



City Hall Office
Councillor's Row
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, ON
City Hall | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

Bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville
Rang du conseiller
110 Avenue Laurier O
Ottawa, ON
Hôtel de Ville | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

For Immediate Release

September 9, 2020

BANK STREET CANAL BRIDGE SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL

Capital Ward Councillor Shawn Menard is pleased to announce that city council has approved the proposed design changes to the Bank Street Canal Bridge. The new design will provide more space for pedestrians and bicyclists, and improve the overall safety of the bridge. The design was approved unanimously by Transportation Committee last week.

The bridge is an important transportation link in Capital Ward, connecting the communities of Old Ottawa South and the Glebe, and providing a link between downtown and areas further south.

Residents have expressed concerns about safety on the bridge for many years. Councillor Menard notes, "speeding has been a long-standing issue, with traffic regularly exceeding the posted speed limit.

"There are also issues with pedestrian and bicycling safety," Menard continues. "The sidewalk is very uncomfortable for pedestrians. It has a high curb and it's not very wide. With speeding traffic on one side and a railing on the other, it can be very difficult for pedestrians to pass each other, especially in winter. There are also no bicycling facilities on the bridge, and bicyclists are forced to share the road with buses and heavy trucks. Many choose to ride on the sidewalk because the roadway is so unsafe."

Six different designs were developed and considered by city staff, before identifying one design that could meet the needs of all users and adhere to city guidelines. Consultations were conducted over the summer, and 86% identified street safety as a priority, while 87% preferred the new design over the existing design.

The new design will reduce the bridge from four traffic lanes to three traffic lanes—two northbound and one southbound. The extra space will be used to implement wide Multi-Use Paths (MUPs) on each side of the road. These MUPS will be 50% wider than the sidewalks they replace. The design will still facilitate buses queuing on the bridge for large events at Lansdowne Park, an important aspect of the Lansdowne Transportation Plan.



City Hall Office
Councillor's Row
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, ON
City Hall | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

Bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville
Rang du conseiller
110 Avenue Laurier O
Ottawa, ON
Hôtel de Ville | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

This new design will balance the needs and safety of all road users. With limited space on the bridge, compromise was needed, and the design will make the bridge work best for all residents.

Menard considers this not only a positive development for the community and the city, but also an example of what can be achieved through collaboration and consultation. "I want to thank city staff for working so closely with us on this project for several months," said Menard, "and I want to thank residents and community groups for all their feedback. Through this project, we had a lot of good discussions about street safety."

Now that the design is approved by city council, the project will enter the detailed design phase. City staff and Councillor Menard's office will be working with the city's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group, the Glebe BIA, and the local community to finalize the detailed design.

The city expects construction to begin next year and be completed by the end of 2021.

Further information is included below.



City Hall Office
Councillor's Row
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, ON
City Hall | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

Bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville
Rang du conseiller
110 Avenue Laurier O
Ottawa, ON
Hôtel de Ville | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

Background Information

Concerns on the bridge have been a long-standing issue

- There is a speeding issue on the bridge, with traffic exceeding speeds regularly
- It is uncomfortable for pedestrians with very large curbs, and a contained sidewalk that has tight passing close to the road, and the railing on the other side
- It can be difficult for people to pass each other, especially if they are using a wheelchair, pushing a stroller or walking small children
- Currently, there are no safe bicycling facilities—which are forced to share the bridge with cars, buses and transport trucks, with a very steep pitch
- This often leads to people riding on the sidewalk, because the road wasn't safe

These issues are more pressing in winter, when snow clearing creates a windrow at the railing, narrowing the sidewalk. For these reasons and others, people have been looking for safety improvements for many years.

Timeline

The time was right to have a good look at this. There is upcoming work being done on the top of the bridge, which made sense for economies of scale and presented an appropriate opportunity to work with staff to come up with a design that would address the concerns.

WSP was retained by the City of Ottawa for engineering design and contract administration services for lifecycle repairs to the Bank St. Bridge. The City of Ottawa requested WSP to provide an assessment and technical memorandum of several options which have been shared with Committee and which ones could be viable.

City staff then selected the preferred option they could support and shared that with us.

Constraints

There were a number of constraints that had to be considered in any new design:

- It is not a simple problem to solve. The bridge isn't wide enough for many preferred options. The current traffic lanes are actually narrower than the city would prefer.
- This is a bus route and trucking route.
- The bridge is a key component to the Lansdowne transportation plan



City Hall Office
Councillor's Row
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, ON
City Hall | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

Bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville
Rang du conseiller
110 Avenue Laurier O
Ottawa, ON
Hôtel de Ville | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

- This is a situation where we had to find a compromise that would address the needs of all users within the space provided.

