What We Heard
Engagement Summary Report

Project: Think Active Transportation in French Creek OCP Amendment

Date: May 4, 2022

Guiding Principles:

- All feedback provided through the consultation should be included within the consultation evaluation report;
- All consultation evaluation reports must be provided to the appropriate board/committee for discussion; and
- If engagement occurs online, the evaluation report must be publicly available through the project page to ensure that the RDN closes the loop with residents.

Process and Objective for Engagement

The Regional District of Nanaimo initiated an active transportation study within the French Creek area of Electoral Area G to review existing conditions and identify upgrades to infrastructure to support active transportation in the community. The completed project will be incorporated as an amendment to the Electoral Area G Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1540, 2008 (OCP).

The objective for the public engagement for the project is to conduct a program that raises awareness and provides opportunities to gather stakeholder and public input. This includes facilitating meaningful engagement using targeted methods and communications materials. Objectives also include confirming any active transportation planning recommendations with insight from the community during multiple phases of consultation.

Outline the Process

The project included two phases on consultation to achieve the guiding objectives. Phase 1 sought feedback from residents of French Creek and surrounding areas on how they get around the community and key destinations, issues they face in travelling actively, and their ideas that would enable them to travel actively. Phase 1 collected feedback through an online survey and the Get Involved website (https://www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/think-active-transportation). The website included an interactive map of French Creek for participants to make comments on active transportation routes and barriers to travelling actively.

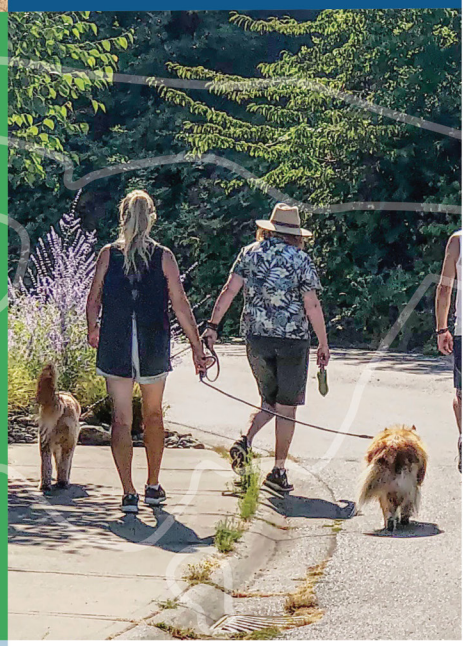
The results from the Phase 1 consultation and review of roadside conditions in the community were incorporated into draft active transportation options that were presented to the community during Phase 2. During Phase 2 the community was presented with the draft options to confirm the recommendations for the active transportation network. Phase 2 feedback was collected through an online survey and the Get Involved website. The public was also able to participate in a virtual open house that included a short presentation highlighting key recommendations

in the plan and live question & answer session. The following document Think Active Transportation in French Creek Phase 2 Public Engagement What We Heard provides a summary of the results of engagement.

Next Steps

A final report will be prepared based on the Phase 2 engagement and will be available on the Get Involved website. The recommendations from the final report will be prepared for an amendment to the Electoral Area G Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1540, 2008 in the summer of 2022. The bylaw adoption process will include more opportunities for stakeholders and the community to comment on a draft bylaw. The bylaw adoption process will require a public hearing.

THINK ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION IN FRENCH CREEK PHASE 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WHAT WE HEARD



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Phase 2 Engagement Highlights

78
Responses

93.6%
Support for the vision and goals

83.3%
Support for the proposed network

89.7%
Support for the use of multi-use pathways

89.7%
Support for the plan priorities

82.0%
Would make fewer trips by car

74.7%
Support implementation sooner with additional RDN funding.

Overview

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) are using this active transportation study to identify upgrades to infrastructure for active transportation within the French Creek Growth Containment Boundary area of Electoral Area G. The completed project will be incorporated as an amendment to the Electoral Area G Official Community Plan Bylaw 1540, 2008 (OCP).

Previously, the project team had reviewed the existing active transportation conditions, engaged the community and stakeholders during Phase 1 engagement to understand how you get around, how you get to key destinations, what issues you face travelling actively, and what could be done to enable you to travel actively more. The What we Heard report for Phase 1 was provided separately to this report.

The team have now drafted recommendations that are the subject to Phase 2. The phase two engagement survey was the primary option to provide feedback in relation to the draft of the French Creek OCP Active Transportation Planning Amendment. The public were able to participate in a virtual open house including a short presentation highlighting key recommendations in the plan and a live question & answer session. The public also provided feedback via email and discussions were held with several stakeholder organizations such as the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, BC Transit, other RDN departments.

Notifications of the project and opportunities for input were provided via traditional and social media, and posters were displayed at key locations in the study area. Facebook proved to be the most popular followed by traditional newspaper notices and the get involved website.

The survey took place at a time when individual's lives were still disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit restrictions were slowly being relxaed. This may have resulted in more people working from home, more people getting out of their house for exercise and physically distanced company, and others potentially facing reduced income opportunities relative to pre-pandemic conditions.

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Demographics

Location

The majority of survey respondents (78.2%) reside within RDN Area G French Creek, an increase from 59.4% during Phase 1, while most other respondents reside within the neighbouring communities of Qualicum Beach and Parksville as shown in Figure 1. There were however fewer responses with 78 in Phase 2 compared with 106 in Phase 1. The responses from French Creek residents stayed broadly similar in Phase 1 (blue bars) and Phase 2 (orange bars), while the responses from outside of the study area dropped highlighted by the difference between the blue and orange bars.

Age

The age distribution of respondents skews toward older community members similarly to Phase 1. In Phase 1, a significant percentage (48.6%) were 60 years of age or older, this increased to 52.6% in Phase 2 despite the number of responses dropping from those over 60. Data from the 2016 Census indicates that 47.3% of the population residing in RDN Area G is 60 years of age or older and, therefore, the results from this survey may be more or less representative of the wider community in terms of age profile as shown in Figure 2.

