

## Plus 15 Policy

### RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation and Transit recommend that Council:

1. Rescind, by resolution, the +15 Policy (October 1984);
2. Approve, by resolution, the Plus 15 Policy (Attachment 2);
3. Direct Administration to update relevant bylaws, policies and plans that are affected by the Plus 15 Policy approval by Q1 2022.

### RECOMMENDATION OF THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT, 2021 JUNE 16:

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2. Approve, by resolution, the Plus 15 Policy (Attachment 2);
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## HIGHLIGHTS

- The Plus 15 Policy supports Calgary's Greater Downtown Plan: Roadmap to Reinvention and provides direction on the future development, operations and long-term asset management of the Plus 15 network. It will replace the 1984 +15 Policy.
- **What does this mean to Calgarians?** The Plus 15 network is an elevated pedestrian network that connects 139 buildings in downtown. It provides safe and comfortable year-round access to work, services, transportation, entertainment and public spaces for all ages and abilities.
- **Why does this matter?** The current 1984 +15 Policy has not been updated over the last 37 years. Since 1984, the landscape of Calgary's downtown has changed with significant downtown development, population growth and transition towards sustainable transportation options like walking, cycling and transit.
- As Calgary adapts to the new economy and continues to evolve with the adoption of Calgary's Greater Downtown Plan: Roadmap to Reinvention, investment to enhance and sustain the Plus 15 network is required to support the economic recovery and reinvention of downtown.
- The Plus 15 network has a direct impact on the downtown economy. Local businesses at street and Plus 15 levels rely on Plus 15 pedestrian traffic for business generation. Plus 15 network connectivity is a tenant priority and attracts businesses to lease commercial space. Property owners have indicated Plus 15 connectivity enhances the long-term value of real estate.
- The Plus 15 network moves large volumes of people and supports Calgary's Safer Mobility Plan's Vision Zero, mobility free of major injuries and fatalities. Since the Plus 15 network is elevated, pedestrian and vehicle conflicts are eliminated.
- The Plus 15 network is a partnership between the City and downtown property owners. Plus 15 network operations are carried out by property owners as outlined in the Plus 15 Development Agreements.

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- Administration identified the 1984 +15 Policy as a priority to be updated.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A city that moves
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

## **DISCUSSION**

The development of the Plus 15 network has been guided by the 1984 +15 Policy which has served Calgary well in establishing the 16 km pedestrian network. The Plus 15 network connects 139 buildings through 86 City owned bridges. Thousands of people use the Plus 15 network daily with over 32,000 people (counted over a six-hour period) in the highest use bridge.

Travel options into downtown are also shifting with access to varied transportation mode options. Communities bordering downtown have increased pedestrian access into the Plus 15 network with sidewalk and public realm improvements.

The landscape of Calgary is changing as it adapts to the new economy and will continue to evolve with the adoption of Calgary's Greater Downtown Plan: Roadmap to Reinvention. Investment to enhance and sustain the Plus 15 network is required to support the economic recovery and reinvention of downtown.

In support of the Plus 15 Policy (Attachment 2), studies, plans and strategies were developed using collected data, information from public engagements and technical analysis. Based on public engagement results, top user requirements of the network included:

- more Plus 15 connections to destinations;
- unified hours and longer opening hours across the network; and
- improve signage and apps to help navigate through the network.

Top operational opportunities based on feedback from property owners and managers included:

- revised hours of operation to mitigate property damage and vagrancy;
- improved communication among property owners and managers; and
- clarity on maintenance, security and enforcement responsibilities.

Plus 15 Policy highlights are:

- Planning initiation criteria for new Plus 15 links.
- Design and performance criteria for new Plus 15 links.
- Plus 15 boundary adjustment to include the future Green Line station in Eau Claire and portions of Chinatown. Contraction of the boundary out of East Village, West Downtown and the Beltline.
- Standard opening hours of 6 a.m.-9 p.m. during weekdays and 9 a.m.-7 p.m. during weekends & statutory holidays. These hours apply to all buildings connected to the Plus 15 network including City owned and operated buildings such as the Andrew Davison Building, Municipal Complex and the Public Building.
- Security to be provided by the property owner to reflect current operational practice.
- Routine condition assessment of Plus 15 bridges to be managed by The City.
- Criteria for programming within the Plus 15 network.
- New revenue opportunity through Plus 15 bridge rentals for events.
- Clarification that busking is not permitted within Plus 15 bridges.
- Simplification of the Plus 15 Fund contribution formula.
- Uses for the Plus 15 Fund to include improvements, operations and maintenance.

