

DATE: November 8, 2011
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Request from Renew 1.1.2
ORIGINATOR: Brian Smith, Director, Finance and Infrastructure
RESOURCE STAFF: Roland Labbe, Lorne Parker
REFERENCE: N/A

ISSUE

The community has requested support for the redesign and reconstruction of 112 Avenue located in Highlands/Bellevue neighbourhoods (ATTACHMENT I). The letter of support was due to City Council prior to November 1, 2011.

RECOMMENDATION

That a letter of support from the Board of Trustees be provided.

BACKGROUND

On June 21, 2011, a letter of support from Dr. Lorne E. Parker, Managing Director, Planning, Property Management and Student Transportation was provided to Ben Hartt, a member of the Renew 1.1.2 committee, advocating for improvements to safe pedestrian transportation routes across 112 Avenue (ATTACHMENT II).

In 2005, Highlands School students and the community were involved in a Charrette to identify the key issues involving the quality of life within the community, including walkability. Through the consultation process, the 112 Avenue Road Diet was identified as the number one issue for action.

The Renew 1.1.2 committee continues to support the redesign of 112 Avenue to improve the walkability of the community.

RELATED FACTS

- The attendance areas for Eastglen, Highlands, and Mount Royal/Virginia Park schools overlap 112 Avenue.
- This is a four lane roadway with a bus route.
- The District supports all neighbourhood and road design initiatives that promote safe and improved pedestrian and cycling activity.
- The District is involved in initiatives including but not limited to:
 - Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere (SHAPE)
 - Active and Safe Routes to School
 - School Travel Planning
 - City of Edmonton Traffic Safety Initiatives
 - Office of Traffic Safety Liaison
 - City of Edmonton Transportation Liaison

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- A. That the Board of Trustees provide a letter of support.
- B. That the Board of Trustees does not provide a letter of support.

CONSIDERATIONS & ANALYSIS

- A. That the Board of Trustees provide a letter of support.
 - The letter would be submitted to the City of Edmonton.
- B. That the Board of Trustees does not provide a letter of support.
 - District administration has already provided a letter of support. District practice is already in place to support and encourage improved safety initiatives for pedestrians and cyclists.

NEXT STEPS

Upon a decision to prepare a letter of support, the Board of Trustees will direct the Administration to prepare a letter for the Board Chair's signature in support of redesigning 112 Avenue, to create a safe environment for pedestrians.

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

- ATTACHMENT I October 2, 2011 email from Ben Hartt to Trustee Colburn
- ATTACHMENT II June 21, 2011 letter to Ben Hartt

RL:gm

From: Benjamin David Hartt [<mailto:bhartt@ryerson.ca>]
Sent: Sunday, October 02, 2011 11:17 AM
To: Dave Colburn
Cc: Cheryl Johner; Ken Shipka; Christopher Spencer; Heather MacKenzie; Michael Janz; Sarah Hoffman; Catherine Ripley; Leslie Cleary
Subject: Renew 1.1.2

Dave Colburn
School Trustee, Ward D
Chair, Edmonton Public School Board

2 October 2011

Dear Chair Colburn,

I am writing on behalf of Renew 1.1.2, an initiative led by Highlands community residents who seek to engage the City of Edmonton regarding the planned reconstruction of 112 Avenue, scheduled for 2012.

ISSUE

Renew 1.1.2 would like to see 112 Avenue redesigned to improve the safety, walkability, livability, attractiveness, connectedness and sustainability of the Highlands and Bellevue neighbourhoods. There is a strong and tangible link between the design of roadways and the safety and health of the children (and other residents) who use, or want to use, them. In particular, with the right road design, the reconstruction of 112 Avenue has the potential to positively affect the safety and health outcomes of school aged children, particularly those who choose to engage in 'kid-powered transportation' by either walking or bicycling to and from school.

REQUEST AND TIMELINES

- Renew 1.1.2 is asking that the Edmonton Public School Board make a formal policy statement in favour of road designs that encourage 'kid-powered transportation,' such as the Road Diet concept (see Background Section), because the perceived and real safety of a roadway influence a child's willingness, or a child's parents' willingness to allow them, to walk or bicycle to and from school. Thus, the safety and health of school aged children are closely linked to the design of roads in Edmonton's communities.
- We also ask that the Board write a letter of support of the Renew 1.1.2 Initiative to Edmonton City Council. For your convenience, at the end of this letter, I have attached a sample letter that might serve as a template for any letter you may wish to write.
- We would appreciate a timely response to this request, as we are meeting with the City Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on November 1, 2011.

CURRENT STATUS

From our recent discussions with the City of Edmonton, it is our understanding that the Transportation and Infrastructure (TIC) Committee will meet on 1 November 2011 to vote on whether or not to engage in further study and consultations regarding the possible redesign of 112 Avenue. To date, 25

percent of Highlands residents have expressed their interest to be involved in the redesign process. In addition to residents, a wide array of stakeholders in the Highlands are supportive of Renew 1.1.2, including local businesses; our local Catholic School Trustee, Cindy Olsen; our local Public School Trustee, Dave Colburn; and both the Highlands and Bellevue community leagues.