Household Composition

With respect to household composition, in Phase 1, 81% of households had two adults, which reduced to 71.1% in Phase 2. 9% had one adult in Phase 1 which increased to 14.5% in Phase 2, 8% had three adults in Phase 1 which increased to 10.5% in Phase, and 3% had four adults in Phase 1 and Phase 2. 55% of households had no children in Phase 1 compared with 76% in Phase 2, 20% had one child in Phase 1 compared with 10.7% in Phase 2, 16% had two children in Phase 1 and 10.7% in Phase 2, and 9% had three children in Phase 1 compared with 2.7% in Phase 2. As stated previously, one objective of the active transportation plan will be to improve cycling for all ages and abilities. In interpreting the results, it should be noted that responses may skew more towards the older residents rather than those with young children.

Gender

65.4% of survey respondents in Phase 2 identified as female compared with 61% in Phase 1, with males representing 30.8% in Phase 2 compared with 37% in Phase 1. 3.8% of respondents preferred not to say. When interpreting the results females tend to prefer safer infrastructure than males do, thus the responses may tend more towards safer infrastructure, but this is of course conducive to accommodating all ages and abilities.

Disabilities

With respect to disabilities that create challenges traveling by active transportation, 6.5% noted a mobility impairment in Phase 2 compared with 11% in Phase 1, while a 3.9% of respondents also noted vision, hearing and cognitive impairments in Phase 2, compared with 5% in Phase 1.

