair work is necessary to support the detour either prior to detouring or upon completion.

Staff also believe that a no heavy truck route designation should be implemented along Mays Road from Herd Road to Bell McKinnon Road.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** That Council:

- (1) Suspend the “no heavy truck” designation on Bell McKinnon Road between Herd Road and Mays Road until the detour route is not required for the construction works related to the Hospital Replacement Project as determined by the Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services.
- (2) Designate Mays Road from Herd Road to Bell McKinnon Road a “no heavy truck” route and direct staff to install appropriate regulatory signage.
- (3) Direct staff to complete work with the hospital construction project team and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for effective and timely detour routing as described in the Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services report dated April 3, 2024.
- (4) Direct staff to work with the hospital construction project team on an as needed basis to ensure that Bell McKinnon Road is repaired to the equivalent conditions present or better, upon completion of the roadworks.

- (5) Direct staff to communicate with the public prior to detour routes becoming active and regularly throughout the construction at milestones that could affect motorists.
2. That Council deny the suspension of the "no heavy truck" designation on Bell McKinnon Road between Herd Road and Mays Road.
 - This would create a very difficult situation for scheduling, timing, and safety related to construction of the required works. Staff have experience with projects such as lowering the hill at Moose Road on Lakes Road and a devastating accident on Beverly Street leading to the belief that this is an extremely poor option.
 - Staff believe that its likely many motorists would take the routes described by the detour out of frustration and many others would be angry that there was not another route option given, that would not involve excessive delays.

IMPLICATIONS

Communication needs to be regular and effective during a road closure of this nature. Staff should work closely with the hospital project team communications for timely updates.

Allowances for repairs ensures that Bell McKinnon Road is not damaged to the point of needing reconstruction before its end of useful life.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- (1) Suspend the "no heavy truck" designation on Bell McKinnon Road between Herd Road and Mays Road until the detour route is not required for the construction works related to the Hospital Replacement Project as determined by the Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services.
- (2) Designate Mays Road from Herd Road to Bell McKinnon Road a "no heavy truck" route and direct staff to install appropriate regulatory signage.
- (3) Direct staff to complete work with the construction project team and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for effective and timely detour routing as described in the Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services report dated April 3, 2024.
- (4) Direct staff to work with the construction project team on an as needed basis to ensure that Bell McKinnon Road is repaired to the equivalent conditions present or better upon completion of the roadworks.
- (5) Direct staff to communicate with the public prior to detour routes becoming active and regularly throughout the construction at milestones that could affect motorists.

Report prepared by:



David Conway
Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



George Farkas
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:

(1) Engineering Report - No Heavy Truck Routes