BACKGROUND

• THE LINK BETWEEN ROAD DESIGN AND THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN

As you are aware, the Highlands and Bellevue communities are home to several public schools, including Eastglen High, Highlands Junior High, Virginia Park Elementary and Mount Royal Elementary. Renew 1.1.2 wants to encourage 'kid-powered transportation' to and from school by making the roadway safer and more walkable. The roadway should be pedestrian friendly whether students walk to and from their home in the Highlands, or whether they are walking to and from a bus stop along 112 Avenue.

Pedestrian safety, whether perceived or real, is critical to supporting the walkability and vibrancy of our neighbourhood. A redesigned 112 Avenue offers an opportunity to provide a safety buffer between vehicles and pedestrians. This could consist of parked cars in the commercial areas or wider boulevards with street trees and furniture in the residential areas. You may remember the recent crash which deposited a car onto the sidewalk in front of Sabrina Butterfly and La Boheme. Luckily, no pedestrians were injured in this event but this car could potentially have been kept on the road if other cars were parked along the Avenue.

Whether residents of Highlands or visitors to the neighbourhood, people, including school aged children, walking to the various shops and services on 112 Avenue contributes to our strong sense of community. Walking provides opportunities for people to meet each other on the streets and to take the time to observe what is happening in the area, a key ingredient in crime prevention. The health and environmental benefits of walking are obvious and well documented.

• ROAD DESIGN OPTIONS THAT FOSTER HEALTH AND SAFETY

One option for renewing 112 Avenue is a 'Road Diet,' which includes reducing the road from four lanes to three with multi-use shoulders and bus pullouts, and a parking strategy to promote local business. Another option for the redesign includes narrowing the width of the four lanes currently present. Our group will support whatever option the community is most comfortable with, as long as it supports the principles of a safer, more vibrant and walkable community, giving more attention to non-vehicular activity along the roadway. For your convenience, I have included specific details about the Road Diet proposal in the Appendix of this letter.

• HISTORY

As you may be aware, in 2005, Highlands Junior High School was involved in the Highlands/Bellevue Charrette, a neighbourhood consultation process designed to engage the community in key issues involving quality of life within our community, a fundamental component of which entails designing a more walkable community.

During the consultation process, the 112 Avenue Road Diet was voted as the number one key priority for action out of a list of 12 items that were identified in the 2005 Highlands / Bellevue Neighbourhood Design Charrette. You can visit the Charrette/Road Diet website at http://www.highlandsbellevuecharrette.com/112_road_diet.html, and our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/highlandsbellevuecharrette>.

OUTCOMES

We strongly believe that a renewal of 112 Avenue – one based on sound transportation and land use planning principles, such as the Road Diet option – will lead to several positive outcomes for the community, including: improving the perceived and real safety of the roadway and greater community for children, youth and the elderly, in turn encouraging the physical activity of all residents, especially children and youth; unifying the community that is currently bisected by an increasingly busy, and dangerous, roadway; promoting local business; and fostering pride and cohesion in our community. Detailed concept drawings for a redesigned 112 Avenue are available for viewing on the website which show enhancements to street crossings that will promote safer crossings for local students and will support healthy transportation alternatives to the private automobile including cycling, walking and transit use.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me. Either I or another member of the Renew 1.1.2 committee would be happy to meet with you in person or talk to you on the phone if you wish to discuss this matter further. I hope we can count on the support of this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Ben Hartt, HBA, MPPA
11230 – 63 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5W 4E6
780.250.1001
bhartt@ryerson.ca

APPENDIX

The Highlands / Bellevue Charrette

The Highlands/Bellevue Neighbourhood Design Charrette was held April 2005 and facilitated by Dan Burden of Walkable Communities, Inc. The project was overseen by an Organizing Committee comprised of representatives from Highlands Community League, Bellevue Community League, the City of Edmonton Planning & Development, Community Services and Transportation & Streets departments, as well as Walkable Edmonton.

Some of Walkable Edmonton's key objectives for the project were to:

- Increase the legitimacy of this community based process as a tool to effect change;
- Connect with more community members, agencies and partners, and to build a greater, stronger network of people supporting walkability and knowledgeable about it.

- Help create a local success story - a model for action - that we can share with other communities; and
- Ensure that the learning, skills and experiences and the neighbourhood empowerment gained from this charrette are passed along to other communities and individuals.

112 Avenue Road Diet

The 112 Avenue Road Diet was voted as the number one key priorities for action out of a list of 12 items that were identified in the 2005 Highlands / Bellevue Neighbourhood Design Charrette.

