
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 9, 2003

File No.: 8330-20

To: City Manager

From: Director of Planning and Corporate Services

Subject: ONE WAY COUPLETS IMPACT ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the *One Way Couplets Impact Analysis* study attached to the Planning and Corporate Services report of September 9, 2003 as input into the City of Kelowna's "five-year" review of its Official Community Plan (OCP) road network;

AND THAT Pandosy/Richter be converted into one-way streets in conjunction with mitigative measures to reduce negative social and economic impacts [measures to be considered include those noted in the *One Way Couplets Impact Analysis (section 7.20)*];

AND FURTHER THAT the public consultation process related to preparation of the *One Way Couplets Impact Analysis* study be considered to have addressed Council's March 21, 2001 directive regarding stakeholder consultation.

BACKGROUND

Transportation Plans

The "Future Road Network" map in the 1995 Official Community Plan shows plans for one-way traffic patterns along Pandosy and Richter streets.¹

In response to projected growth in the southern suburbs, the City's Transportation Plan identified an eventual need for two additional road lanes (one north, one south), by 2013.

In evaluating the options for providing the required additional lanes, the following alternatives were considered for the area north of Old Meadows Road:

- widen Gordon Drive to six lanes and add left turn lanes
- widen Lakeshore Road/Pandosy Street to four lanes and add left turn lanes

¹ In 1995, the couplet plans did not include the Pandosy to Water connection. That portion was recommended as an outcome of traffic planning for the Okanagan Lake Bridge project.

- widen Lakeshore Road/Richter Street to four lanes and add left turn lanes
- widen Lakeshore Road to four lanes and widen Richter/Pandosy to three lanes each and operate both as one-way roads

Given the above choices, the Council of the day affirmed the Richter/Pandosy couplet based on the following rationale:

- little or no property required on Richter Street or Pandosy Street
- the pedestrian environment could be improved with a one-way couplet (creating two three lane roads to cross rather than one wider, four-lane road)
- consistent with Ministry of Transportation and Highways recommendation to improve the capacity of the bridge approaches to support a widened four-lane bridge
- Gordon Drive was deemed to be located too far to the east to effectively serve the major future travel demand between the South Pandosy Town Centre and Downtown/Hwy 97 west
- Lakeshore and Pandosy/Richter couplet would most directly serve future travel demands

During 1995 and 1996, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways approached the City to determine how Kelowna's plans for a one-way couplet would provide for traffic flow to and from a four-lane Okanagan Lake Bridge. Those involved in that review identified that the proposed one-way couplet was insufficient to provide for smooth traffic flow since Pandosy Street "dead-ended" north of Highway 97 (at Queensway). The close proximity of the Pandosy traffic light to the Ellis Street light further contributed to problems in that it hindered highway mobility. As a result of these issues, staff examined the possibility of connecting Pandosy Street to Ellis Street or to Water Street (south of the Highway) or to Ellis Street (north of the Highway). Works and Utilities staff identified the Pandosy Street to Water Street connection as the most suitable. This refinement to the couplet, although proposed, has not yet been adopted as part of the OCP road network.

More recently, Ward Consulting was asked to, once again, review the options that were examined earlier, review several options that were subsequently identified by Council (for example, creating two lanes southbound and one lane northbound on Pandosy and then doing the opposite on Richter Street), as well as review any additional options identified by either Ward or the Ministry of Transportation. Alternatives to the one-way couplet were found to be markedly more expensive (by a margin of \$20 to \$30 million) and/or found to be less effective in meeting Ministry requirements for the flow of highway vehicle traffic.

As well as providing for long-term local road needs, a one-way couplet between Cadder Avenue and Clement Avenue has been considered an integral part of the east approach improvements associated with a proposed new Okanagan Lake Bridge. Although the Bridge project has recently been stalled due to provincial funding problems, the City expects that the province will soon decide to move forward. Reconfirmed city support for the one-way couplet would help avoid any further delay in building a new bridge.

Impact Analysis

Until recently, there had been studies assessing the transportation benefits of the couplets, but there had been no studies to identify any associated social and/or business impacts. Some members of the local business community and neighbourhood associations voiced opposition to the plan to implement the one-way couplet through Kelowna's Inner City, citing concerns about the associated social and economic impacts. In response to that concern, Council directed staff to

oversee a consulting assignment that would identify the positive and negative social and economic impacts of the first phase of the couplet so as to allow for an holistic assessment of the planned road network changes. Early in 2003, Development Consulting Group Ltd. and Typlan Consulting Ltd. were commissioned to complete an "Impact Analysis" of both existing (Leon/Lawrence) and proposed (Pandosy/Water and Richter) couplets (from Clement to Cadder Avenues). The study was jointly funded by the City of Kelowna, the Downtown Kelowna Association and the Real Estate Foundation of B.C.

