

FITZROY STREET BIKE LANE

Engagement Overview

Community Drop-in Session
What We Heard Report

January 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Cycling infrastructure has been a major theme in a number of City of Charlottetown consultation sessions in recent years. It not only was identified as a need in the Regional Active Transportation Plan, but was a key concern in the development of the 2017 Integrated Community Sustainability Plan and a theme of the City's Community Energy Plan development. In the summer of 2018, the City held three "let's talk cycling" pop-ups to engage the public in cycling safety and gather feedback on necessary improvements. Dedicated cycling infrastructure has been a regular topic.

More specifically, a cycling connector between Victoria Park and the Confederation Trail has been identified as a need for some time. The downtown has a lot of density and development making it impractical to put an off-street route in place. Making use of the existing street network is the only way to achieve a cycling connector in the downtown.

As such, in 2018 an analysis was conducted to review east-west connecting streets in downtown Charlottetown for their potential to accommodate a cycling lane. Fitzroy Street was recommended for further study and consultation, based on the following:

- + The level of continuity it would provide cyclists
- + The composition and types of existing development
- + The traffic volumes
- + The orientation of on-street parking
- + The existing presence of "sharrow" markings

The current stage of the process (January-March 2019) is to explore all the factors for consideration in conceptual design and implementation. This includes input received from the public and stakeholders through a number of consultation opportunities. A detailed proposal will then be submitted for consideration by City Council.

How to Use This Report

The first section of this report provide an overview of the consultation activities that were undertaken. The last two sections present the outcomes of the information session and online comments as a summary of major and secondary themes. This covers the topics that repeatedly came up in written notes and in conversation, and the information that participants expressed as important to them. In some cases a theme includes different views on the same subject. This report is a record of what was heard and does not make recommendations. It illuminates perspectives and questions so that they may be taken into the decision making process.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the engagement activities.



Participants arrive at the community drop-in session.



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

Community consultation for the Fitzroy Street Bike Lane is being carried out with a range of opportunities. The objectives of the consultation are to:

- + Provide information about the context, rationale, benefits, challenges, and design solutions of a bike lane on Fitzroy.
- + Foster meaningful and constructive dialogue among community members.
- + Gather public and stakeholder input, to develop a viable plan for implementation of a bike lane that best serves the community.

The consultation opportunities include:

- + Community drop-in session on January 10
- + Follow-up community meeting on February 26
- + Stakeholder and resident meetings
- + Online social media comments (via Facebook)
- + Online feedback form and email submissions
- + Long format written submissions to City staff

Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder meetings were held in January, with representatives from 11 organizations and groups of individuals, including businesses, churches, residents, and City staff across multiple departments. Much of the stakeholder input is reflected in the community drop-in session major themes, and any other input from stakeholders has been integrated at other points in the process. The stakeholder meetings were held with:

- + Charlottetown Police Services
- + Charlottetown Fire Department
- + Charlottetown Parks and Recreation
- + Charlottetown Parkland Conservation (street trees)
- + Charlottetown Planning and Heritage
- + Charlottetown Asset Management and Infrastructure
- + ADL
- + Kirk of St. James
- + Downtown Charlottetown Inc.
- + Downtown Residents Association
- + Fitzroy Street residents

Public Online and Written Input

The City of Charlottetown website offered information about the project, and an online feedback form to submit short, private, written submissions. The City also created an event page for the January 10 community drop-in session, and members of the public were able to make open comments view by other Facebook users. Additionally, long format written submissions were accepted by City staff. The high level information provided online and through written submissions is reflected in the major themes of this report.

- + 25 Social media comments
- + 33 Online feedback forms and emails
- + 3 Long format written submissions

Community Drop-in Session

The focus of this report is the public consultation event, held January 10th, 2019 at the Rodd Hotel in downtown Charlottetown. The event was two hours in duration, and was a drop-in format where participants could come and go at their convenience. There were approximately 100 people in attendance.

Attendees participated in a range of activities at the meetings. There were no formal presentations or speakers. Instead, 7 project staff people were available for direct conversations and individual comments were recorded in writing. The specific activities included:

- + Panels provided information about the project, the big picture of infrastructure planning, and cycling promotion.
- + Reference document library to review relevant policies and literature about cycling infrastructure design.
- + Input about existing physical conditions was collected on a large aerial photograph of Fitzroy Street, as well as an open comment board.
- + Preliminary concepts for mid-block bike lane design and major intersections were shared on large-format maps and diagrams for participant feedback.
- + Preferred precedent design treatments for protected bike lanes were identified using a sticker-voting template.
- + Open small-group discussion table focused on parking.
- + Input about concerns and benefits was collected in writing with questionnaire.
- + Input about a vision for Fitzroy Street was collected with an open comment board.