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The Plus 15 Policy was prepared by a cross-corporate team from Roads, Transportation Planning, Community Planning, Calgary Growth Strategies, Law, Corporate Security and Facilities Management who are responsible for policy implementation and Plus 15 network operations. This team will continue to work together to ensure the long-term sustainment of the network. The Plus 15 Policy will be amended as required to ensure continued alignment with the Downtown Strategy.

### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)**

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

Public engagement was undertaken from 2017 to 2019 to understand stakeholder needs and expectations. Two online questionnaires, four pop-up sessions and 18 stakeholder meetings focusing on the vision, the Plus 15 network, safety and security, and funding were held. There were over 2,300 responses from the 2018 online questionnaire and 660 responses from the 2019 online questionnaire. More details can be found in Attachment 3.

Work has been undertaken with the Chinatown Corporate Alignment team and community of Chinatown on a coordinated collaborative approach for input.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### Social

The Plus 15 network is a place where social connections occur and is a networking hub where people often “run into each other”. It is a space for health and wellness where people can get their “steps” in and walking clubs can be found during inclement weather. It allows people of all ages and abilities to travel independently throughout downtown, something that may not be possible at the street level due to winter and street conditions. It also supports Calgary’s Safer Mobility Plan’s Vision Zero, mobility free of major injuries and fatalities, as pedestrian/vehicle conflicts are eliminated since pedestrians are separated from traffic.

The Plus 15 network provides connections to entertainment and cultural destinations with bridges connecting Arts Commons and the Glenbow Museum to underground parking in adjacent buildings. The network safely moves school groups for educational excursions at cultural destinations like Glenbow Museum.

Over the past 50 years, the Plus 15 network has been constructed to varying design standards. Improvements to accessibility and wayfinding were identified in the Plus 15 Network Study (2019). Programming was also explored through the Plus 15 Network Study where locations and placemaking activation opportunities were identified.

#### Environmental

The Plus 15 network moves thousands of individuals daily and helps reduce traffic congestion and idling time as roadway users and pedestrians are not competing for green times at

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signalized intersections. Also, the Plus 15 network reduces the likelihood of vehicle trips within downtown during inclement weather because the network is climate-controlled. This in turn reduces greenhouse gas emissions and decreased reliance on vehicular trips.

### **Economic**

The Plus 15 network has a direct impact on Calgary's downtown economy. Most of the businesses on street and Plus 15 levels are locally owned and rely on Plus 15 pedestrian traffic for business generation. Plus 15 connectivity also attracts businesses to lease commercial space and is an important amenity for tenants. It is viewed as a competitive advantage for Calgary as downtown is a connected campus of amenities, services and destination. Property owners have also indicated that Plus 15 connectivity enhances the long-term value of their real estate.

### **Service and Financial Implications**

#### **Other: Reduction of the Plus 15 Fund**

The Plus 15 Policy proposes expanding the use of the Plus 15 Fund to include improvements to accessibility, wayfinding, security infrastructure, public safety, Plus 15 network renewals, emergency repairs and condition assessments. The Plus 15 Fund balance is currently \$24.8 million.

There will be increases to City capital and operating budgets for lifecycle rehabilitation if the Plus 15 Fund cannot be utilized. Without increases to operating and capital budgets, maintenance repairs will need to be deferred and could lead to public safety risk and increased long-term lifecycle rehabilitation costs.

Updates to Plus 15 bridge construction value in the Plus 15 Fund contribution calculation, fees associated with Plus 15 Commercial Use of Easement and future rental income will be brought to Council at the next budget cycle. The Plus 15 bridge construction value has not been updated since 2010 and the Plus 15 Commercial Use of Easement fee has not been updated since 2017.

There is not enough base operating budget to support the Plus 15 network. The request for additional base operating budget will be brought to Council at the next budget cycle.

## **RISK**

Without Council authorization of the Plus 15 Policy, support of the Greater Downtown Plan, long-term sustainment and operational improvements of the Plus 15 network would be impacted. This would prevent The City from implementing actions outlined in the Greater Downtown Plan and improvements identified by citizens and downtown property owners. This could impact public confidence and affect the speed of economic recovery for businesses and the real estate sector. Also, the Plus 15 network complements the sidewalk and provides citizens with mobility choices during inclement weather. Without Council approval, pedestrian mobility options within downtown would be impacted.

## **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Plus 15 Policy

**Transportation Report to  
SPC on Transportation and Transit  
2021 June 16**

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- 3. What We Heard Reports
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Department Circulation

General Manager (Name)	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform (Pick-one)
Doug Morgan	Transportation	Approve