

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: September 16, 2024

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WARD(S) INVOLVED: All

DATE OF REPORT: September 5, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-378

SUBJECT: Wayfinding and Branding City Wide Active Transportation Routes

RECOMMENDATION:

That staff proceed with the proposed wayfinding strategy in report DSD-2024-378, following further community engagement.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to present council with an initial plan for feedback for city-wide active transportation wayfinding strategy and associated routes, as identified in the strategic plan, and outlined in the Cycling and Trails Master Plan.
- The proposed city-wide active transportation routes connect major neighbourhoods with 8 different routes, using the existing and proposed trails and cycling network.
- The routes have a name that reflects the start and end of the route, such as Boardwalk – Downtown. The routes have a unique number and colour, giving them a distinct brand that is easy to identify and accessible for people regardless of age, ability, and language.
- When fully implemented, the total cost of wayfinding for all ~100 km of the routes is estimated to be \$1,200,000. This does not include infrastructure costs, which are already identified in the Cycling and Trails Master Plan.
- Community engagement is being conducted in September and October to gather feedback from residents, including students and newcomers, on the destinations, routes, and signs.
- This report supports **Building a Connected City Together: Focuses on neighbourhoods; housing and ensuring secure, affordable homes; getting around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter.**

BACKGROUND:

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

Developing city-wide active transportation routes is identified as an action in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. The aim of this action is to *“encourage increased use of active transportation that connects neighbourhoods through holistic trail and bike route enhancements that are easy to identify, navigate and use for all ages and abilities”*.

The desire for more wayfinding on trails has been a common theme in meetings with councillors and from the community. The City has been working on improving wayfinding with the development of the Wayfinding Guidelines for Parks & Trails in 2019, which is used as a working document. Additionally, in 2023 active transportation wayfinding guidance was created in partnership with other bodies of government in Waterloo Region.

The Cycling and Trails Master Plan, which was approved by Council in 2020, guides the development of safe and comfortable active transportation options for people of all ages and abilities over the next 20 years. The plan identifies a complete route network and includes direction to begin implementation of a wayfinding strategy to help residents more easily navigate the city by walking, rolling and cycling.

This project will bring together these existing wayfinding projects as part of the development of the city-wide active transportation routes. As the City of Kitchener nears completion of the Downtown Cycling Grid, city-wide active transportation routes will connect more neighbourhoods across Kitchener.

REPORT:

Wayfinding and branding of city-wide active transportation routes encourage increased use of active transportation by connecting neighbourhoods through trail and bike routes that are easy to identify, navigate, and use for all ages and abilities. The City of Kitchener has a rich network of trails that connect parts of the city, however these trails are not well known outside the neighbourhoods they are in. Bike routes around the city may be harder to identify compared to the major roadways that many residents are used to. Staff are proposing the development of branded routes that connect major neighbourhoods across the city using some of these lesser-known options, with the intention that they become as simple and memorable as the current transit and road network.

The City of Kitchener will continue to work on adding active transportation to major corridors as prioritized in the Cycling and Trails Master Plan. This project will complement the full network with branding and signage for lesser-known connections between major neighbourhoods. Additional wayfinding and safe links to major destinations within these neighbourhoods, creates a comprehensive network for active transportation in Kitchener.

This project will help people that are new to cycling or thinking about trying walking, rolling, or cycling for transportation, as well as those that are new to Kitchener, including students. These routes prioritize connections that are safe for all ages and abilities but may be less known as they do not follow the major roadways. Branding the routes with a name, number and colour will bring more awareness to the trails and bike routes that connect neighbourhoods throughout Kitchener. This method of wayfinding conveys directions that are easy for people to understand, regardless of age or ability. The signage will also help people on the route understand what major destinations they can access and how long it would take to travel there by active transportation – which is often shorter than people think.

Active transportation routes that connect neighbourhoods

The proposed network connects major neighbourhoods that are recognizable to a Region-wide audience. The 2020 Cycling and Trails Master plan identifies 4 different levels of destinations that should be included in active transportation wayfinding signage. The table below summarizes the criteria used to for each level from the Cycling and Trails Master Plan and best practices in wayfinding.

Level	Criteria for inclusion
Level 1 - Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These can be regional, municipal, town, or urban centres depending on the context.• They are characterized as major centres of activity that offer a range of attractions and services and provide primary geographic orientation points.• Recognizable to a Region-wide audience as an orientation point• Has a transit terminal with the same name• Has multiple Level 2 or 3 destinations with the same name (ex. community centre or shopping centre)• Included on signs up to 8 kms away
Level 2 – Major Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These trip attractors include transit stations, major tourist venues, regional parks, and post-secondary education institutions• Included on signs up to 4 kms away
Level 3 – Local Neighbourhood Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These represent centres of a community with neighbourhood importance.• They should be suitable reference points as they are well-known and unambiguous.• Destinations on these signs can include, but are not limited to: community centres and recreation facilities, parks and public libraries• Included on signs up to 2 kms away
Level 4 – Local Destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They may be useful to provide wayfinding signage on a route that does not connect Level 1–3 destinations• Schools may be considered, with a primary attention to walkability• Included on signs up to 2 kms away

In Kitchener, eight areas were identified as Level 1 destinations using these criteria:

- Downtown Kitchener
- Boardwalk
- Stanley Park
- Sunrise
- Fairview
- Sportsworld
- Huron
- Doon

Additional Level 1 destinations around Kitchener that were identified include:

- Cambridge
- Waterloo

- Uptown Waterloo
- Breslau
- Petersburg
- Mannheim

Easy to identify routes with colours and numbers

Eight routes are being proposed to connect the major neighbourhoods in Kitchener, each with a unique brand. The brand is made up of a number and a colour, and the name reflects the major origins and destinations to help residents identify them, similar to how a transit map functions. Using these three elements in the route branding makes it easier to incorporate the brand into the existing signs so they are clear and legible. All eight routes are shown in a map in Appendix A. Below is a list of the routes with their associated brand elements:

- Route 1 (Pink): Boardwalk – Downtown - Breslau
- Route 2 (Teal): Mannheim – Sunrise - Downtown
- Route 3 (Red): Sportsworld – Stanley Park – Waterloo
- Route 4 (Yellow): Downtown – Fairway - Doon
- Route 5 (Purple): Sunrise – Fairway – Stanley Park
- Route 6 (Green): Downtown – Stanley Park
- Route 7 (Blue): Doon – Boardwalk
- Route 8 (Orange): Huron – Sunrise

Branded recreational routes such as the Trans Canada Trail will also be an important part of a complete active transportation network, however it is not included in this work as it already has its own branding.

Easy to navigate with wayfinding signage

A wayfinding system helps to identify destinations that can be accessed on a given route or within a short walking or cycling distance. Wayfinding can also help raise awareness of the distance and time that is required to travel to destinations by walking or cycling.

The wayfinding signs being proposed incorporate the branding of the new routes into the signs that are already used around Kitchener for active transportation. The proposed signs will continue to show the name of major destinations, an arrow pointing the direction of travel, and the time it takes to travel there by walking or cycling. The new proposed signs also contain the name, colour, and number of the branded route to help people navigate farther distances. There are four types of signs used for active transportation wayfinding in the City of Kitchener. Appendix B shows examples of the four wayfinding signs that are used beside an example of the proposed signs incorporating the route colours and numbers. The existing signs will continue to be used, without branding, in locations that are not on one of the branded routes. Street name signs will also be used on trail-street crossings to help users orient themselves.

These routes with their branding will be included in online and printed maps produced by city and/or regional staff. Printed maps are very popular and one of the most requested items from the community. Using the same colour and number system on the maps and signs make it easier for people to follow the routes that they have planned, using the printed City of Kitchener maps.

Easy to use for all ages and abilities

The goal for the selected routes is to be comfortable for people of all ages and abilities to walk, roll and cycle. This will include sidewalks, multi-use trails, cycle tracks, protected bike lanes and neighbourhood greenways on quiet streets. The routes will also be all season, with the entire network being maintained year-round, including snow removal. For some routes this will require spot fixes such as curb-cuts or traffic calming elements. Other routes require major infrastructure upgrades and cannot be implemented until those investments are completed. The costs for these major infrastructure upgrades are already captured in the Cycling and Trails Master Plan.

The map in Appendix A shows the routes being proposed. The final routes may change slightly through the implementation phase due to costs and other construction work being done, as well as ongoing collaboration with the Region of Waterloo. While “all ages and abilities infrastructure” is the final goal, there may be small sections that cannot be upgraded in a feasible timeline. The signs include a symbol in the legend which would indicate these sections to users.

Implementing the city-wide active transportation routes

Route 1 from Boardwalk to Downtown is recommended to be implemented in 2025, with future routes being implemented in future years. This route was chosen because the upgrades required for this route, which includes a small number of spot fixes and some trail paving, can be completed within the existing budgets for Cycling Infrastructure and Trails are already being planned for next year. Appendix C shows the map of Route 1.

This project will not reprioritize the infrastructure projects outlined in the Cycling and Trails Master Plan. City staff will implement 1-2 wayfinding routes per year once a route has is fully (or mostly) considered safe for all ages and abilities. Therefore, full implementation of the wayfinding routes will correspond with the timeline of CTMP implementation, particularly the routes that require major infrastructure upgrades.

Developing signage plans for each of the routes will also take significant staff time. This work includes identifying the destinations and determining how to direct people, as well as identifying all intersections that require directional signage to help users remain on the route. Asset management and maintenance requirements for the wayfinding signage will also be considered by staff prior to implementation.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports **Building a Connected City Together: Focuses on neighbourhoods; housing and ensuring secure, affordable homes; getting around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter.**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – Implementation of the wayfinding signage is estimated to cost \$12,000 per km. The total cost of wayfinding for all 100 km of the routes would be \$1,200,000. This is currently funded by the Cycling Infrastructure account. At the current rate of funding, it will take approximately 16 years to fully implement the wayfinding system. Staff will seek

synergies with other capital projects to speed up implementation. This does not include infrastructure costs, which are also funded by the Cycling Infrastructure account, as well as the Trails account.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has a minor impact on the Operating Budget. The vinyl on the signs is expected to last for 8-10 years, at which point the vinyl may need to be replaced at a cost of \$200 per sign. The most common maintenance cost related to signage is monitoring and vandalism. Monitoring and inspection costs are not known at this time as this is not a service level currently provided. Staff will evaluate costs as the wayfinding project is implemented.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

CONSULT – Community engagement for this project is occurring September and October. Feedback on the Level 1 destinations, routes and signs will be gathered through a survey on the Engage Kitchener page. There will also be three in-person events across the city to help gather perspectives from residents of different geographical regions. There will be an emphasis on engagement with students and newcomers, as they will benefit the most from improved wayfinding. The project will also be presented to the Active Transportation and Trails Advisory Committee for feedback.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [INS-20-015 Cycling and Trails Master Plan, October 2020](#)

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ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A – Map of proposed city-wide route network
- Attachment B – Proposed Wayfinding Signage
- Attachment C – Route 1 Map