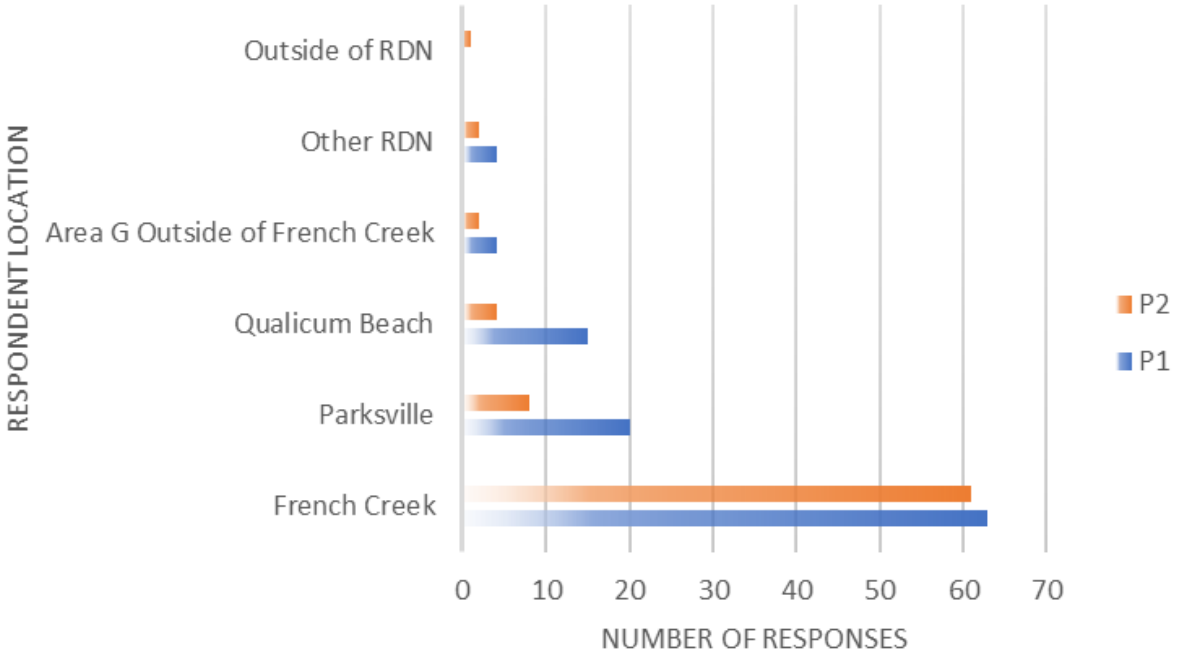

Figure 1: Location of Respondents

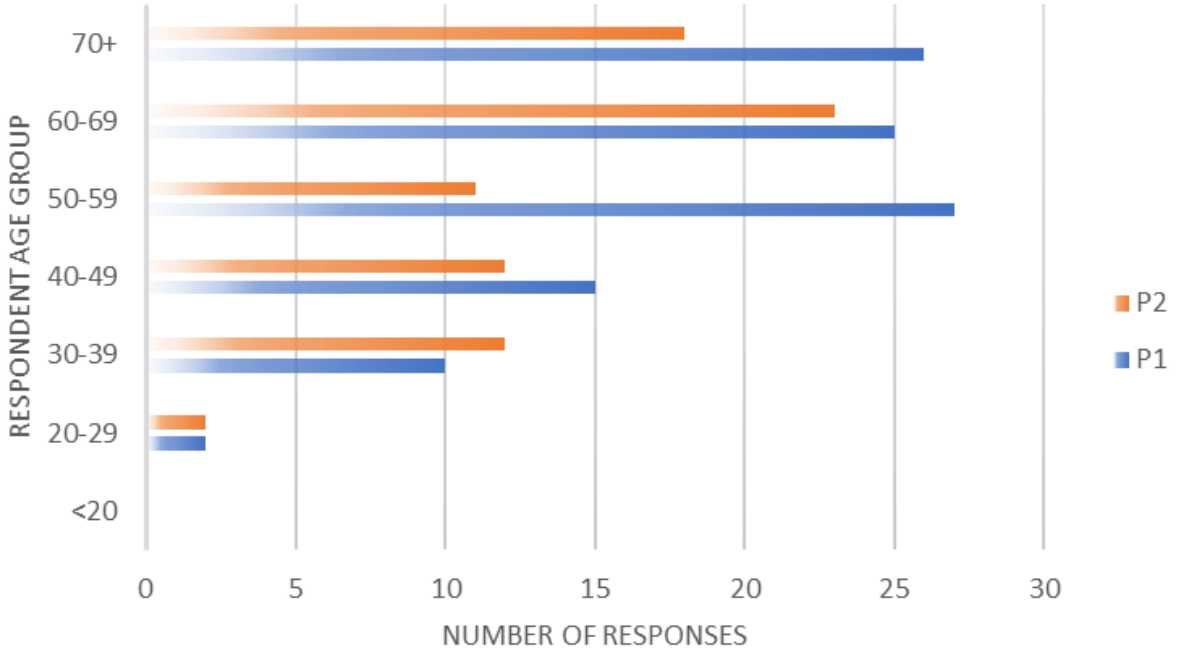

Figure 2: Age Range of Respondents

Travel Patterns

Access to Modes

In Phase 1, all respondents indicated that their household has access to a motor vehicle while in Phase 2, one person noted they did not have access to a motor vehicle. In Phase 2, 28.6% of households had just one motor vehicle compared with 20% in Phase 1, 54.5% of households have access to two motor vehicles in Phase 2 compared with 63% in Phase 1, 10.4% have access to three motor vehicles in Phase 2 compared with 13% in Phase 1, and 5.2% have more than three motor vehicles in Phase 2 compared with 4% in Phase 1.

In Phase 1, 8% of respondents didn't have any bicycles in their household which increased to 14.3% in Phase 2. In both Phase 1 and 2, others had between one and seven bicycles, with most having two bicycles in both surveys as shown in Figure 3.

Active transportation includes other ways of rolling in addition to the bicycle. Access to several other micro-mobility devices were reported with scooters being most common in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of the number of people with access to other micro-mobility modes.

With respect to access to transit, this can be subjective. 70.1% of respondents felt they had reasonable access to transit within walking distance of their home in Phase 2 compared with 77% in Phase 1.

