



The Corporation of the District of Central Saanich

REGULAR COUNCIL REPORT

For the Regular Council meeting on Monday, January 27, 2025

Re: Brentwood Bay Sewer (Wallace Dr. Sewer Main) and Active Transportation Project

PURPOSE:

To report back to Council on the following resolutions:

July 22, 2024

That staff review the sidewalk design on Wallace Drive to see if it does or can accommodate vulnerable populations, including wider implements such as cargo bikes and accessibility equipment, and report back to Council.

November 4, 2024

That at an upcoming meeting, staff report out on progress to date with the Wallace Drive sewer-main project, the communication line between the contractor, staff, and the public, with mediums that are applied to the project, and what options there are to enhance communication to commercial owners in the area.

BACKGROUND:

The \$12.4M project to replace the Brentwood Bay sewer system is one of the largest capital projects undertaken by the District in recent times. The project was approved for \$5.8M in cost sharing funding from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program due to the environmental protection aspect of the project as the main sewer pump station is a few metres away from Saanich Inlet. New sewer mains will be installed in the roadway and new sewer service connections will be provided to the properties where affected, additionally, the Hagen pumpstation will be decommissioned with upgrades to the Brentwood Bay pumpstation able to address the capacity. In total, the project includes 4,270 meters of sanitary sewer mains along Sluggett Road, Wallace Drive and Stelly's Cross Road. Improvements along Wallace Drive will also include the installation of new bike infrastructure. The design for the Brentwood Bay Sewer project was developed in 2017/18 with the addition of bike facilities being included in 2018. The project was awarded to Hazelwood Construction Ltd in early 2024 for the lineal works including the new bike infrastructure.

The project is the largest infrastructure project since the 2010 East Saanich Road rehabilitation. The Brentwood Bay forcemain and Hagan pumpstation was identified as a risk of failure in 2009 with design completed in 2017 and updated in 2019 and 2020 to include the pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure. The District of Central Saanich was awarded an infrastructure grant in 2022 based on a 2020 submission

for the works, and tendered the pipe replacement and pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure portion in December 2023.

Improvements to the active transportation infrastructure on Wallace Dr. from Silverdale Place to Stelly's Rd. have been designed according to the BC Ministry of Transportation Infrastructure Active Transportation Design Guidelines and the design constraints from the creek, hydro infrastructure and road configuration. All road users' considerations are to be considered when designing transportation infrastructure in a confined corridor.

The District recently entered into an offer for ten metre wide strip running north-south along the western property line at 7210 Wallace Dr. to be included in the cycling infrastructure as an alternate route. Other alternate routes were referred to Parks and Trails Masterplan and the update to the Active Transportation Plan in 2025.

Council requested that staff report back on the sidewalk design on Wallace Drive to see if it does or can accommodate vulnerable populations, including wider implements such as cargo bikes and accessibility equipment; and report out on progress to date with the Wallace Drive sewer-main project, the communication line between the contractor, staff, and the public, with mediums that are applied to the project, and what options there are to enhance communication to commercial owners in the area.

DISCUSSION:

Sidewalk Design

The design consultant has reviewed the design of the sidewalk design on Wallace Drive to see if it could further accommodate vulnerable populations, initially by widening. The current design mostly meets the 1.5m standard for sidewalks except where hydro poles are limiting. Unfortunately, as stated in the May 30, 2024 staff report to the Healthy Communities Committee, physical limitations prohibit many options. Drainage is required on both the south and north sides of Wallace Drive, either retaining walls or significantly sloped banks would be required if the sidewalk was widened which will affect drainage will have to be addressed. Retaining walls would necessitate a railing, limiting the effective gained width (e.g. widening by 250mm resulting in the need for a railing, but BC Active Transportation Guidelines and engineering best practices recommending a 300-750mm separation buffer from vertical elements to increase safety).

Report on Communications of Sewer Main Project

Resourcing

At the beginning of 2024, the District of Central Saanich's Engineering Department established a project team that included the Director of Engineering, the Manager of Infrastructure (also responsible for operations), and an Engineering Project Technician. The other Engineering Project Technician primarily supports the District's Development Department in the review and deployment of new development applications and permits. The Community Engagement Department included a Manager and a Communications Assistant.

Recognizing the significant increase in capital projects, including a compressed timeline for priority Active Transportation projects (from 10 years to five years), the District increased its capacity to manage capital projects in 2024, with the addition of two Engineering Technicians and a term position to support Climate-related communications including Active Transportation. Due to budget approval timelines, these staff were deployed between June and August of 2024 and are currently in the on-boarding/training phase.

Roles and responsibilities

Both construction contractors and the municipality have distinct but complementary roles in public communications. The communication channel starts with the contractor, who has the most in-depth knowledge of the project, which then flows to the engineering department and to the communications department.

The Engineering Department is responsible for project management. The staff project manager is the central coordinator and decision-maker for the project, ensuring it aligns with organizational goals and community needs, including communications. They coordinate with the Contractor, and the Community Engagement Department to ensure consistent messaging to the public.

The Engineering department leads in responding to public inquiries, providing technical information and updates to the communications team, as well as direct communication to impacted parties, such as immediately located businesses and residents.

The contractor's communications responsibilities are built into the contract. The contractor is responsible for communicating critical updates to the community about traffic, noise, safety, and disruptions. Construction projects are often faced with challenges in effective communication and managing public expectations due to complexity of potential disruptions (weather, environmental, geotechnical, utilities) that can impact the ability to provide timely communication; therefore, the District or its contractor has committed to notifying residents a minimum of 24 hours prior to any disruption of services.

