



CASE
IN
POINT
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Downtown Transportation Planning by Design with Complete Streets in Mind: Engineering Planning Collaboration

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Abstract

Many communities across North America are now looking to improve quality of life of their citizens through an enhanced street environment with integrated transportation choices.

The City of Vancouver has begun to address streets in a more wholistic manner through collaboration and design. In 2002, the City of Vancouver embarked on the development of a Downtown Transportation Plan (DTP). The plan made 80 recommendations including 83 specific initiatives to increase the transportation options in downtown Vancouver. The Carrall Street Greenway is one of the specific initiatives currently underway.

In Winnipeg, there is clear recognition that both collaboration and design are crucial to integrating transportation choice in the urban fabric. Consideration is currently being given by staff to define internal processes and if necessary, amend or establish planning and design tools to facilitate a more collaborative approach to the planning, design and construction of public right of ways.

Table of Content

Background	2
Vancouver's Downtown Transportation Plan	3
Carrall Street Greenway	4
Fostering Collaboration in Winnipeg	5
Lessons Learned	6
References	7

Background

With the rise in the use of the personal vehicles in the last half of the 20th century, streets throughout our communities have been engineered as vehicular thoroughfares. This emphasis has left many streets uninviting and unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists.

Planning for young children, seniors, motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, business owners and wheelchair users is crucial to make public rights-of-ways efficient, accessible and equitable.

Communities are recognising the need to not only accommodate all road users but support and integrate those users to address a variety of public policy goals.

Cities and towns are using a variety of tools and processes to integrate users. Two common themes to success have been identified in this case-in-point: collaboration and design.



Cyclists push button in Vancouver



Assiniboine River Trail in Winnipeg



Traffic calming on Cypress Street bike boulevard in Vancouver

The DTP includes 7 key components including:

- 1) Road Network Plan
- 2) Transit Plan
- 3) Pedestrian Plan
- 4) Bicycle Plan
- 5) Goods Movement Plan
- 6) Parking
- 7) Intelligent Transportation Systems

Cycling Infrastructure

Municipal cycling infrastructure can include a variety of facilities. It is important to consider the most appropriate facility in a given situation. Cycling infrastructure can be considered similarly to a level of service continuum. At the most basic level municipal cycling infrastructure in the public right of way might include a wide shoulder or curb lane. The next level of service may include bike lanes. This could be followed by bike boulevards on low volume traffic calmed residential streets which are parallel to major arteries. This is then followed by separated facilities within the public right-of-way. There are guidelines noted in the references section which can help determine what is the most appropriate given the volume and speed of traffic.

City of Vancouver's Downtown Transportation Plan

In 2002, the City of Vancouver embarked on the development of a Downtown Transportation Plan (DTP), including an extensive technical analysis and public consultation of residents and businesses. The plan made 80 recommendations including 83 specific initiatives to increase the transportation options in downtown Vancouver.

Vancouver council approved the plan which included a three year implementation phase, as well a detailed monitoring program to track the 83 initiatives. In 2006, a progress report was released which documented the DTP recommendations and transportation trends for the downtown. The monitoring program was carried out in conjunction with monitoring of the overall Transportation Plan for the city.

The Carrall Street Greenway is one of the specific initiatives currently underway.

The Process

A multi-disciplinary and inter-departmental staff team was created to develop the Downtown Transportation Plan. An extensive public consultation process was established to seek input from a wide range of stakeholders, including business, community and resident groups. The public process included the following:

- 1) 17 workshops, open houses and walkabouts
- 2) A random sample telephone survey
- 3) Newsletters with mail-in surveys
- 4) Stakeholder meetings

Finding The Road Space - Three Metre Travel Lanes

Narrow 3m vehicle lanes in Vancouver are not a response to accommodating cyclists, however narrow lanes nevertheless meet the minimum size specified in the TAC guidelines and have been used for many years in Vancouver. More recently they've been recognized as compatible with 40 and 50 km/h speeds.

Carrall Street Greenway

The Carrall Street Greenway is one of the specific initiatives of Vancouver’s Downtown Transportation Plan. It includes economic revitalization and community building while increasing transportation options for residents and tourists alike.

The route will link trails along False Creek and Burrard Inlet, completing a seawall loop around Downtown and Stanley Park. It will connect a series of parks, plazas and historic sites in Gastown, Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and Chinatown.

The greenway features a separated bike path which provides cyclists a safe and comfortable place to ride. It also provides a wider pedestrian realm with an increased number of street trees. Since Carrall Street was designated as bicycle corridor in the Downtown Transportation Plan, this made the removal of on street parking more political feasible and gave priority to other forms of transportation, such as walking and cycling.