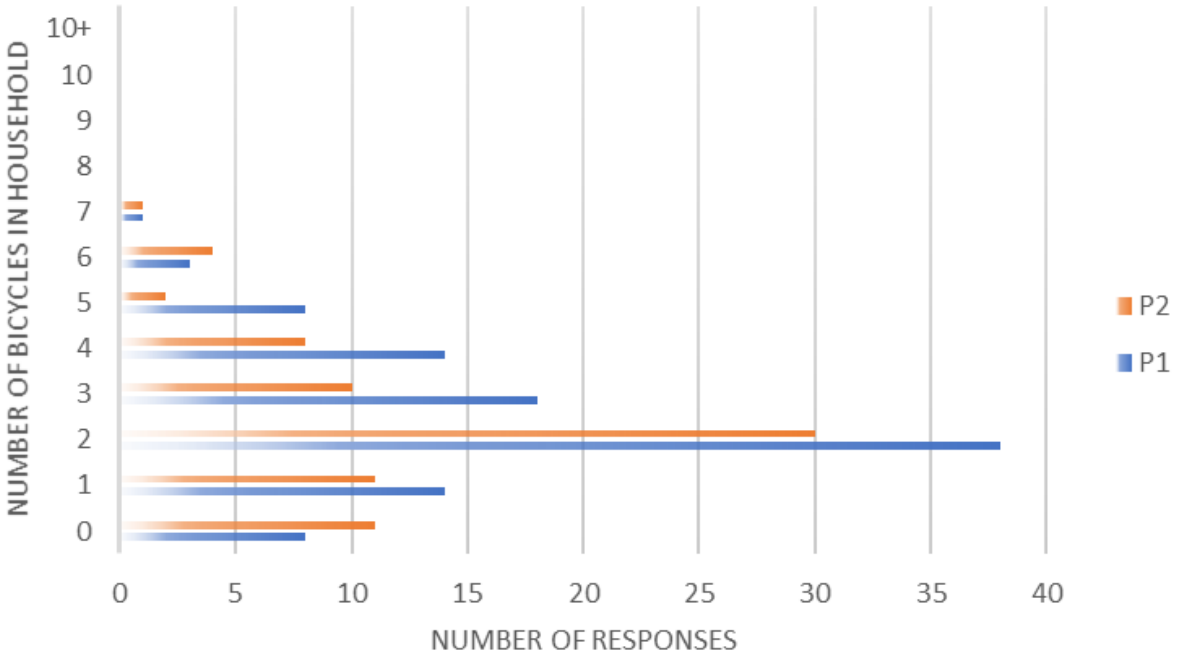

Figure 3: Bicycles in Household

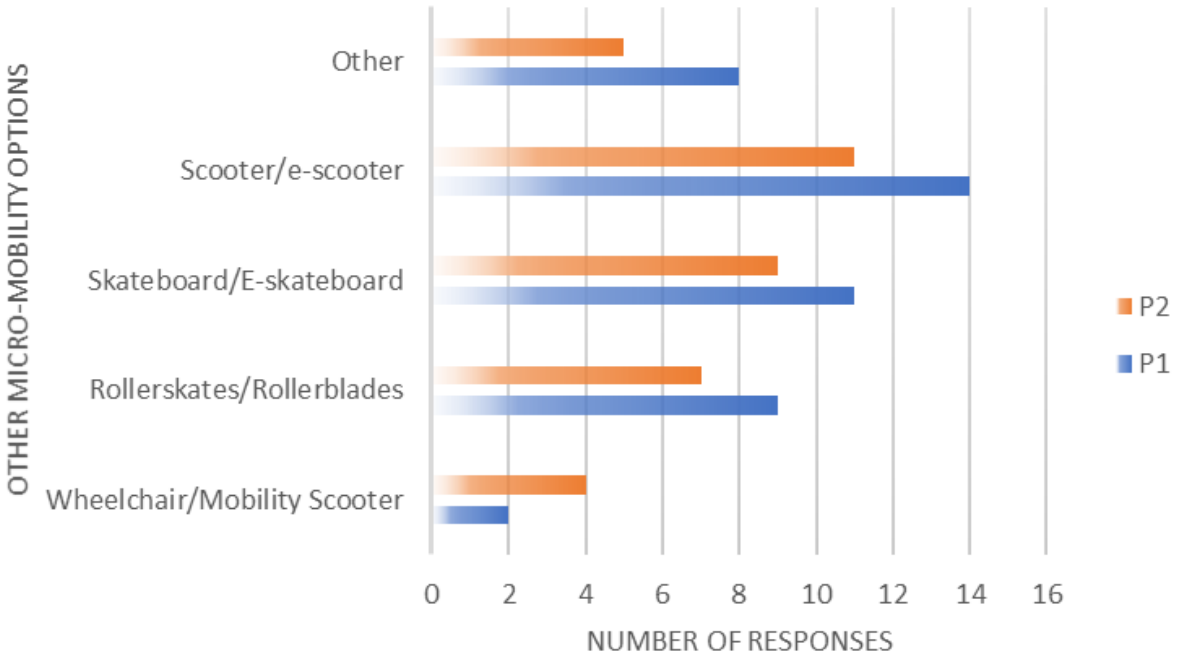

Figure 4: Other Micro-Mobility Modes in Household

Vision and Goals

The vision for active transportation in French Creek is "The Regional District of Nanaimo Area G French Creek will provide a safe all ages and abilities active transportation spine through the study area along the Parksville-Qualicum Beach (PQB) Links alignment, and improve access to it via all ages and abilities feeder routes from each neighbourhood enabling everybody in the community to travel actively within the community, and outside of the community for regional active transportation trips to the adjacent communities."

Respondents were asked how strongly they supported or opposed the vision as written. Of the 78 responses, 59 people strongly supported the vision while 14 somewhat supported it, 3 neither support or oppose it, while 1 person somewhat opposed the vision and one other strongly opposed it. In summary 93.6%, somewhat or strongly support the vision as proposed as shown in Figure 5.

There are several supporting goals to achieve the vision, and people were asked to rate their level of support for each. Most either somewhat or strongly supported each of the goals. Figure 6 provides an overview of the level of support. Importantly those that opposed the goals were limited to between one and three respondents for each.

Respondents were provided the opportunity to provide additional comments with respect to the vision and goals. 25 text responses were provided with key themes across these comments including RCMP enforcement of drivers, safety being paramount, especially for children, lack of current infrastructure, limiting development adjacent to the estuary, enhancing tourism, catching up with other communities, extending routes further afield, i.e., to Nanaimo, the need for maintenance, directness, the need for improved lighting, and access to transit, parking at school drop-off and pick-up blocking the shoulder, use of the E&N trail as a transportation corridor.

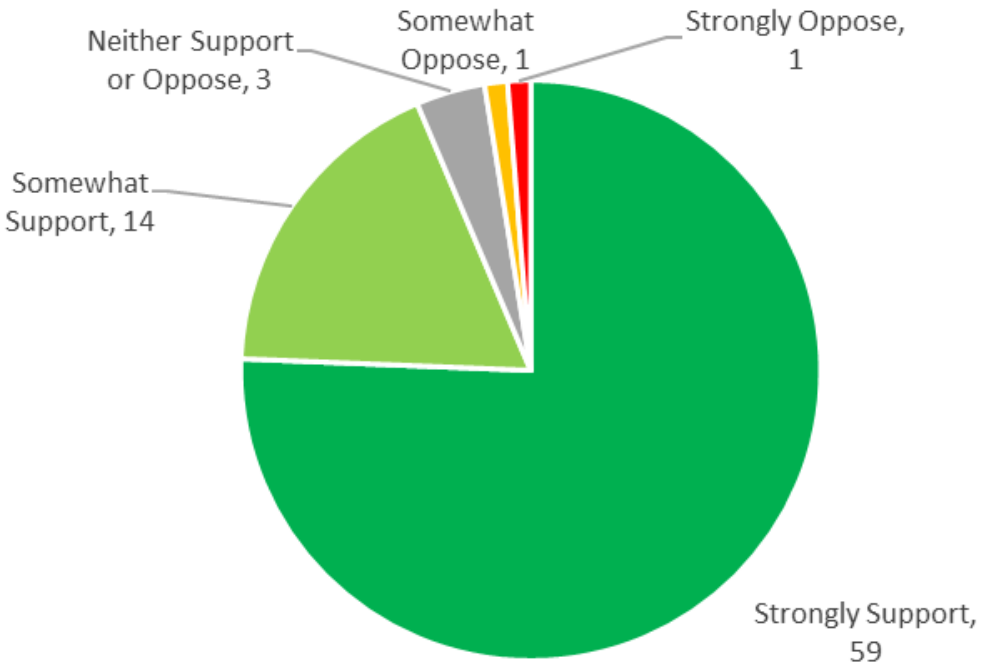

Figure 5: Level of Support for Vision Statement (Number of Responses)