MAJOR THEMES

Community Prosperity and Well-Being

Many participants were excited about a designated cycling connection in the downtown, and optimistic about the proposed bike lane. Support was most often related to building community prosperity and well-being. Participants highlighted benefits they personally gain from cycling, as well as benefits enjoyed by bike-friendly communities with strong bicycling infrastructure. It was noted that in order to continue as a thriving contemporary city and an attractive place to live, Charlottetown will need to pay close attention to fostering excellent quality of life with improvements such as bike lanes.

Many participants indicated that cycling is an important part of their lives, and it improves their quality of life and mental well-being. Specific benefits include physical activity and interaction with other people in the community. Some feel that Charlottetown is well suited to cycling, as it has level terrain and good density, and the only thing needed to have thriving cycling community is the infrastructure.

Cycling Equity

Some experienced cyclists described feeling safe and confident travelling with traffic or shared routes, without needing barriers or designated lanes. However, many other participants explained that they simply are not at ease cycling in traffic, and a designated bike lane would greatly expand their ability to participate in cycling downtown. This was especially the case among seniors, women and people who would like to cycle with children. For these participants, the provision of infrastructure such as a protected lane is essential for creating an inclusive cycling community.

Traffic Management

There were many questions, comments and opinions about how the bike lane might impact traffic. Some feel that reducing the number of traffic lanes would result in delays in traffic, particularly if garbage or delivery trucks are stopped. There were also concerns about how a bike lane and reduced traffic lanes could cause delays at intersections. Just a few participants described existing issues with mid-block traffic congestion. Most are able to navigate the street by vehicle in a smooth and prompt manner, sometimes switching from lane to lane or traveling along the centre line to maximize efficiency. In fact, some participants feel that currently there are issues with traffic, including excessive speed, tight passing, taking the one-way street the wrong way, and not observing stop signs.

Parking

Loss of parking was one of the most common points of input. Participants reported some existing issues with parking, such as all-day parking, blocking driveways and a general challenge to find convenient spots. A need for parking restriction and enforcement, in advance of any bike lane was identified. A few participants indicated that on-street parking ought not to be a deciding factor in efforts to promote cycling, but for others any loss of any on street parking is highly undesirable. The deepest concern is for residents and church parishioners who have mobility challenges and are greatly assisted by parking near their home or other destination. General parking for visitors and customers was also a concern. Some participants identified that parking usage peaks in the daytime, and anecdotally, is primarily occupied employees and students in the downtown.

Many participants expressed a desire for detailed information about the existing parking supply, usage and regulation, and ultimately, clarity about what the impact and mitigation measure could be.



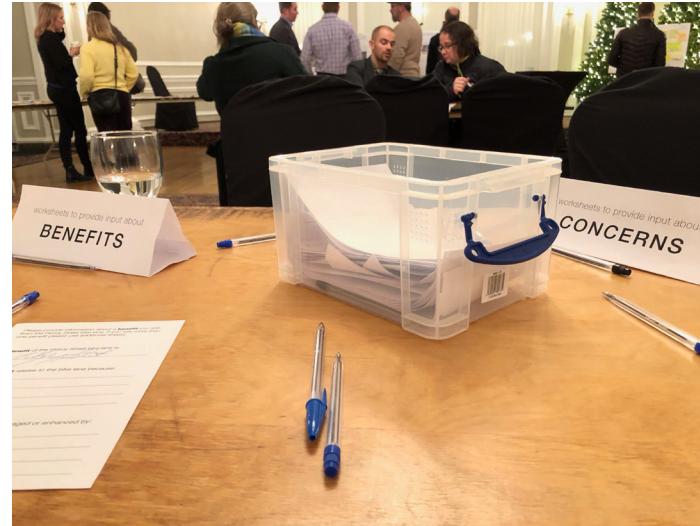
MAJOR THEMES, CONTINUED

Safety

Participants had differing points of view about whether the bike lane would increase or reduce safety on Fitzroy Street. Some voiced fear about driveways, in particular scenarios where residents back out into the street and inadequate sight lines. Other concerns related to cyclist/pedestrian interaction, generally, and fears about increased "road rage".

Crossing at intersections was a frequent topic. In particular, comments focused on the intersections with Great George and Queen, and explored ways to improve the comfort and safety of all road users. It was noted that improvements to these intersections would be beneficial regardless of the bike lane, and quite necessary with it.

With good design and care to the issues, many participants felt that with proper design, especially reconfiguration of intersections and use of protective elements, the bike lane would increase safety and comfort for cyclists and pedestrians. For these participants, there is a sense that a bike lane helps to calm traffic and increase cyclist visibility, resulting in overall safer conditions. Awareness building to foster respectful, safe coexistence of motorists and cyclists was a popular idea, regardless of perspective on the impact of a bike lane on safety.



Open-ended questionnaires on concerns and benefits.



Aerial photograph of existing conditions with comments.



SECONDARY THEMES

Overall Cycling Network

As with safety, participants also had differing views about the overall cycling network and implementation of bicycling infrastructure on other streets. Some participants felt that a bike lane on Fitzroy is a significant connection in the network, and an exciting first step toward an extensive network of cycling infrastructure, with more protected lanes or cycling-and-pedestrian only streets.

