

Transportation Report to
Infrastructure and Planning Committee
2020 July 7

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
IP2022-0556
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Expanded Active and Safe Routes to School Program

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Infrastructure and Planning Committee recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report for information, and
2. Direct Administration to consider a funding request in the 2023-2026 Budget for an expanded Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRS) program that will support sustainable, safe, comfortable, and accessible school travel.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING COMMITTEE, 2022 JULY 7:

That Council:

1. Receive this Report for information; and
2. Direct Administration to:
 - a. **Include the Active and Safe Routes to School program in the 2023-2026 budget in an amount that replicates the funding from the existing program of \$1.5 million in capital over the four-year program and \$75k in annual operating in order to support sustainable, safe, comfortable, and accessible school travel; and**
 - b. **Bring an option in the 2023-2026 budget for an expanded package that would accelerate the programs objectives for Council's consideration.**

Oppositions to Recommendations:

Against: Councillor Chabot and Councillor McLean

HIGHLIGHTS

- Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRS) follows the internationally recognized School Travel Planning approach to coordinate engagement, education, encouragement with any needed engineering improvements and enforcement to support increases in safe and active school travel.
- Under today's program, engineering improvements made are small-scale and immediate to school sites. While these changes have improved access and operations around school sites, there is a bigger infrastructure gap to adequately support students and families in their journey to or from school.
- Council directed Administration to explore expansion of the program and develop a prioritization framework based on the Council-approved 'Always Available for All Ages & Abilities' (5A) Network map and Prioritization Tool.
- The 5A Network has been prioritized using several criteria, including equity, safety, route connectivity, school catchment, and school clustering. This has resulted in a list of priority projects.
- A business case and request for funding for an expanded program for priority projects has been developed and is being prioritized by Administration and can be brought forward for November budget discussions.

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- What does this mean to Calgarians? Expanding the ASRS program is a proactive approach to increasing the safety and comfort for all Calgarians traveling to and from school by building accessible sidewalks, pathways and bikeways that are well lit and easy to navigate.
- Why does this matter?
 - Routes that meet 5A Network Principles encourage more students and families to walk and wheel (cycling, scooting, etc.) by increasing the level of safety, comfort, and connectivity.
 - More families and students choosing to walk or wheel to school results in reduced transportation related emissions and better air quality around schools.
 - Physical activity, including walking and wheeling, is shown to improve health and mental well being and is linked with better school performance.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: "A city of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods" and "A city that moves".
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.
- An expanded ASRS Infrastructure Toolbox is included as Attachment 2.
- Letters of support are included as Attachment 3.

DISCUSSION

Existing Active and Safe Routes to School Program

Administration created the ASRS program in 2018 to support Calgary Transportation Plan's goals of safety, universal access, affordability, and environmental sustainability and the Step Forward Pedestrian Strategy target of 20 per cent of students walking to school by 2025. ASRS combines engagement, education, encouragement, engineering improvements, and enforcement to support increases in active school travel.

The existing program's capital funding from the Community Mobility Improvements Program of \$1.5 million over four years has realized engineering improvements around 24 school sites, roughly equating to 34 traffic calming and pedestrian improvements. In addition to capital funding, the existing ASRS program has an annual operating budget of \$75,000. This funding supports education and outreach at an average of 8 schools a year between 2019 to 2022. The program is fully subscribed and has been a welcome addition in the school communities that have participated since its introduction.

Need and Scope Expanded ASRS Program

After four years of the ASRS program and regular conversations with school boards/districts and community partners through the Safe School Travel Advisory Group (SSTAG) and related work delivering the Community Mobility Improvements program, Neighbourhood Streets Policy and the upcoming Design Guide for Subdivision Servicing (DGSS), it is clear that more is needed to encourage and sustain active school travel.

An expanded ASRS program would continue to include traffic calming and pedestrian improvements around school sites and would expand the engineering improvements to add missing sidewalks, bikeways (cycle tracks or bike paths) and multi-use pathway improvements that would support a greater portion of school trips. Previous 5A (Always Available for All Ages and Abilities) bikeway and pathway projects, which include the Centre City Cycle Tracks, Silver

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Springs Boulevard N.W., 50 Avenue S.W., demonstrate that ridership increases when the level of comfort and connectivity is improved.