Beyond providing a pedestrian and cyclist-friendly transportation corridor, the greenway will also connect and build on the unique heritage character of these neighbourhoods, encourage active ground floor uses, and serve as a catalyst for economic revitalization and community development.

This project has received significant support from the public and private sectors, as well as the local communities.

Existing Condition

Greenway design: more space for non-motorised traffic

The City of Vancouver approved \$5 million for the Carrall Street Greenway in the 2006-2008 capital budget plan. As well, the Vancouver Agreement partners, federal and provincial governments and Bell Canada committed \$300,000 to the project as part of the Downtown Eastside Economic Revitalization Plan.

One of the accomplishments of the Carrall St Greenway is providing a traffic-separated cycling facility that’s compatible with the separated facilities on the downtown seawalls so that recreational users continue to be largely free of concerns about motor vehicles.

Interconnections

Although bicycle boulevards accompanied by traffic calming have become the standard for cycling facilities outside the city centre, a major program of the DTP for downtown where streets for bike boulevards are not available was a program of bike lanes in the downtown.

In Winnipeg, there is clear recognition that both collaboration and design are crucial to integrating transportation choice in the urban fabric. Important in moving towards this recognition is an understanding of the relationship between land use and transportation planning and how this relationship needs to guide the design of the physical infrastructure to support both the public's land use and transportation needs. Consideration is currently being given by staff to define internal processes and if necessary, amend or establish planning and design tools to facilitate a more collaborative approach to the planning, design and construction of public right of ways (ROWs).

In doing so, consideration is being given to maximizing transportation choice in

- 1) New infrastructure,
- 2) Reconstruction and re-design of existing infrastructure and
- 3) During partial disruption of the ROW (during underground works, or construction on adjacent lands).

Fostering Collaboration In Winnipeg

In July of 2002, City Council adopted the Integrated Planning Model (IPM) to ensure that all of the City's actions including city programs, projects, partnership agreements and regulations match the City's intentions as defined in long term city-wide plans and neighbourhood plans. As part of this model, the directors and managers of departments involved in the planning and development functions of the City participate in a forum (by way of an internal committee - Planning Executive Advisory Committee (PEAC) and a Support Team) that facilitates cross-departmental integration on development and planning issues. This administrative forum has proven useful in fostering a more integrated culture within the organization. It has allowed staff to identify shortcomings in current administrative processes as they related to the integration of multiple stakeholder interest in City projects and processes. Ultimately, this forum has also led to the collective commitment to addressing such shortcomings through collaborative means.

As this commitment relates to integrating transportation choice, a collaborative effort is underway to establish more collaborative processes that will respond to multi-modal transportation needs and the needs of adjacent property users/owners as transportation facilities are planned, designed and implemented. It is anticipated that the lessons learned via this exercise, may be useful in influencing other integrated planning and design processes such as the development of land use plans, or input provided to private development proposals.

Lessons Learned

In looking at both City of Vancouver and the City of Winnipeg there are a number of key themes and lessons learned which emerge.

Transportation choice can and should be addressed in new infrastructure projects, reconstruction projects, and during construction (on an operational level)

Transportation choice needs to be considered and integrated in the planning, design and construction stages of ROW works.

There needs to be stronger linkages between land use and transportation planning including the design of the physical infrastructure to support integrated transportation choice and access to land uses.

Transportation choice should be considered not only in new infrastructure design, but also any time construction projects in the public right of way take place, whether they are driven by needs to maintain underground infrastructure or the specific access needs of adjacent developments (these types of projects provide an “opportunity” to incorporate transportation choice). As such, collaboration on projects which may not be driven by a ROW project, are equally important (if not more important) in being approached in a collaborative way to integrate transportation choice by design.

Engineering and planning departments must work collaboratively to bridge the interface between land use and transportation.

Specific to Winnipeg

The PEAC /PEAC Support Team model/forum has been incredibly effective in evolving the administrative culture to one of integration. Staff are stepping outside of their silos to consider and develop a commitment to addressing things in more collaborative ways. It seems true that the culture shift needs to come from the leaders within the organization and that this leadership is translating into a shift in structures and processes that are more reflective of this new culture.

It is anticipated that procedural improvements which integrate transportation choice on public ROW projects will be transferable to some degree to other processes where integration is equally important.

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Cyclists push button and traffic calming photos courtesy of Tom Pearce

Assiniboine River Trail photo courtesy of the 2008 Proposed Active Transportation Action Plan

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