Beckwith Street Redevelopment Plan

February 25, 2019

This bulletin is being provided to inform citizens and provide clarity on the nature of the chosen design for Beckwith Street. The Complete Streets design (parallel parking, bike lanes, and wide sidewalks) features a series of elements that are important to the way the new street will function. The following Question and Answer format is intended to provide the reader with fact based information.

Question #1 – why does the Town need to reconstruct Beckwith Street?

Answer – the water and sewer pipes that run beneath Beckwith Street have long surpassed their useful life (some of the pipes were installed in the late 1800’s). The Town applied for provincial infrastructure funding to assist in the cost of replacing aged pipes and successfully secured $933,000 for this purpose. The project will enable the Town to separate our combined wastewater and storm water sewers thereby reducing water flows into our wastewater treatment plant and lowering the cost of treatment. The separation of this infrastructure will better enable storm sewers to accommodate future heavy rain events. The money must be spent before the end of 2019 or the Town will lose this significant financial contribution. The surface of Beckwith is also deteriorating rapidly and maintenance costs will escalate significantly if left unattended.

Question #2 - why was the decision to change to a complete streets model made so early in 2019?

Answer – The window of opportunity to access provincial Connecting Link funding has been delayed due to the change in provincial government. Council understood there was a limited amount of time to reconsider the Beckwith Street design and still be in a position to apply for Connecting Link funding. Additionally, it is important to tender large scale civil projects as early in the calendar year as possible to receive competitive pricing from contractors before they decide on their projects for the fast approaching construction season. Additionally, the answer to question #1 was a factor to the extent the $933,000 in funding already confirmed will be in jeopardy if the project does not proceed in 2019.
Question #3 – will the complete streets design provide enough space for snow storage during heavy snowfall events?

Answer – the complete streets arrangement will provide improved space for short term storage of snow compared to the angle parking arrangement due to the existence of the bike lane adjacent to the parking lane.

Question #4 - how many on street parking stalls will there be compared to the angle parking arrangement?

Answer – there are currently 120 parking stalls on Beckwith Street between Chambers and Elmsley. The current yield cannot be replicated because parking spaces need to meet minimum setbacks from traffic signals along with new pedestrian activated crossing signals being added at William Street and Church Street. These features were added to the design as an outcome from the public consultation process. The consultant was directed to maximize parking supply in both the complete streets and angle parking options. Both options will provide parking capacity for 101 vehicles. There are also opportunities to create new parking stalls on several intersecting streets to minimize the overall reduction – this will be pursued to its full potential in the future.

Question #5 – will the complete streets design make the downtown more accessible for people using assistive devices (wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc)?

Answer – yes. The design reduces the barrier that presently exists between regular parking stalls and the sidewalk. The new design provides improved access from the parking lane to the cycle lane then to the sidewalk. The extra parallel parking lane width will make it easier for lift equipped vehicles to deploy a side ramp or maneuver an assistive device out of or into their vehicle. Additional designated spaces will also be provided in each block that will allow increased opportunities for vehicles that deploy accessible equipment from the rear.

Question #6 – is parallel parking more dangerous than angle parking? Is there a greater likelihood of getting hit by a car or bicycle when exiting a parallel parked vehicle?

Answer - the parallel parking lane will be 2.75 metres wide and adjacent buffer zone will be 0.7 metres wide providing a generous total of 3.45 metres of space for passengers to enter and exit their vehicles without impacting other vehicles or bicycles.
Question #7 – will parallel parking result in traffic delays?

Answer – parking a vehicle, whether it be parallel or angled, consumes time. Parallel parking may require more time while parking (unless there are no cars parked in front or behind the desired parking stall, then a motorist can simply drive directly into the parking lane) yet it is quicker, and perhaps safer, to exit a parallel parking stall compared to backing out of an angled parking stall. Angled parking will remain on Main Street between Market and Maple Streets for motorists preferring this option.

Question #8 - what is the point of having cycling lanes that start and finish downtown?

Answer - the Beckwith Street redevelopment presents the perfect opportunity to install cycling lanes in the more intense section of downtown. The cycling network can be expanded upon over time with either dedicated lanes or shared use lanes to meet the Town’s long-term objectives for active transportation. The Beckwith redesign will serve our community for decades and if dedicated cycling lanes are not installed now, it would be very difficult and expensive to add them in the future.

Question #9 – did members of the new Council have the same information as the previous council had last year when Beckwith Street was initially discussed?

Answer – yes. The new Council was provided with all of the information made available to the previous Council. Information included the consultant reports, a block by block analysis of existing parking inventory as well as parking supply for both options considered, notes from the various public meetings, and all public input comments received throughout the original public consultation process.

The next page is a cross-section (arrangement) of the complete streets design.
Complete Street - Cross Section

Parallel Parking Both Sides, Cycle Tracks