To understand which routes could be built to best serve active school travel, Administration leveraged the existing 5A Network and Prioritization Tool. The 5A Network consists of 2900 km of existing and proposed bikeways and pathways organized into 1300 separate projects. Only projects within 800 m of one or more schools were carried forward for prioritization using four separate criteria:

- *User Demand*: prioritizes projects that will fulfill high wheeling demand based on their geographic location.
- *Route Connectivity*: prioritizes projects that provide a higher level of connectivity and utility within the 5A network.
- *Safety Improvements*: prioritizes projects which address perceived and actual safety performance of 5A infrastructure.
- *Equity & Inclusivity*: prioritizes projects in equity seeking areas of the city.

The top 250 ranking projects using this tool were then further prioritized based on a combination of the following two factors:

- *School Clustering*: number of schools located within 800 m of each candidate project
- *School Catchment*: number of students living within walking distance to each school

The top 30 shortlisted projects were then reviewed and refined based on infrastructure implementation feasibility, parallel route redundancy, and geographic distribution across the city to form an initial list of top ASRS projects.

Priority projects were then examined corridor by corridor, to identify elements that would make up the complete street retrofit to support safe and active school travel. Retrofits include traffic calming, completing missing sidewalks, new wheelchair ramps, new multi-use pathways, bikeways, and intersection improvements. Common 5A infrastructure tools are described in Attachment 2.

A business case and funding request for an expanded ASRS program is with Administration and is under prioritization. Once prioritized, Administration can include a request for funding an expanded ASRS program as part of the 2023-2026 budget discussion.

Should an expanded ASRS program be funded, additional exploration and collaboration would be undertaken to find opportunities and synergies with other programs (such as the Pavement Overlay Program, Community Mobility Improvements Program, Main Streets, Established Areas Growth and Change Program) before proceeding with the design of 5A ASRS Network routes.

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

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Since 2019 the Safe Student Travel Advisory Group (SSTAG) meets monthly to discuss school travel issues. SSTAG has representatives from City Administration, Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic Separate School District, Conseil Scolaire FrancoSud, Alberta Transportation, Alberta Motor Association, and bussing companies. These stakeholders are aware of the scope of an expanded ASRS program and letters of support can be found in Attachment 3.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Improving 5A Network routes near school sites will add mobility options for people of all ages and abilities, enhance connectivity, safety and quality of life for the whole community. Active school travel helps school-aged children participate in physical activity, which is linked to improved health and mental well-being. 5A Network routes near schools can also reduce the chauffeuring burden and transportation costs on parents or caregivers, as walking and wheeling are the only truly independent forms of travel for children.

Environmental

Increasing active school and community travel supports reduces vehicle trips and transportation-related pollution such as greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing this pollution, helps improve air quality, which aligns with Calgary's Climate Resilience Strategy.

Economic

Peak demand for driving facilities and traffic management is reduced when more students actively travel to school. Active transportation options can also reduce an individual's transportation-related costs associated with owning, operating, and maintaining a vehicle.

Service and Financial Implications

New capital funding request

\$0 – in prioritization with Administration, see note below

This is a scalable program. The number and extents of engineering improvements can be scaled up or down depending on funding availability. At this time, a funding request for an expanded program is with Administration and is bring prioritized and will be brought forward for 2023-2026 budget discussion in November.

New operating funding request

\$0 – see note below

Operational funding is required to increase the number of students that can benefit from engineering improvements through targeted outreach, education, and encouragement. Maintenance is another key consideration and supports the year round use of walking and

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wheeling infrastructure. Operating and maintenance costs have been considered alongside capital costs for an expanded program.

RISK

The ASRS is heavily subscribed and requests for participation outnumber available resources. The new framework provides clear direction on priorities.

Behaviour change takes time. In some instances, we may only initially see modest increases in walking and wheeling to schools.

Inflation has impacts on construction costs. A 40% contingency has been included in cost estimation in anticipation of future inflation.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction
2. Expanded ASRS Infrastructure Toolbox
3. Letters of support

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Doug Morgan	Transportation	Approve
Kerensa Fromherz	Transportation Infrastructure	Consult
Troy McLeod	Roads	Consult