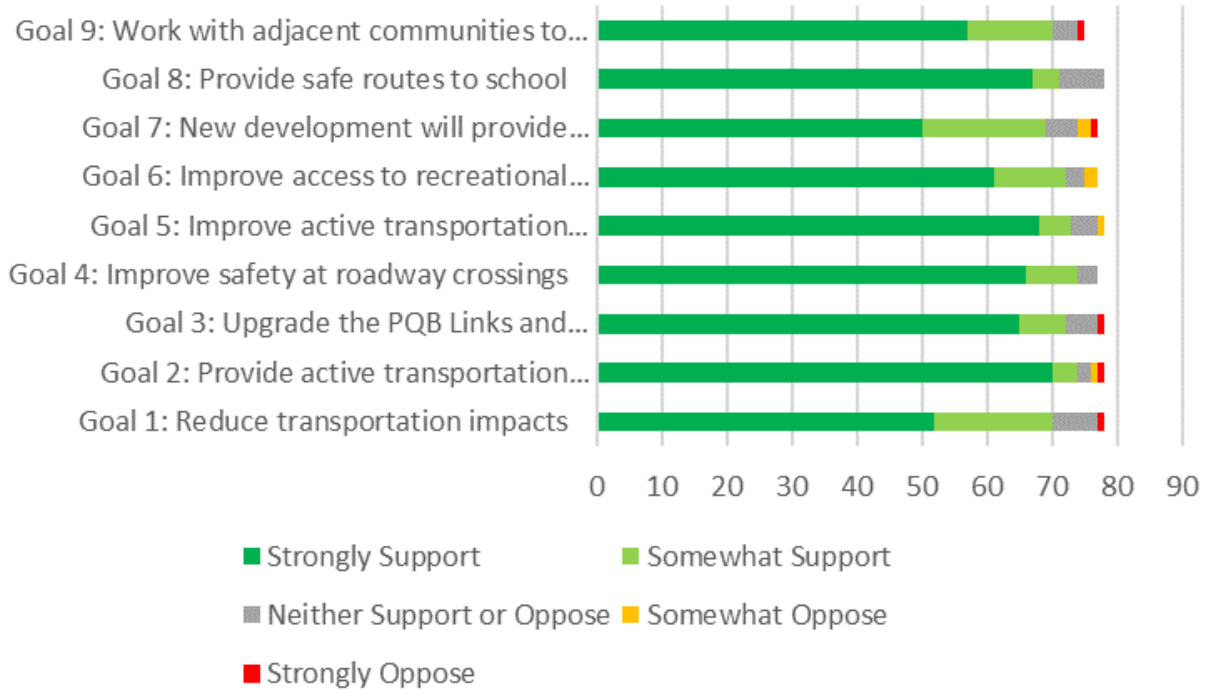

Figure 6: Level of Support for Goals (Number of Responses)

Proposed Network

The proposed active transportation network is planned to provide all neighbourhoods with a safe connection along major roadways. Over time, it will upgrade the Parksville Qualicum Beach Links, upgrade routes to Oceanside Elementary and provide connections from north of the highway to the Parksville Qualicum Beach Links.

Respondents were asked how strongly they supported or opposed the proposed network. Of the 78 responses, 44 people strongly supported the proposed network while 21 somewhat supported it, 6 neither support or oppose it, while 3 somewhat opposed it and 4 strongly opposed it. In summary, 83.3% somewhat or strongly support the proposed network.

Respondents were provided the opportunity to provide additional comments with respect to the proposed network. 31 text responses were provided with key themes across these comments including:

- Improved connection between Columbia and Lee
- The segment from Barclay to Lee is a steep climb
- Path from the Parksville community park to Rathtrevor
- Use the E&N Railway corridor
- Accessible crossings of the highway
- Traffic calming on Columbia Drive
- Doesn't address safety on the highway
- Need for continuing connections into Parksville and Qualicum Beach
- Good signage and wayfinding

Questions that arose from this section included:

- **What is etiquette signage:** This is signage to encourage pathway users to keep to one side to allow space for those travelling faster to pass. It also instructs those travelling faster to pass with care. It is intended to reduce conflicts on the shared use pathway.
- **Queries with respect to the width of the proposed pathways:** The proposed facilities reflect the expected lower volumes and reduced conflicts anticipated in French Creek, they meet standards and will include separation from motor vehicles either through concrete or asphalt curbs or the drainage ditch. Given the lack of infrastructure, the proposals are also cognisant of the limited available funding and the need to provide lower cost solutions. The Metral Drive example is representative of an urban condition with more substantial budgets.

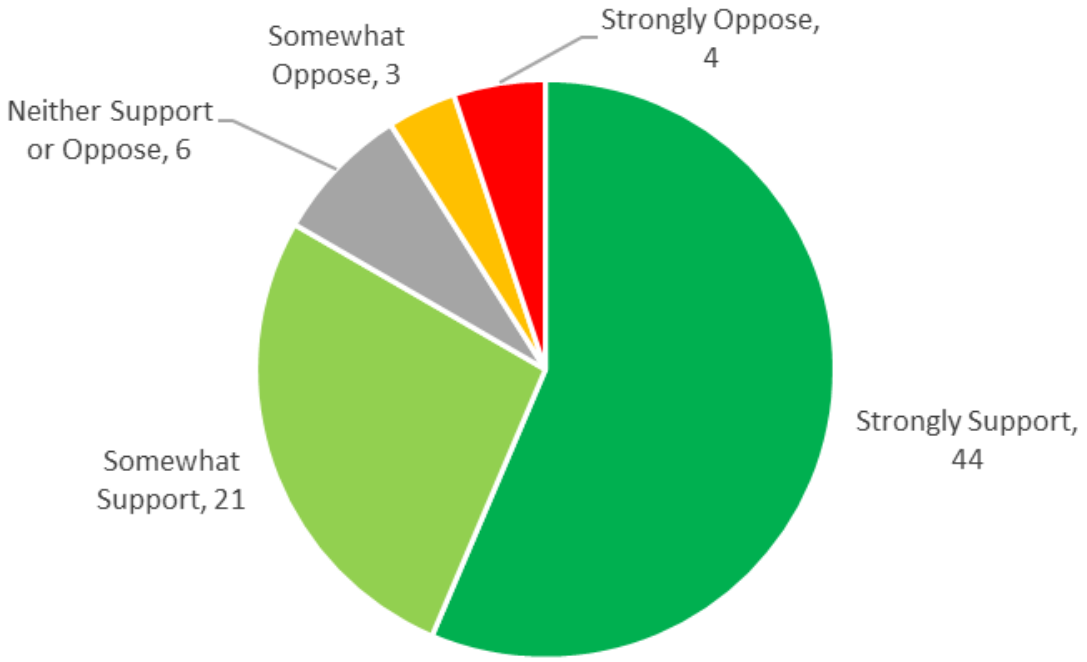

Figure 7: Level of Support for the Proposed Network (Number of Responses)

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Multi-Use Pathways

Active transportation facilities can be constructed in many different ways. While separate pedestrian and cycling facilities are often preferred, they require more space, construction and materials, increasing the cost significantly. To provide an active transportation facility separate from traffic and safe for all ages and abilities, the proposed network is planned using multi-use pathways. This provides the most cost-effective way to accommodate all active modes (i.e., pedestrians, mobility devices, cyclists, scooters, skateboards, etc) and can be utilized by young and old, confident and less confident.

Respondents were asked how strongly they supported or opposed the use of multi-use pathways as the primary facility type. Of the 78 responses, 61 people strongly supported the use of multi-use pathways while 9 somewhat supported it, 3 neither support or oppose it, while 1 somewhat opposed it and 4 strongly opposed it. In summary, 89.7% somewhat or strongly support the use of multi-use pathways.