Throughout this process the councillor's office has received dozens of suggestions on how to re-configure the bridge. These have included an alternating centre lane, as you see on the Champlain Bridge today (staff have indicated that because of the pitch of the bridge it is too dangerous to implement that alignment, but should we find a solution to that safety issue in the future, it is certainly something that could be looked at); a two-lanes design (although desired by many in the community this wouldn't address the buses that queue on the bridge for Lansdowne events, and wouldn't be supported); separated bike lanes as well as pedestrian facilities and three traffic lanes (this is desirable but the space on the bridge is limited and at the moment staff have indicated this would be difficult to implement because of the width needed for wide buses and trucks on the bridge); and using the outsides of the bridge for pedestrians or cyclists (heritage concerns and budget concerns preclude this solution, currently).

There are several competing demands and what we have been trying to achieve is a balance for all users of the bridge. With construction that is taking place on the bridge, it made sense to solve the long-standing issues now for economies of scale.

Width of the Bridge

The city would need 1.8m of additional width to provide a 2m sidewalk and a 1.8m cycle track. When a sidewalk is at same grade and next to a cycle track, the city require a .2m to .4m tactile delineation between the sidewalk and the cycle track to meet AODA regulations (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act). This is to ensure that people that are visually impaired have the ability to detect the edge of the sidewalk.

In this case, the proposed width of the MUP is 3.2m on each side of the bridge. With a 2m sidewalk, a 1.8m cycle track and a .3m tactile delineator, this would require a width of 4.1m. Therefore, we require an additional .9m (4.1m – 3.2 m) in both directions for a total of 1.8m. So even if the city were to reduce the middle lane to 3.0 m (which is substandard for arterial road and would not be recommended), it would still be short 1.5m.

In terms of reducing the two lanes next to curb to below 3.5m, we would not recommend this as well. A 3.5 m width is required for the lane next to MUP because buses and heavy vehicles travel on Bank Street.



City Hall Office
Councillor's Row
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, ON
City Hall | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

Bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville
Rang du conseiller
110 Avenue Laurier O
Ottawa, ON
Hôtel de Ville | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

The proposed design with a MUP of 3.2 m in width provides space for both pedestrians and cyclists to travel on the bridge in a protected manner while ensuring that vehicles can also safely travel over the bridge within their lane.

Consultation

Once staff recommended the final preferred design, Councillor Menard's office presented the design to the community via their website, their newsletter and other media. They also sent it to the community associations, the Glebe BIA and other community organizations, asking for feedback.

- At the end of July, a two-week survey was also provided to gauge support.
- From these consultations, we learned a few things:
 - 87% surveyed supported the proposed design over the current design
 - 66% surveyed supported a two-lane design with protected bike lanes over the proposed three-lane design
 - 86% agreed or strongly agreed that safety should be prioritized.
 - The majority of email respondents supported a modified lane configuration in order to improve safety, with many asking for separate protected bike lanes
- Residents also offered a number of suggestions, including:
 - Create an alternating centre lane that changed direction with rush hour
 - Adding railings between the MUP and roadway
 - Further narrowing traffic lanes to increase the space on the proposed MUPs
 - Narrowing the sidewalks to implement segregated bike lanes
- After consultation with traffic staff, we were able to alter the proposed design to amend the centre lane to 3.3m which allowed the widening of the MUPs from 3.1m to 3.2m.

Remaining Work

- There are remaining pieces of work here. The city will need to detail the full impact for PM peak hours. Of course, COVID-19 has disrupted most traffic patterns, which may or may not permanently remain in the future depending on people's choices. The two-lane configuration on the bridge presently has been operating very well during this time. But there are transit and traffic impacts that we will look to mitigate in the design stages. This would include the transition at Exhibition Way, no blocking



City Hall Office
Councillor's Row
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, ON
City Hall | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

Bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville
Rang du conseiller
110 Avenue Laurier O
Ottawa, ON
Hôtel de Ville | K1P 1J1
(613) 580-2424 x17017
CapitalWard@ottawa.ca

intersection requests, the Wilton transition on to Bank Street, analysis of turn restrictions during certain hours, and amendments to bus stops.

- There are other factors that will reduce conflict:
 - The situation that exists now is that many choose to ride their bikes on this sidewalk, because of road safety issues, causing conflict in a two-metre space. The new MUP will be 3.2 metres. It will feel very wide compared to what is currently in place, this will also help with the large pedestrian overflows we see with game days and events
 - It will also be the expectation that bicycles will travel only in the direction of traffic, one way. The way the road is configured and the transition to this design also lends itself to that expectation; That is different than you would see on traditional MUPS and is an advantage in this case.

Final Design

The draft design shows an acceptable compromise that balances the issue of traffic flow, including large vehicles, and safety.

It also supports the Lansdowne Transportation Plan, as it maintains a northbound lane to use for bus queues during special events. In addition, the Lansdowne Transportation Committee repeatedly noted that additional space was needed for pedestrians and bicyclists. This proposal helps with that goal, as well.

The final design process will include consultations with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Community Associations, the NCC, the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group, and the Glebe BIA to ensure that accessibility considerations and improved functionality are woven into the plan as we move forward.