Study Findings

The "One Way Couplets Impact Analysis" is attached. The study provides an estimate of the social and economic impacts associated with the first phase of the couplet.

The study concludes that greater Kelowna will not, by introducing the Pandosy/Richter couplet, on a net basis, experience any loss in business sales revenue. There will, however, be localized impacts. The most significant impact will be on businesses fronting onto Richter, Water and Pandosy streets. Particularly affected will be those businesses relying on through traffic, businesses such as gas stations, convenience stores, motels, restaurants, and cafes. Projected loss of sales for these types of businesses would represent 2-4% of downtown's current sales revenues. Over time, this amount is expected to decrease, as the market adjusts to the transportation changes. The sales losses would for the most part be made up for by increased sales elsewhere in the downtown area. The sales losses along the affected streets (Pandosy, Water, Richter) could be reduced by 33-50% through a series of mitigative measures (outlined in the report).

With respect to existing one-way streets (Leon and Lawrence), the consultants concluded that the conversion to two way traffic would be unlikely to have any significant impact on the level of retail activity.

Public Input

In researching the Couplet Study, the consultants, through the DKA, faxed a survey to downtown business owners. Fifty-two businesses responded to the survey. Of those responding, 50% felt the proposed one-way couplet would have a negative impact on their property or business. Twenty-three percent felt it would have a positive impact. Both those in favour and those against primarily cited changes in access as being the reason for their response.

Once the project consultants had completed their preliminary research, an Open House was held to convey initial findings and obtain community feedback. It is estimated that over 100 people (mostly downtown business owners and residents) attended the May 1, 2003 session. Of those, 41 took the opportunity to complete questionnaires. Twelve respondents identified positive attributes of the couplet (including improvements to traffic flow, and reduced traffic along Abbott Street). A greater number of respondents identified negative attributes. Among those identifying negative attributes, thirteen individuals expressed concern about additional traffic, nine about the impact on local neighbourhoods, nine about the loss of businesses downtown and eight about pedestrian access and ambience.

In connection with a survey concerning future uses on the KSS site, residents of one of the areas impacted by the proposed one-way couplet were also asked about their opinions on the

Richter/Pandosy one-way couplet. All households between Highway 97 and Cadder Avenue and between Pandosy Street and Ethel St. (the survey area for the KSS questionnaire) were asked the following question:

“Current City Transportation plans call for Richter St. and Water/Pandosy Streets to eventually become 2 to 3 lane one-way streets with widening at key intersections (Richter would be one-way north-bound, and Pandosy one-way south-bound). This is proposed in order to add road network capacity without the need to add an overpass at Richter St. (and the Highway) and without the need to make Richter St. as wide as the portion of Gordon Drive south of Harvey Avenue. Converting to one-way streets is expected to cost approximately \$20 to \$30 million less than alternative network expansions. What do you think about this? ”.

In response to that question, 48% indicated support, and 25% indicated that they didn't support the plans (27% had no opinion).

On March 21, 2001 Council directed that staff hold "a workshop to discuss the Pandosy/Richter one-way couplet with affected business stakeholder groups". This direction was given prior to a decision being made to conduct the detailed assessment of economic impacts, which has now been completed. As noted above, stakeholder consultation was undertaken as part of the study. In addition to the initiatives noted above, the consultant met with representatives of the group most likely to be affected by the northern portion of the Richter/Pandosy couplet -- the board of the Downtown Kelowna Association. Representatives from the broader business community were in attendance at the May 1st Open House. It is suggested that these consultation initiatives provided an opportunity equivalent to what would have been afforded with the stakeholder workshop that was envisioned before the impact analysis study was commissioned.

SUMMARY

With the completion of the “Impact Analysis” for the northern portion of the Richter/Pandosy one-way couplet, information is now available to assess associated social and economic consequences. It appears that there will be some, mostly short-term, negative impacts that will affect certain types of businesses fronting on Richter, Water and Pandosy streets. Action can, however, be taken to mitigate many of those negative impacts.

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Approved for inclusion

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cc: Director of Works and Utilities
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