- Business and resident notifications: For specific concerns (e.g., nearby residents or businesses impacted by traffic disruptions), contractors reach out directly to those affected. This can involve one-on-one communication, providing contact information, or organizing local meetings.
- Signage: Contractors are responsible for signs around the construction area to warn the public about hazards and direct traffic. Being the prime contractor, they are responsible for site safety, any signage the District wants to post, must be vetted to ensure it complies with their safety plan.

Notification timing is dependent on factors such as known impacts and contingency planning. Timing for notifications is timed such as impacted parties are given sufficient time, when possible, but not so much time that notifications are forgotten.

The Community Engagement Department is responsible for community-wide messaging. They seek to provide clear, accessible, and regular updates to the public about the project's scope, timeline, objectives, and potential impacts (such as traffic disruptions, environmental concerns, etc.).

- Media: The District has issued press releases and updates to the media to disseminate project information.
- Newsletters: The project and website link were included in multiple Community Focus newsletters sent to all homes in the District, ensuring widespread dissemination of information. Recent updates include: January 2025, May 2024, January 2024, May 2023 and September 2023 .
- Social Media: The District issued 14 social media posts about the project between April 2024 to January 2025, providing timely updates about the need for the project, traffic advisories, updates, and that businesses in the area remain open and need local support

- [Project Webpage](#) that includes a) project overview with the following general guidelines of what to expect during the project, b) frequently asked questions and c) project updates (approximately 10):
 - *During construction, work will take place between 7:00 am and 9:00 pm from Monday to Saturday.*
 - *Vehicle access will be restricted to local traffic only.*
 - *Minor detours may be required and will be communicated closer to the start of construction works.*
 - *Traffic control personnel and signage will be in-place to help direct vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians through and around the work areas.*
 - *Phased disruptions to services in the area will occur during construction.*
 - *The District or its contractor will notify residents a minimum of 24 hours prior to any disruption of services.*
 - *Garbage and recycling services will not be impacted.*
- The website also has:
 - A spotlight on the homepage, at times
 - Information on the Infrastructure Projects page
 - Two news releases on the site

Enhancing Communication to Commercial Owners

To enhance communication specifically to commercial owners in the area, the District could consider the following options:

- Move from “as needed” updates to weekly e-mail updates. **Challenge:** Due to the changing nature of construction, sending commercial property owners more frequent updates that will often change will diminish trust in the construction project and communications. Additionally, this may lead to businesses communicating information publicly that would constantly be changing.
- Business Liaison: Appointing a business liaison to directly communicate with commercial owners, providing personalized updates and support. **Challenge:** Salary and outfitting (IT, office, etc) costs as well as additional administrative time managing or filling in, in addition to challenge noted above. Benefit: Dedicated staff to address business concerns.

IMPLICATIONS:

Strategic

Projects identified in the Active Transportation Capital Plan are currently underway and in development. Standardized criteria were used to understand how well active transportation projects address the key objectives of the Active Transportation Plan. One of the critical pieces of the plan is completing routes where there are gaps in the network.

In the 2024-2027 Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), the District has committed to advancing 9.5 kms of bike facilities, sidewalks, Multi-use pathways and nine crosswalks. Improving the sidewalk on Wallace Dr. from West Saanich Rd. to Stelly’s High School will provide a safer route to school for members of the Stelly’s High School and Brentwood Elementary students.

Legislative/Policy

In assessing and planning road safety, and designing and constructing active transportation improvements the following design standards are utilized:

- Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Design Manual;
- BC Ministry of Transportation Infrastructure Amendments to TAC;
- BC Ministry of Transportation Infrastructure Active Transportation Design Guidelines;
- TAC Canadian Guide to Traffic Calming; and
- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) design guides: Designing Streets for Kids, and Urban Bikeway Design Guide.

These are guidelines for best practice to be included with site specific constraints when considering road safety and design and implementing active transportation improvements.

Legal/HR

As the designated prime contractor, the contractor has the legal obligation to keep the construction site safe, but also the care and control of the site to meet the legal obligation. If the District were to try to supersede this through enforcing or communicating contrary safety measures, the District would be responsible for the site safety and would have prepare, monitor and enforce appropriate site safety plans, task risk assessments, daily tail gate talks and WorkSafe BC reporting. The District is not resourced for undertaking these responsibilities, and it is not industry standard for the District to take on these roles for a tendered construction project.

Communications

Communications efforts and resourcing on this project is higher than most road works projects and it has detracted resources from other projects in recent months; however given the route, it's appropriate to continue to ensure fulsome and timely updates to the general public. Due to the nature of construction project coordination and uncertainty of timing, the vast majority of efforts are behind the scenes maintaining awareness of upcoming potential work and evaluating the impact on the public.

Financial

Increased communications by the Contractor and/or staff would represent an increased service level and cost. Staff will be bringing forward a Community Engagement Framework to Council by Q2 of 2025 to confirm District Community Engagement service level standards.

Additional sidewalk width is not as straightforward as widening the concrete sidewalk. Retaining walls, additional drainage works with possible private property implications significantly increasing costs without adequately addressing safety issues.

CONCLUSION:

The Brentwood Bay Sewer project is the first major infrastructure project for the District of Central Saanich since East Saanich Road in 2010. Timely and appropriate communications for engineered infrastructure is key to successful completion based on prescribed level of service.

Report written by:	Dale Puskas, Director, Engineering and Britt Burnham, Manager, Community Engagement Services
Concurrence by:	Emilie Gorman, Director, Corporate Services Department/ Corporate Officer
Concurrence by:	Christine Culham, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: Social Media Posts