Respondents were provided the opportunity to provide additional comments with respect to the use of multi-use pathways. 13 text responses were provided with key themes across these comments including:

- Educate drivers to share the road
- Use flashing crosswalk signage
- Educate people with respect to pathway etiquette
- Consider adjacent bark/mulch walkways along the side of the pathway

Questions that arose from this section included:

- **Why didn't we recommend separate bike lanes and sidewalks:** With no funding currently allocated for any improvements, the priority was providing a facility for all modes separate from traffic that provided value for money, furthermore, with lower volumes compared to an urban facility, conflicting volumes were considered sufficiently low to reduce the risk of significant conflicts. Separate walking and cycling facilities would require approximately double the amount of construction and similarly cost.
- **Don't narrow the roads, elderly drivers need space:** Road widths would be kept to appropriate standards. Reference to Metral Drive in Nanaimo which provides 3.3m lanes (plus 0.3m gutter) are sufficient for buses and trucks.
- **Ebikes should not be on the same pathway:** With increasing electrification of bikes and scooters, speed differentials are an issue. This is intended to be addressed through etiquette messaging, and wider facilities where speeds are likely to be higher (i.e. steep slopes) or the pathway busier (i.e. adjacent to a commercial business). Furthermore, Ebikes are enabling more people to ride a bicycle for transportation or recreation which provides many positive benefits, however, they are not the same as motor vehicles and require safe space separate from traffic also.
- **Lee Road is not wide enough:** The most constrained section at Lee Road over the creek would require some form of single lane alternating traffic operation if we are to add a separate active transportation facility.

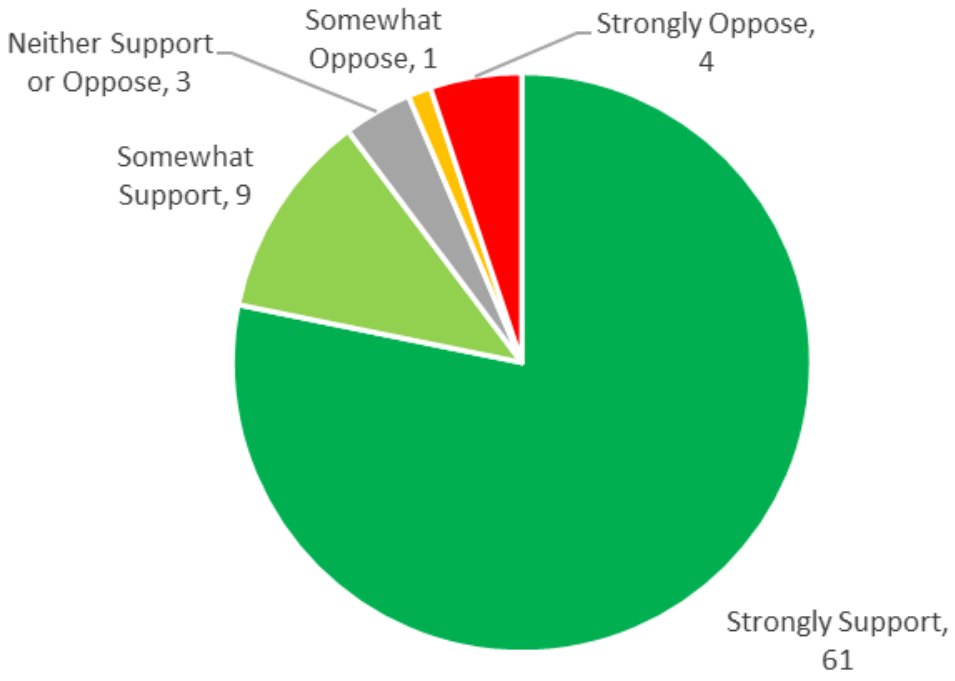


Figure 8: Level of support for the use of Multi-Use Pathways (Number of Responses)

Priorities

The draft plan identified high, medium and low priorities, prioritizing the locations closest to the elementary school and therefore likely having higher activity levels of vulnerable road users. The plan then prioritizes those sections with highest traffic volumes.

Respondents were asked how strongly they supported or opposed the priorities. Of the 78 responses, 44 people strongly supported them while 26 somewhat supported it, 6 neither support or oppose it, while 1 somewhat opposed it and 1 strongly opposed it. In summary, 89.7% somewhat or strongly support the priorities as proposed.

Respondents were provided the opportunity to provide additional comments with respect to the priorities. 20 text responses were provided with key themes across these comments including:

- Complaints of speeding traffic on Johnstone Road have not resulted in any changes and disappointment that it is low priority.
- Maintenance of Wembley Road shoulders should eb a priority while that facility still exists.
- More work required on Lowry's Road to slow traffic
- Lots of foot and bike traffic on Lee and Barclay, should be higher priority
- Transit routes should be prioritized
- More direct route from Columbia to oceanside Elementary
- Direct link between Columbia and Lee
- Include the E&N Trail