Current Road Configuration

- Currently 112 Avenue is the “Major Arterial” and runs through the community, on an east / west alignment. There are four-lanes with no left turn bays.
- There are signalized intersections at 68 Street and 50 Street and signalized pedestrian crossings at 65 Street, 62 Street and 55 Street. There is an un-signalized pedestrian crossing at 53 Street.
- 112 Avenue has unstructured, non-peak hour parallel parking in proximity of 65 Street intersection.
- The Highlands and Bellevue communities are served by Bus Route #2 on 112 Ave.
- 68 Street and 66 Street are one-way Collector Road “Couplet” connecting to 118 Avenue with 66 Street also connecting to Yellowhead Freeway. 50 Street is major connection to 118 Avenue and Yellowhead Freeway

112 Avenue Road Diet Proposal

- The 2005 Charrette proposes to reduce 112 Avenue to 3 lanes with multi-use shoulders / bus pullouts.
- Replace signals with green medians or roundabouts at intersections with 53, 57, 60, 62 and 68 Streets.
- Create alternating parallel parking from 64 Street to 66 Street.
- Create meaningful green buffer, with added trees, between sidewalk and traffic.
- Develop street parking and provide back-in angle parking in commercial areas.

SAMPLE LETTER TO CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Stephen Mandel and Members of City Council 2nd Floor, City Hall
 1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
 Edmonton, Alberta
 T5J 2R7

RE: Renew 1.1.2: Highlands / Bellevue 112 Avenue Redesign Initiative

Dear Mayor Mandel and City Councilors,

The Edmonton Public School Board is dedicated to building a safer, more vibrant and livable neighbourhood in the Highlands/Bellevue community, as well as in every community in Edmonton.

We are concerned with the high volume of traffic along 112 Avenue, as well as the perception of an overwhelming number of Highlands residents that the roadway is not safe due to speeding and reckless driving along the roadway.

This has become a dangerous risk for school aged children either walking across, or cycling along, on their way to and from school. 112 Avenue has become exceedingly busy, and the majority of drivers no longer stop to let pedestrians cross, many of whom are aggressive and discourteous.

Promoting the health of our students is one of Edmonton Public's priorities. Since 112 Avenue will be reconstructed in 2012, the Board would like to see a roadway design that makes provisions for safe 'kid-powered transportation' (ie. walking and/or cycling) to and from school. As a Board, we are committed to promoting the health of our students by fighting sedentary living and childhood/youth obesity. For that reason, we support a redesign of 112 Avenue that will promote child and youth physical activity pursued in a safe environment. We believe that children are the heart of any community, and that by encouraging child/youth activity along 112 Avenue (and elsewhere in the community), we will, in turn, help Highlands/Bellevue evolve into a more vibrant, destination community.

City Council is dedicated to revitalizing older neighbourhoods as part of a larger strategy to make Edmonton a world-class city. Policy documents such as The Way We Grow and The Way We Move embrace planning principles that include more livable, walkable, and vibrant neighbourhoods. We believe firmly that a redesign of 112 Avenue, such as the Road Diet proposal, dovetails nicely with Council's vision for a more livable Edmonton, as well as with the Edmonton Public School Board's vision for a safer and healthier community for our children.

The current condition of the 112 Avenue discourages anyone who wants to walk, bicycle, or take transit while encouraging driving. With small adjustments to the developed area of our city, we can give residents greater choice in a safe environment on how they transport themselves.

We hope we can count on your support when Council is asked to decide on what the future of 112 Avenue will look like.

Sincerely,



Board of Trustees
 Dave Colburn, Chair
 Sarah Hoffman, Vice-Chair
 Leslie Cleary
 Michael Janz
 Cheryl Johner
 Heather MacKenzie
 Catherine Ripley
 Ken Shipka
 Christopher Spencer

Superintendent of Schools
 Edgar Schmidt

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June 21, 2011

Ben Hartt, HBA, MPPA
 11230 - 63 Street
 Edmonton, AB T5W 4E6

Dear Mr. Hartt:

Thank you for your email on June 6, 2011 regarding the proposed Road Diet Initiative along 112 Avenue. The students attending Eastglen, Hardisty, Mount Royal and Virginia Park schools may be affected by these improvements.

We understand that the proposed Road Diet is intended to improve the walkability of the neighbourhood. Edmonton Public Schools supports initiatives brought forward by the community and/or the City of Edmonton in increasing safety for our students.

The District encourages kid-powered transportation modes for students. Kid-powered transportation supports a healthy lifestyle. The walking school bus and the school travel route planning programs are available to schools within the District. If you would like additional information regarding kid-powered transportation please visit SHAPE at www.shapeab.com, or for information on bicycle safety visit Safe Roads at http://www.saferoads.com/safety/safety_bicycle.html. If you are interested in creating a safe, walkable neighbourhood you can visit <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/default.asp>.

We look forward to working with the community and the City of Edmonton through this proposal. If you require a letter to the Mayor or Council members, please contact the ward trustee, Trustee David Colburn.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lorne E. Parker', with a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. Lorne E. Parker, EdD, CD
 Managing Director
 Planning and Student Transportation

LP:rl

*Bright futures
 begin here* 