



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Brian Lee, Director, Engineering, Ext. 7507

Prepared by: Loy Cheah, Senior Manager, Transportation, Ext. 4838
David Porretta, Manager, Traffic Engineering, Ext. 2040

Date: April 19, 2021

Re: **2021 Open Streets Markham (Ward 3 and Ward 7)**

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the memorandum entitled, "2021 Open Streets Markham (Ward 3 and Ward 7)" be received; and
2. That staff work with key stakeholders to further refine, implement and promote the 2021 Open Streets Markham program to include the Main Street Unionville "Slow Street" initiative and Middlefield Road closures for Sundays and statutory holidays; and
3. That the 2021 Open Streets Markham program be implemented to include the Canada Day (July 1, 2021) to Labour Day (September 6, 2021) period at a minimum, and for a longer time period if funding permits; and
4. That should the Destination Markham's application to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative for \$99,500.00 be unsuccessful or reduced, the 2021 Open Streets Markham program be brought back to Development Services Committee for further funding consideration; and further,
5. That staff be directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This memorandum addresses a November 9, 2020 resolution from Development Services Committee (DSC) "That staff work with key stakeholders including the Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and in consultation with the local Ward Councillor to develop an annual Open Streets program and to report back to Council prior to implementation."

BACKGROUND:

At the June 9, 2020 Council meeting, and as part of the City response to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff was directed to implement a series of traffic operations measures to support local businesses and

encourage active modes of travel, while maintaining physical distancing guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiatives implemented included:

- Closure of Enterprise Boulevard from Andre de Grasse Street to Main Street Unionville on Sundays and statutory holidays to provide additional space for active transportation;
- Traffic volume and speed restrictions on Main Street Unionville between Fred Varley Drive and Carlton Road;
- Villages and Valley Walking and Cycling Loop, providing a designated active transportation route between the villages of Unionville and Markham through the Rouge Valley Trail System.

Staff were also directed to explore additional opportunities for similar walking and cycling loops and potential weekend street closures for cycling activity in Thornhill and Milliken Mills.

At the November 9, 2020 DSC meeting, as part of an update on the above projects, Council directed, *“That staff work with key stakeholders including the Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and in consultation with the local Ward Councillor to develop an annual Open Streets program and to report back to Council prior to implementation.”*

DISCUSSION:

Shortly after the November 9, 2020 DSC resolution, staff initiated discussions on an Open Streets Program with a number of stakeholders including Markham Cycles and CPAC. Other key stakeholders were added to the discussion, including Operations Department and Corporate Communications, as ideas developed into practical concepts.

Building upon the projects from 2020, the group discussions led to the formation of a 2021 Open Streets Markham program consisting of the following two projects:

Main Street Unionville “Slow Street”

Earlier this year, staff received a request from the Unionville Business Improvement Association (UBIA) to repeat the 2020 traffic restriction implemented on Main Street Unionville in conjunction with expected applications from merchants for patio extensions. Staff worked with the UBIA and the Ward 3 Councillor to develop a modified plan that is simpler than the plan used last year. The new plan will implement traffic calming measures and expansion of the street boulevards to create a calmer and safer condition for pedestrians and cyclists during the busy tourist season of the summer months. This initiative will benefit many community activations in the area including an Indigenous passive art display to be located outside the Varley Art Gallery on Main Street planned for June - September 2021.

Middlefield Road Closures on Sundays and Statutory Holidays

A portion of Middlefield Road between 14th Avenue and Denison Street is proposed to be closed on Sundays and statutory holidays during the summer months to create a pedestrian and cyclist friendly area for residents and visitors to experience. The intersections at 14th Avenue, Highglen Avenue and Denison Street will remain open for east-west traffic throughout the Middlefield Road closure times.

This section is suggested for closure as it will amplify the natural assets along the Middlefield Road corridor such as Featherstone Park, Beaupre Park and the activities of the diverse community centres including the Aaniin Community Centre and Jam'e Masjid mosque. The road closures are planned to be activated with programming to showcase local talent, activities and amenities, while adhering to public health and safety requirements.

Destination Markham (DMC) is a key stakeholder in facilitating and promoting community programming of the road closures. The dedicated road space will be permitted for pedestrians, cyclists and have community and business booths providing services to residents and visitors such as local tourist and business information. Local groups and businesses will be encouraged to participate in the activations.

As in the Enterprise Boulevard road closures last year, Markham Cycles will participate by operating bicycle tune up and cycling information booths. A bike rental station is also being explored with Markham Cycles to encourage and promote cycling.

Public health and safety regulations and requirements to be maintained at all times

Development of the Open Streets Program, in particular the Middlefield Road closure activation and programming component, recognizes public health risks associated with the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. This was also a key consideration and a learning experience at last year's Sunday road closures of Enterprise Boulevard. Therefore, building upon last year's experience, adherence to Provincial health and safety guidelines will be a standard requirement for this program and staff will work with Health & Safety to review the final plan to ensure compliance with Provincial COVID regulations.

Open Streets Markham operating period is subject to budget availability

At a minimum, this program is planned to operate across the Canada Day to Labour Day period. Due to the static nature and limited cost of the Main Street Unionville Slow Street project, it can be implemented for a longer period of time, likely from May 1, 2021 to at least Labour Day (September 6, 2021) or later depending on the weather condition.

For the Middlefield Road closures, its cost varies with the length of the project operating period due to the labour and equipment rental components. Staff will work with available budget to confirm the final operating period. Additional budget through business sponsorship opportunities may allow the Sunday road closure operating period to be lengthened.

Ward Councillors have been consulted

Ward 3 and 7 Councillors have been consulted and are supportive of the initiative in their respective communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The estimated costs for the 2021 Open Streets Markham program are as follows:

Main Street Unionville - \$15,000

Middlefield Road - \$85,000

The cost estimate for the Middlefield Road Sunday & Statutory Holiday closures mainly covers the traffic management contract to close the road for each of the closure days (\$65,000) and an amount for community and business activation and programming (\$20,000).

As there is no approved City budget for the Open Streets Markham program, staff has been pursuing different funding options.

Application to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative submitted

Destination Markham has submitted an application to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative to fund this Open Streets Markham program. A decision is expected by May 14, 2021 or earlier.

If Destination Markham's application is unsuccessful or there is a shortfall in external funding, staff will report back to DSC for further funding consideration.