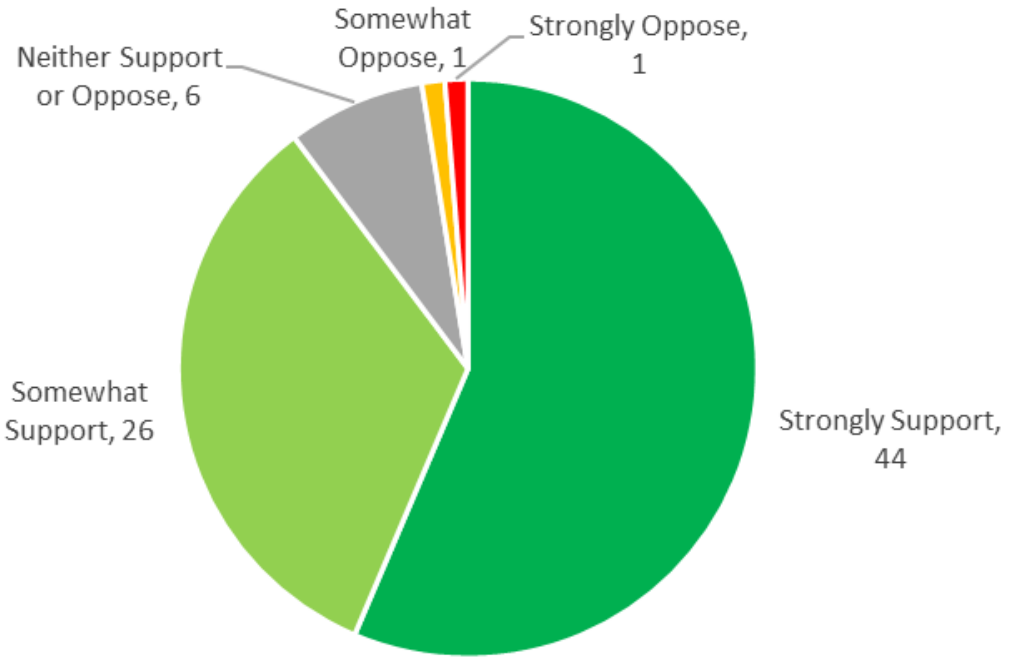


Figure 9: Level of support for Priorities (Number of Responses)

The purpose of the planned network is to enable more trips in the community to be made by active modes. For example, it might let someone leave the car at home and walk or cycle more, or make it safer to walk to the bus.

Respondents were asked, if the network were built out as planned, how many trips per week they think they would change to active modes. With respect to changing trips from car to active modes 4 people noted they would make 7 more trips per week by active modes, 9 people stated they would make 5-6 more trips per week by active modes, 26 people stated they would make 3-4 more trips per week by active modes, and 25 people stated they would make 1-2 more trips per week by active modes. Only 14 of the 78 respondents stated the network as planned would not change their travel habits.

Fewer people would change from bus to active modes or from car to bus. 8 people stated they would move between 1 and 4 trips per week from bus to active modes, while 20 people noted they would make between 1 and 7 trips per week by bus rather than car if it were more accessible.

While these estimates could be overly optimistic, it demonstrates considerable interest and desire to shift trips from the car to active modes or even bus.

People were asked what micro-mobility mode they would use if the network was built as planned. Walking was most common with 67 responses, cycling a regular bike next with 55 responses, running third with 20 responses, using an electric bike fourth with 19 responses and scooter or skateboard fifth with 10 responses. Of the other options available e-scooter/skateboard, roller skates/inline skates, mobility device, and wheelchair all received 2 or 3 responses. It should be noted that many people selected multiple options, i.e., walking and biking. One other included horseback riding.

People were also asked for what purposes they would use the active transportation network as planned. The primary reasons were for exercise, fun/recreation, and shopping which received 70, 59, and 55 responses respectively. Socializing was fourth with 34 responses, while commuting to work and school received 14 and 13 responses respectively. Other uses noted included attending meetings and events, sightseeing, and dog walking.

People were asked, if they had children attending school, would they be more comfortable with them walking or rolling to school using the proposed active transportation network. Responses were lower for this question at just 33 responses. 24 (72.7%) stated they would be more comfortable, 4 (12.1%) stated somewhat comfortable, while 5 (15.2%) stated it wouldn't make them any more comfortable.

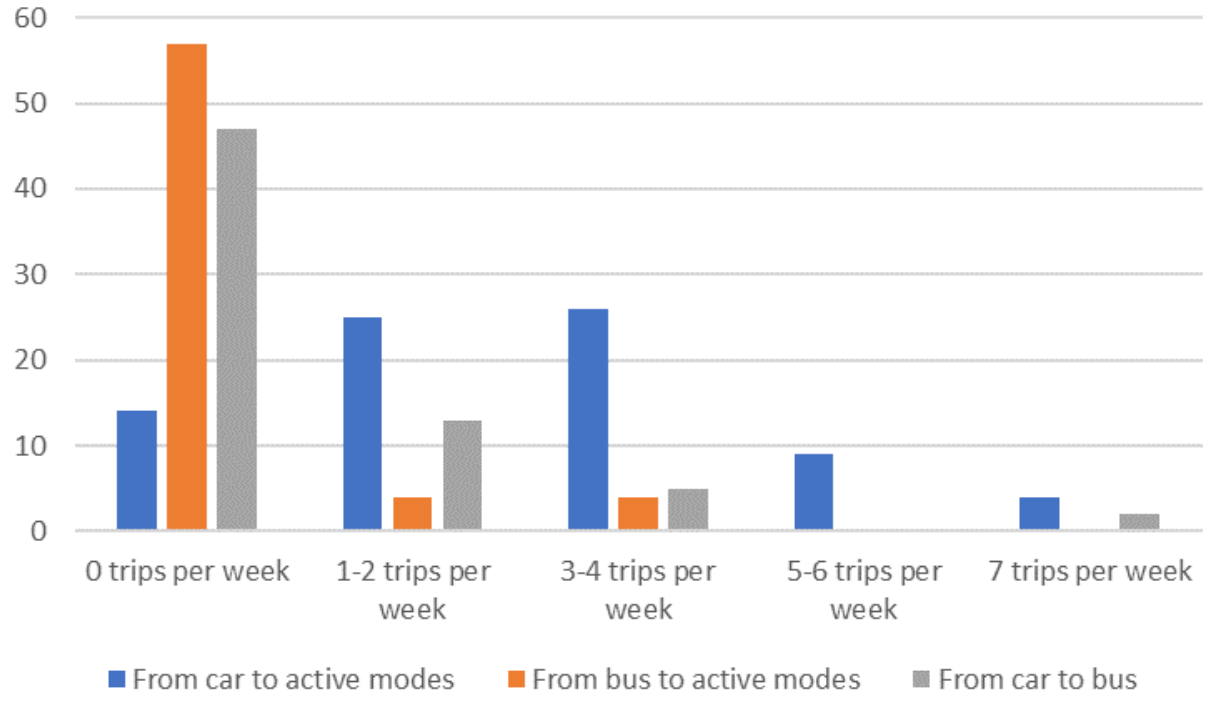


Figure 10: Number of trips per week that could be transferred to active modes (Number of Response)

Funding

Funding would be pursued through grant funding, developer contributions and RDN budgets for existing services where possible. However, the plan could be implemented sooner if RDN budgets were to prioritize active transportation.

