Staff Report

Report To: Operations Committee

Report From: Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works and Engineering

Meeting Date: February 19, 2026

Report Code: OP-26-004

Subject: 4th Avenue West Reconstruction Project (15th St to 20th St W) Preliminary Design Options

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-26-004 respecting the 4th Avenue West Reconstruction Project (15th St to 20th St W) Preliminary Design Options, the Operations Committee recommends that City Council provide general feedback to Staff relating to the discussed design concepts, including Council's priorities when allocating space within the corridor.

Highlights:

- The City is undertaking a complete infrastructure renewal on 4th Avenue West between 15th and 20th Streets. Currently, the design is underway.
- To ensure that the finished product meets the needs of the neighbourhood, Staff are requesting the input of residents, the Operations Committee and Council.
- Staff employed a novel public engagement approach by hosting a Public Information Centre (PIC) within the project area, which drew strong attendance compared with typical PICs.
- The considerations to be discussed include the provision or absence of on-street parking, active transportation facilities, and traffic calming.
- All of these options have advantages and disadvantages, including but not limited to the ability to preserve the mature tree canopy,

the walkability of the neighbourhood, and maintaining the historic character.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

Strategic Plan Priority: City Building – Enhancing urban development, planning and place-making processes to create places and spaces that contribute to complete communities for existing residents, future residents and tourists.

Previous Report/Authority:

This project has been approved as part of the Capital Program, project 25P.2.

The award of the Engineering Contract was approved on September 8th, 2026, by Council through Report CR-25-114 "*Award of RFP-25-004 - Engineering Services for 4th Ave W Reconstruction - 15th St W to 20th St W*"

Background:

The City has retained WSP Canada Inc. (WSP) to complete the detailed design for the reconstruction of the following roads:

- 4th Ave. West, from 15th St. West to 20th St. West (775 m)
- 16th St. West, from 4th Ave. West to 5th Ave. West (145 m)
- 17th St. West, from 3rd Ave. West to 5th Ave. West (250 m)

The project has been prioritized primarily to renew the existing infrastructure within this area. As a collector road, this corridor serves a large area, including a portion of Georgian Bluffs developed along the City Boundary. It is an alternative corridor to Eddie Sargent Parkway and was previously Brook Township's Main Street. It is a vital link between a large residential area and the City's current downtown, providing a major north-south pedestrian corridor.

Both the City's deep underground utilities (water, wastewater, and storm sewer) and the surface infrastructure (roads and sidewalks) are largely at or beyond the end of their service lives. When undertaking a complete infrastructure renewal, it is an opportune time to assess opportunities to add or enhance active transportation, safety, and accessibility features for road users, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

The proposed design aims to address localized flooding by strategically designing above-ground infrastructure (pavement, sidewalks, curbs and gutters, signage, etc.).

Lastly, as the corridor is known for its mature tree canopy, WSP has been tasked with minimizing the removal of healthy trees. While there may be some loss due to infrastructure conflicts or poor health, the objective will be to minimize tree damage through strategic design.

Analysis and Options:

Existing site conditions within the project limits were determined through a review of background information and pre-engineering investigations, including topographic surveys and site reconnaissance.

Road Classification = Collector

Speed Limits:

- Ambient speed limit 50 km/h
- School Zone (16th St. West to 19th St. West) 30km/h School Days from 8 am to 5 pm

The **lane widths** are not symmetrical.

- Average Lane Width Northbound = 3.5 m
- Average Lane Width Southbound = 5.0 m (on-street parking)

No designated **bicycle lanes** / active transportation routes

1.5m wide **sidewalks** (majority) on both sides of the road

Design Challenges

The presence of hydroelectric and streetlight poles, fire hydrants, telecommunications vaults and pedestals, mature trees, and private structures (e.g., retaining walls, gardens, fences, buildings) adjacent to both sides of the road complicates the introduction of a multi-use path and the relocation of sidewalks.

Coordination and consultation with utilities will be required to ensure that required utility relocations are completed with minimal impact; preferred implementation to occur before any conflicting municipal infrastructure work.

Traffic accommodation, construction methods, and phasing are designed to ensure that resident access is maintained and to minimize impacts on the travelling public.

In some locations, the grade changes significantly; to avoid retaining walls, tree removal and grading on private property may be required to address these concerns.

Balancing municipal responsibility for managing overland flow and floodways within the road allowance with efforts to mitigate private on-site ponding areas within a fiscally responsible strategy.

