



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

# Staff Report

**To:** Council

**File No.:** 5335-20

**From:** City Manager (CAO)

**Date:** April 2, 2025

**Subject:** 6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement – Grant Application

## PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's support for both the interim and ultimate cross-section design options for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor and for Council to provide approval for staff to apply for grant funding for the 6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement project through the National Active Transportation Fund Application and British Columbia Active Transportation (BCAT) Fund Application.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Infrastructure Canada's Active Transportation Fund will provide \$400 million over five years to support a modal shift away from cars and toward active transportation, in support of Canada's National Active Transportation Strategy. The Active Transportation Fund will invest in projects that build new and expanded networks of pathways, bike lanes, trails and pedestrian bridges, in addition to supporting active transportation planning and stakeholder engagement activities. Qualified capital projects are funded up to \$50 million per project, with a maximum contribution rate of 60% for federal funding and up to 100% when stacked with provincial funding. Eligible costs include capital, design and planning, and grant requirement costs, such as signage. Pending council resolution, staff will submit a grant application to fund the construction of the 6th Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancements.

Additionally, an application to the B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant fund is planned for the Fall of 2025. This is the same grant opportunity that the City has been successful with in the past for projects such as 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Fitzgerald Ave, Back Rd, and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. This funding stream is being targeted to support the interim bi-directional bike lane treatment on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, including protected facilities on the south side of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and intersection treatments at Cliffe Avenue and Fitzgerald Avenue. The province cost-shares to a maximum of \$500,000 per project, with a contribution rate of 50% of the applicant's share. Eligible costs include capital infrastructure directly related active transportation infrastructure.

## BACKGROUND:

The City's past downtown revitalization concepts and previously contemplated improvements for 6th Street are the starting point for considering multi-modal corridor enhancement options. Key components include consideration of 6th Street as a "green street" per the Downtown Playbook, as well as 6th Street as the key east-west cycling corridor through the downtown area per the Cycling Network Plan. Consideration is also to be given to the following specific locations along the corridor:

**6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement – Grant Application**

---

- Opportunities to further the Duncan Commons concept, including accommodating possible closures to host festivals and special events;
- Transition to/from the future 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge and the Riverway Trail; and
- Accommodation of transit access/egress to the planned future transit exchange on England Avenue.

Progress is being made toward an interim design treatment for 6<sup>th</sup> Street that includes a two-way cycling facility on the south side, including bicycle signal at Cliffe Avenue and cyclist-activated crossing at Fitzgerald Avenue. This treatment is currently being advanced through concept and detailed design, in anticipation of an application to the B.C. Active Transportation (BCAT) Infrastructure Grant program in September / October 2025. The BCAT Grant has an annual intake, providing up to 60% funding, up to \$500,000 to support active transportation infrastructure investment.

More recently the Government of Canada announced the most recent intake for the National Active Transportation Fund (NATF). This grant opportunity allows for 60% funding for infrastructure improvements supporting active transportation, supporting projects with a significantly larger funding ceiling. Staff have determined that the full build-out of 6<sup>th</sup> Street, including protected bike lanes, widened sidewalks, bike storage and support streetscape and public realm enhancements would make for a strong application to the NATF.

**DISCUSSION:**

In response to a review and direction by Council, Urban Systems was retained by the City to review and provide a recommended option. A key outcome from the discussion and subsequent conversations with staff was the desire to advance cycling improvements on 6th Street as the 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge is completed (anticipated 2026/2027).

An interim treatment has been identified consistent with a two-way protected bike lane that would see bi-directional bike lanes replacing on-street parking and curb extensions on the south side of 6th Street, with associated intersection upgrades at Cliffe Avenue and Fitzgerald Avenue, as illustrated in Appendix I. These improvements could be realized over the next few years with only modest cost and impacts, with the potential still for a more comprehensive streetscape and urban design revitalization pursued longer term. These improvements would form the City's B.C. Active Transportation (BCAT) Infrastructure Grant program application.

To complement our interim treatment and meet the corridor's build-out strategy, a more detailed concept design and cost estimate should be advanced. This next step will allow the City to understand the full impact and costs associated with the proposed changes. To achieve this, staff propose an application under the National Active Transportation Fund (NATF) to deliver the following:

- Specify dimensions and design of travel lanes, bi-directional bike lanes and physical protection between travel lane and bike lane;
- Impact on on-street parking on 6th Street and surrounding area;

**6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement – Grant Application**

---

- Extent of the removal for existing curb extensions (est. 5 locations), including any landscape and tree loss (assumes no mature trees impacted);
- Impact on public space and seating area associated with curb extension / public space removal in front of the library;
- Impact on drainage associated with the removal of existing curb extensions (5 locations)
- Required street light relocation (est. 3 street lights);
- Required curb ramp, crosswalk and sidewalk reconfiguration due to loss of curb extensions (England Ave, Fitzgerald Ave intersections);
- Consultation on bike storage needs;
- Confirm bicycle crossing treatments at Cliffe Avenue and Fitzgerald Avenue, including the requirement for a dedicated bicycle signal (Cliffe Ave) and cyclist-activated treatment (Fitzgerald Ave);
- Study of impact on intersection performance at Cliffe Avenue resulting from removal of one eastbound travel lane and bicycle signal and dedicated signal phase for cyclists.