People were asked if they preferred that the plan be implemented slower relying on existing funding sources or implemented sooner with additional RDN funding. Figure 11 illustrates that of the 75 people that responded to this question, 56 people (74.7%) stated they would like the plan to be implemented sooner by supplementing developer contributions and grant funding with additional RDN funding. 19 people (25.3%) stated they would prefer the plan to be implemented slower relying only on developer contributions and grant funding with existing RDN budgets for services.

Comments were very mixed with for example some wishing to push costs on developers while others would doubt the extent of development would contribute much. Likewise, some would be happy to pay more in taxes for good active transportation infrastructure while some would not. Most are in support of grant funding being used.

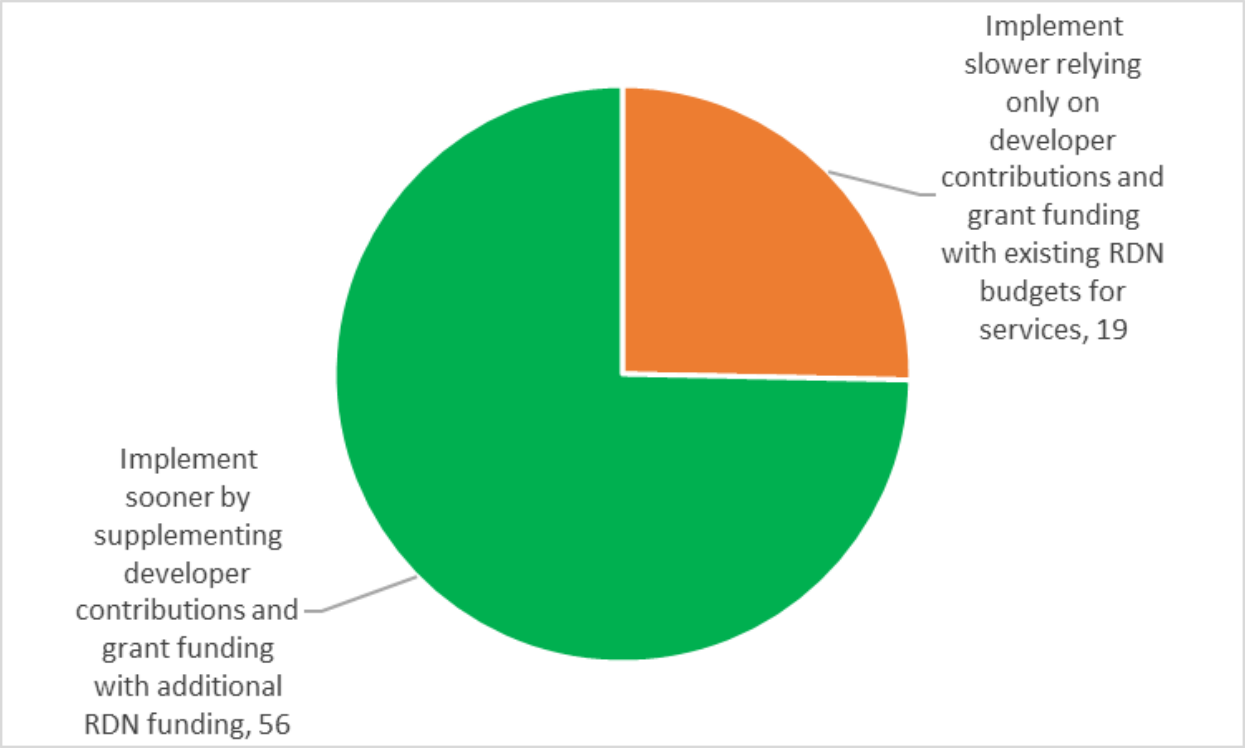
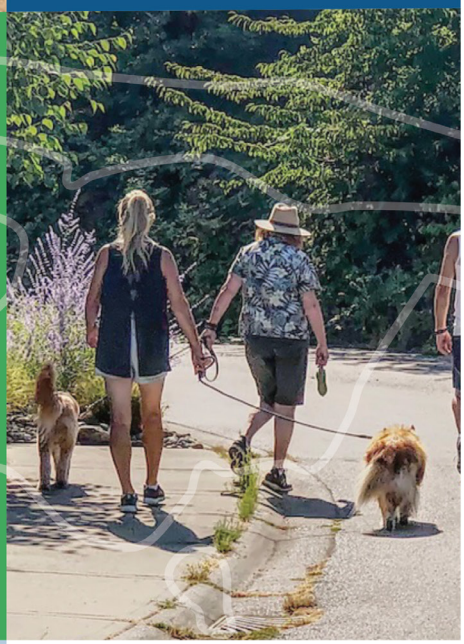


Figure 11: Pace of Implementation Preferences (Number of Response)

How the Feedback was Used

While the feedback identified a high level of support for the plan recommendations, several valuable contributions were provided and have been included in the updated recommendations:

- While the E&N Trail is not currently a feasible option, language has been included to support the conversion of that corridor to an active modes facility. While the corridor would undoubtedly provide an excellent traffic free facility, the recommendation comes with the caveat that a rural and potentially unpaved trail is not considered accessible for all ages and abilities. It presents potential usability issues if unpaved and unmaintained during bad weather, becoming less accessibly if there is pooling water or ruts forming, or even simply due to the surface material. Furthermore, a remote and rural facility presents increased risk from crime and potentially wildlife encounters that some people may not be comfortable with.
- Several people requested the old Island Highway is upgraded to provide safe cycling facilities. This is also supported in principle, but would require a larger regional initiative to provide meaningful connections beyond the study area. Language has been included to support a regional initiative. In the meantime the focus of the proposed network within the study area will provide local connections for the community.
- The plan focuses on the build out of long term active transportation network, but several commented on traffic calming and intersection control issues. These have been included in supporting policies that could speak to the need for traffic calming.



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