The County's Active Transportation Plan and the City's Official Plan reflect an active transportation route along Eddie Sargent Parkway. Staff have requested that the consultant assess this corridor as a potential substitute for that active transportation route, given its complementary uses (school, residential area) and a dual-prong approach that uses the space for traffic calming while providing a more comfortable route for active transportation participants (i.e., not on a minor highway).

Potential Cross-Section Options:

- **Option 1**: Reconstruction to Existing Road Cross Section and Right-of-Way Layout
- **Option 2**: Reconstruction using City of Owen Sound Typical Cross Section for a Collector Road (3.5m Lane Width, No Parking, add two 1.5m wide Bicycle Lanes)
- **Option 3**: Reconstruction using 3.5m Lane Width, No Parking or Bicycle Lanes, add a New Multi-Use Path
- **Option 4**: Reconstruction using 4.25m Lane Width, No Parking or Bicycle Lanes, add a New Multi-Use Path

Pros-and-Cons

Option 1

<u>Option 1 Advantages:</u>

- Sidewalks and curb ramps would be reconstructed to City and AODA standards.
- Less disturbance to existing trees, poles, etc., compared to other options.

- Lower reconstruction cost and shorter reconstruction schedule compared to other options.

Option 1 Disadvantages:

- Does not address safety and efficiency concerns for bicycle use.
- Does not address road parking concerns.
- Does not address speeding; traffic speed can be expected to increase with wide pavement (unless on-street parking is substantially occupied) and a smooth surface.
- Does not fully address sidewalk relocation to remove the curb face sidewalk (winter operations and safety considerations).

Option 2

Reconstruction according to the City of Owen Sound Typical Collector Road Cross Section (3.5m Travelled Lanes, No Parking, adding Bicycle Lanes)

Option 2 Advantages:

- Reduction in travel lane width and adjusted centre line of road supports traffic calming and safety.
- Delineated bicycle lanes provide added safety and efficiency.
- No on-street parking promotes improved traffic flow (reduced congestion), enhances safety through fewer obstructions (including road snow plowing), provides better visibility, aesthetics (cleaner appearance), and increases safety at intersections and crosswalks.
- Eliminates the potential for people to cross the road between parked vehicles.
- Potentially lower reconstruction cost and shorter reconstruction schedule compared to Options 3 and 4.

Option 2 Disadvantages:

- Lack of physical barrier between bicycle lanes and potential for on-road parking still. If a barrier were added, it would increase operational complexity and costs. Bicycle lanes may need to be closed in winter if snow removal cannot be accomplished efficiently.
- Transition of bicycle lanes to adjacent streets may be challenging.
- Higher disturbance to existing trees, poles, etc., compared to Option 1.
- Increased impervious area (road width) resulting in additional storm water runoff and potential management upgrades required.

- Higher reconstruction cost and longer reconstruction schedule compared to Option 1.
- In winter, the Traffic calming effect may be limited as bicycle lane line painting will often be covered with snow.

Option 3

Reconstruction using 3.5m travelled road Lane Width, No Parking or Bicycle Lanes, adding a New Multi-Use Path.

Option 3 Advantages:

- Reduction in travel lane width and adjusted centre line of road supports traffic calming, pedestrian safety, and reductions in on-road parking.
- The addition of a multi-use path enables separation of active transportation from vehicular traffic. The path provides a shared travel surface for people on foot and on wheels, efficiently using land, and addressing safety concerns.
- Multi-use path presents comparable snow clearing effort to an equivalent length of sidewalk, when providing a winter service level of 1.5m of maintained width. Path can be maintained year-round.
- No on-street parking promotes improved traffic flow (reduced congestion), enhances safety through fewer obstructions (including road snow plowing), provides better visibility, aesthetics (cleaner appearance), and increases safety at intersections and crosswalks
- Lower reconstruction cost and shorter reconstruction schedule compared to Option 4.

Option 3 Disadvantages:

- Higher likelihood of conflicts with existing trees, poles, etc., compared to Options 1 and 2.
- Increased potential conflicts with existing private property infrastructure located within the City's right-of-way, particularly where the homes are located immediately adjacent to the property line.
- To achieve a path with a minimal sideslope, grading and tie-in to the existing elevations along the property line may be difficult without retaining walls or grading onto private property, especially on the West side.

- Increased impervious area (multi-use path) resulting in additional stormwater runoff and potential management upgrades.
- People on motorized vehicles could abuse the multi-use path.
- Higher reconstruction cost compared to Option 1, and potentially higher construction cost compared to Option 2.
- Longer reconstruction schedule compared to Options 1 and 2.