For delivery on both projects, the interim and ultimate design, staff propose the next steps:

- Develop detailed concept design and cost estimates for the preferred enhancement option;
- Undertake a two-phased preliminary public engagement approach. First with the Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Association (DCBIA), followed by the downtown business community, Courtenay residents, and other stakeholders;
- Undertake follow-up engagement with the downtown business community, DCBIA and directly impacted property / business owners;
- Secure funding to advance enhancement project, including possible external grant opportunities related to active transportation, economic development and/or downtown beautification; and
- Advance to detailed design, tendering and construction. Consideration may be given to the opportunity to “pilot” the preferred enhancement option, in full or in part, prior to permanent construction. This could utilize rapid implementation measures (e.g., lower-cost materials, within available curb space, faster implementation time) and would enable further feedback from the downtown business community, residents, and other stakeholders.

As staff reflected on both existing and future policies, the Downtown Courtenay Playbook and the Downtown Local Area Plan, each recommended a series of corridor improvements that integrate several key elements: green street design, enhanced community services, public spaces, and a supportive infrastructure for active transportation. The recommended improvements (cross-section) aim to create a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant, and sustainable downtown environment, while also considering opportunities for gathering spaces and community use.

While the proposed cross-section improvements do not exactly match the original conceptual designs, as contemplated within the Downtown Playbook, the overall delivery of the recommended upgrades has been successfully achieved. Importantly, these changes preserve and reflect the unique history and character of the downtown corridors, ensuring that the area’s heritage is honoured while embracing modern urban planning principles. The resulting direction of Council, with respect to the preferred cross-section, will go on

to guide the remaining Downtown Local Area Plan planning work as it relates to forward design and ultimate use of the 6th Street corridor.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Both BCAT and the NATF project application have financial implications. The following is a summary of each respective project and application.

If the BCAT interim project is approved, the class C cost estimate is \$981,600. Of that, the City would be responsible for 50 %, or \$490,800 in the 2026/2027 financial years.

If the NAFT ultimate build-out project is approved, the class C cost estimate is \$4,826,500. Of that, the City would be responsible for 40 %, or \$ 1,930,600 in the 2026/2027 financial years.

A detailed cost estimate is not required to be submitted at the time of both applications. If the grants are approved, a detailed cost estimate will need to be submitted and included in the finalized agreement. It's expected that this timeline will allow the detailed design to be completed and develop more accurate cost estimates.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

The 6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement will be led by Operational Services, with support from most other City Departments. Consultants with technical knowledge specific to this work will be utilized to develop and implement detailed designs and processes. Estimated costs associated with external consultants are included in the project capital budget.

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

Under the Council Strategic Priorities 2023-2026, Streets and Transportation (Page 7);

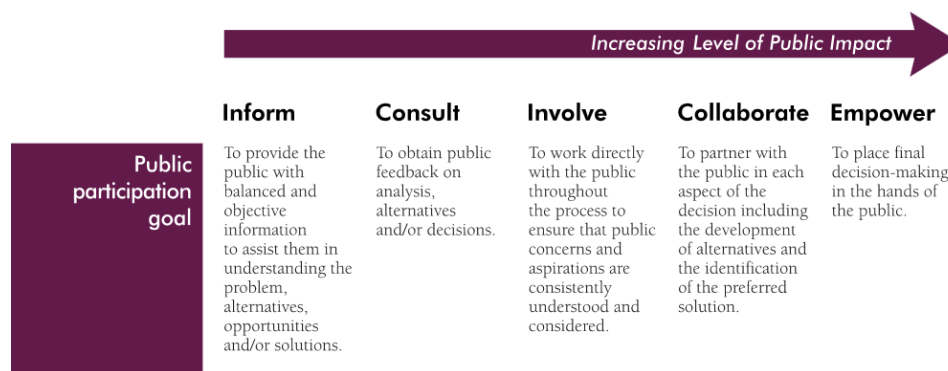
This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Streets and Transportation - Update cycling network plan and implementation strategy
- Streets and Transportation - 6th Street Bridge design and funding

#### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:

[http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum\\_vertical.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf)

**6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement – Grant Application**

© International Association for Public Participation [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)

**OPTIONS:**

1. THAT Council endorse the preferred cross-section for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor, and THAT Council provide in principle support for the application to the National Active Transportation Fund for the ultimate build-out of 6<sup>th</sup> Street including two-way protected cycling facilities, pedestrian and public realm improvements; and  
FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to prepare an application for 2025 B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant fund for the interim cycling improvements on 6<sup>th</sup> Street.
2. THAT Council endorse the preferred cross-section for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor, and THAT Council direct staff to prepare an application for 2025 B.C. Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant fund for the interim cycling improvements on 6<sup>th</sup> Street.
3. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

**Attachments:**

1. 6<sup>th</sup> Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement – Council Presentation
2. 6<sup>th</sup> Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement - Options Assessment

Prepared by: Matthew Brown, Manager of Transportation Services

Reviewed by: Brandon Donais, Manager of Operational Projects

Kyle Shaw, Director of Operational Services

Concurrence: Chris Davidson, Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Engineering – Acting City Manager (CAO)

**6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor Enhancement – Grant Application**

**Appendix I**

