
City of Kelowna

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 25, 2006
FILE: 5400-01
TO: City Manager
FROM: Transportation Manager
RE: **Leon Ave & Lawrence Ave One-way Conversion**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive the report from the Transportation Manager dated January 25, 2006 reporting on the results of analysis of converting Leon Ave and Lawrence Ave between Richter St and Abbott St from one-way to two-way traffic;

AND THAT Council direct staff to consult with the Downtown Kelowna Association, the Chamber of Commerce and the Urban Development Institution and hold an open house meeting for the public to review the proposal and ask question concerning the proposed conversion and the impacts of this conversion;

AND FURTHER THAT the impacts on lost on-street parking resulting from this conversion be referred to the Parking Advisory Committee for consideration relative to the Downtown Parking Management Plan and report back to Council prior to Council's decision on this conversion.

BACKGROUND:

In March of 2005, the City received correspondence from the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce asking the City to take immediate steps to convert Leon Ave and Lawrence Ave between Richter St and Abbott St from one-way to two-way traffic. In their correspondence, they urge the City to begin the conversion without any further analysis of the impacts of the conversion. The Chamber's letter was cosigned by representatives of the Downtown Kelowna Association and the Urban Development Institute.

The City received this correspondence soon after the Roads Task Force had recommended to Council a new option for road network changes in support of traffic flow downtown and to a new W.R. Bennett Bridge. The analysis work done for the Task Force however did not include this possible conversion. Furthermore, there was no broader consultation with the community on it.

It's important to note here the agreement between the City and the Ministry of Transportation for the new W.R. Bennett Bridge. In support of the new upgraded lake crossing and investments by the Province, the City agreed to provide capacity from its road network including the roads in the downtown. Therefore any additional changes

over those recommended by the Task Force should be considered in this light and reviewed with the Ministry.

So in 2005, the City engaged Urban Systems Ltd to undertake analysis of the impacts of converting Leon/Lawrence to two-way traffic. This consultant had also assisted the Task Force with their review of road network options for the W.R. Bennett east approach. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the results of their analysis.

Traffic Flow

The consultant's analysis was based on 2020 forecasted peak period conditions. The peak period is afternoon traffic on a typical weekday. The City's proposed future road network improvements were assumed to be in place.

One of the most significant conclusions from the analysis was that the Leon Ave and Lawrence Ave corridors are underutilized today, at the forecast horizon, and if converted to two-way operation. Converting their configuration to two-way operation will do little to increase traffic volumes along either corridor. The overwhelming direction of traffic flow is north/south to/from and across Hwy 97 so the two-way operation of Leon and Lawrence Avenues primarily results in increased levels of difficulty going in these directions.

The analysis shows there will be significant queues of vehicles along the Abbott, Water and Ellis extending from Hwy 97 to Bernard Ave. With the complete consumption of all capacity gaining access to and across the Hwy 97 corridor during the afternoon peak period, Ethel St will become a more important arterial road north (and possibly south) of the highway.

The loss in capacity on Leon, Lawrence and Bernard (with three-lane conversion) will result in the need to strengthening the east-west connectivity within the downtown and beyond to Gordon Dr. The Doyle/Stockwell and Cawston Avenue corridors are considered to be the most viable alternatives. Improvements to these corridors will be important to reduce through traffic on other local roads.

Due to the separation from Hwy 97, the consultant has emphasized the Lawrence corridor over the Leon corridor. The close proximity of Leon from the highway makes it necessary to restrict northbound left-turns into Leon because of the spill back affect on the highway intersections. With the resultant added use of Lawrence Ave, the consultant has provided westbound left turns on Lawrence to provide access back to Leon Ave.

If the conversion to two-way traffic is put in place, by 2020 conversion back to one-way traffic or other alternative means of congestion mitigation will need to be explored.

Parking Impacts

The conversion will result in a significant loss of on-street parking stalls, particularly along the Leon and Lawrence Avenue corridors. In total, it's estimated that 190 on-street parking stalls will need to be removed. This is over and above the estimated 57 on-street stalls lost with the improvements recommended by the Task Force. The proposed Bernard Ave three-laning streetscaping project will remove a further 30 stalls.

So the total on-street parking lost by these three projects would be 277 stalls. Most, if not all of these spaces have been recognized as important short-term customer parking.

Replacement of at least some of the parking loss in off-street facilities will no doubt be important to the downtown businesses. The first step will be to assess the availability of spare capacity in near by facilities but at the same time consider the impact on long-term employee parking if some facilities need to be converted to short-term parking. If new parking facilities are deemed to be necessary then the financial impact of providing them should be considered. The City's Downtown Parking Management Plan includes a financial strategy for providing new parking facilities in the downtown. The Parking Advisory Committee should be asked to oversee a review of the Plan to address the loss of parking resulting from this conversion.

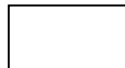
Estimated Cost of Conversion

A preliminary estimate has been done of the costs (exclusive of parking replacement) to make the physical conversion. This cost includes a micro-asphalt resurfacing of the two roads to eradicate the existing line painting. It also includes the installation of new traffic control signal at Abbott Street and Leon and Lawrence Avenues and at Leon Ave and Pandosy Street, and major upgrades (rebuids) of the existing traffic control signals at Leon Ave and Ellis Street, Lawrence Ave and Ellis Street, and at Lawrence Ave and Pandosy Street. The cost estimate is \$994,000 for Lawrence Avenue and \$1,022,000 for Leon Avenue.

Discussion & Recommendation

Some initial review of the results of this analysis has taken place with the Ministry of Transportation relative to the traffic flow of the east approach to the W.R. Bennett Bridge. They expressed concern about the level of congestion in the Downtown but understand that the City may be willing to accept this congestion on its streets.

At the January 30, 2006 regular meeting of Council, a more extensive presentation will be provided for City Council. This will allow some discussion and an opportunity for Council to ask some initial questions about the analysis and impact of the proposed conversion. It is then recommended that Council refer the analysis to the Parking Advisory Committee to address the parking loss and direct staff to have further consultation with the stakeholder groups and the general public prior to consideration by Council on a decision to make the conversion.



Ron Westlake, P.Eng.
Transportation Manager

Approved for inclusion
John Vos
Works & Utilities

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