Others questioned how Fitzroy was selected, and for a range of reasons, some participants felt there are other streets that could be more suitable for a bike lane than Fitzroy. Suggestions included creating two 1-way bike lanes, or opting for a street that has more destinations, such as shops and work places.

Streetscape and Bike Lane Design

Currently, many participants enjoy the quality of Fitzroy Street, feeling it is a nice street with trees and sidewalks, and numerous heritage buildings, as well as a nice mix of residential and commercial uses. The main challenges people face currently are feeling unsafe at crossings and inconvenient parking. Overall improvements that participants mentioned ranged from "none needed", to improved crosswalks, wider sidewalks, and a bike lane.

Participants were presented with options for bike lane design treatments and were asked to "vote" for the options they considered favourable and suitable for Fitzroy Street. The most popular options were:

- + Movable planters
- + Permanent planters
- + Painted lane, intersections, and major driveways

Cost / Benefit

Some participants described the bike lane in terms of its potential to grow the attractiveness of downtown Charlottetown. There is a view that the bike lane is an investment in community building, and contribute to the wellbeing of current and future citizens. It was also noted that a relatively small cost compared to overall transportation infrastructure budgets.

On the other hand, some participants felt that the bike lane project is too costly relative to the benefits it would provide, and that resources would be better spent improving cyclist and pedestrian safety in other ways, or on other issues entirely. Some expressed a sense that there is minimal issue with cyclist safety on Fitzroy, and that funds ought to be prioritized for other active transportation infrastructure and road user education. Similarly, there are questions about the ongoing costs, particularly if the lane is to be installed and uninstalled seasonally.

Snow Removal

Participants explored ideas for how to manage snow removal for the proposed bike lane. Ideas fell on a continuum. Some feel it would be best to completely remove the bike lane during the winter to allow regular snow removal activity. Others felt that with proper snow clearing equipment, the barriers can remain during the winter time, to ensure the bike lane is still usable year round.

It was also noted that there are some existing challenges with snow removal on sidewalks, trails and bike lanes. Overall, there is a general desire for increased resources to ensure that all active transportation infrastructure is successfully maintained and operated in the winter months.



CONCLUSION

Among the people who became involved in the engagement, a relatively small proportion held strong positions either in support or opposition to the project. More participants had not yet made up their minds one way or the other, and saw both merits and challenges with the Fitzroy Street bike lane. As such, many of the online comments and the community conversations explored two sides of the same coin, and the focus was on open-minded discussion about the issues.

A wide range of perspectives were shared about the Fitzroy Street bike lane project, as well as public street infrastructure more broadly. Many participants were excited about a designated cycling connection in the downtown, and optimistic about the proposed bike lane. There was support for a range of ongoing efforts to promote cycling. At the same time, people expressed questions and concerns about traffic, parking and safety, as well as priorities in the overall network. Many participants had conversations that centered around envisioning how a bike lane would change the dynamic of the street.

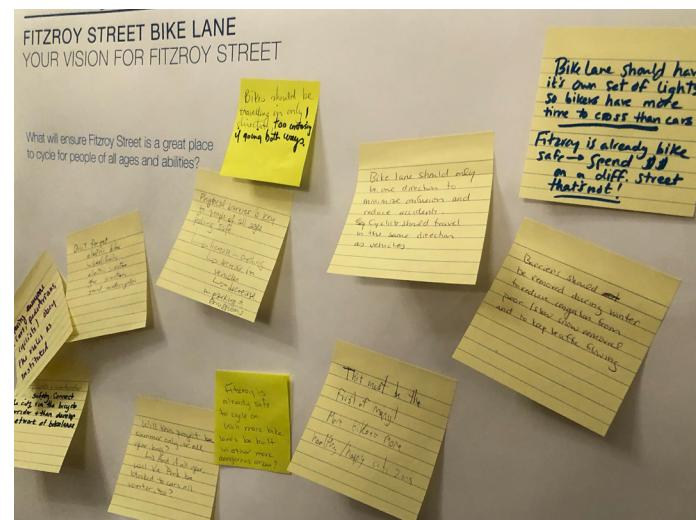
As such, there was no general agreement that emerged through the engagement process. As with many types of community change, people are optimistic about a bright future but worried about the uncertainties that change implies. Participants brought many constructive questions and illuminated the pieces of information that they needed

in order to help them come to a clearer understanding, and an informed opinion.

These inquiries are useful for guiding further analysis and development of design solutions. Major outstanding questions among meeting participants included:

- What is the existing parking supply, usage and regulation? What exactly would the impact of the bike lane be?
- Do residents have rights to the street outside their homes?
- Can residents of Fitzroy Street be consulted directly?
- How would the design address driveway access?
- How will accessible parking be addressed?

Additional information and explanations to address outstanding questions will be provided in the final proposal to Council and the public.



Responses to "what is your vision for Fitzroy Street?".





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