Option 4

Option 4 is essentially Option 3, but with wider travelled road lanes.

Reconstruction using 4.25m Lane Width, No Parking or Bicycle Lanes, with New Multi-Use Path.

Option 4 Advantages:

- Relocating the centreline to create a symmetrical road platform improves road geometry.
- The multi-use path separates active transportation from vehicular travel, increasing comfort, safety and accessibility.
- No on-street parking promotes improved traffic flow (reduced congestion), enhances safety by reducing obstructions (including more efficient snow plowing), improves visibility and aesthetics (a cleaner appearance), increases safety at intersections and crosswalks, and eliminates the potential for pedestrians to cross the road between parked vehicles.

Option 4 Disadvantages:

- Travel lanes are wider than in Option 3, so traffic calming due to visual cues is minimal.
- Highest conflict with existing trees, resulting in the most tree removal and replanting cost.
- Increased potential conflicts with existing private structures located within the City's right-of-way, as the new infrastructure will consume all available space within the road allowance.
- More challenging grading and tie-in to properties, specifically on the West side, compared to Option 3. To avoid retaining walls, grading onto private property is likely required.
- Increased impervious area (multi-use path) resulting in additional storm water runoff and potential management upgrades.

- People using motorized vehicles could abuse the multi-use path, requiring increased enforcement.
- Higher reconstruction cost compared to Options 1 and 3.
- Longest reconstruction schedule of all four of the presented options.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

Options 1, 3 and 4 represent a more-or-less equal operational cost for long-term maintenance, assuming that the multi-use path options are maintained to the City's current accepted standard of 1.5m of maintained width during Winter Control.

Due to the addition of Bicycle Lanes, Option 2 changes the long-term operational cost, depending on how the City ultimately chooses to maintain bicycle infrastructure in winter. It is common in many urban jurisdictions now for bicycle lanes to be winter-maintained; however, that is not the City's current level of service. There may also be additional costs if a physical barrier between the bike lane and the vehicular lane is included, due to more difficult access to the bike lane, potential multiple snow removals, and/or seasonal removal and reinstallation of the barriers/delineators.

The end-of-life/disposal costs for each option would be proportional to the initial construction cost.

Human Resources

As this is an existing roadway, maintenance activities are already included in the operational programs of both Public Works and the Parks and Open Spaces divisions. Examples of these activities include tree trimming/removal, sweeping, and winter snow removal.

Specifically for street trees, once the tree work is completed as part of this project, little maintenance will be required for very mature trees for several years, as any potentially weak limbs or diseased trees will be removed before construction. Removed trees will be replaced with tree species well-suited to the boulevard environment. Lastly, wherever possible, replacement trees will be offered for planting on private property, restoring the tree canopy without increasing the City's liability or long-term operational costs.

The construction and contract administration of this project can be managed with existing staff resources, with support from the consultant and the future contractor to be procured through a competitive bidding process.

Time and Scheduling

Tasks Completed:

- Topographic Survey and Site Reconnaissance, including Tree Inventory
- Geotechnical Investigation and Soil Analysis
- Private Utility Locates Requested and Received
- Existing Conditions Plans
- Alternative Cross-Section Drawings

Proposed Project Timeline:

Due to its size and complexity, a pre-qualification bid has been added to the procurement process.

- Public Information Center #1: February 3rd, 2026
- Discussion at Operations Committee: February 19th, 2026
- Preparation of 60% Design: February to March 2026
- Contractor Prequalification and Award: March to April 2026
- Public Information Center #2 –60% Design: March 19, 2026 (tentative)
- Complete 100% Design and Tender Award: April to June 2026
- Construction Phase 1: July/August to November 2026

Technology and Infrastructure

As discussed, depending on the solutions selected for construction, changes may be needed to the City's operations, service levels, and equipment. However, even if the proposed option could trigger a higher level of service or require specialized equipment, it could be possible to establish a reduced level of service in the short to medium term, i.e., until such infrastructure becomes more common within the City.

An example of this would be bicycle lanes. Currently, bicycle lanes receive the same treatment as the overall road (they are just plowed as part of the road). Although the Minimum Maintenance Standards require a slightly less rigorous standard for bike lanes within a particular road classification, as the bicycle lane is contiguous and undivided from the vehicular lanes, it is all

plowed at the same time. The bicycle lanes could initially be undivided, in the typical configuration, with no additional maintenance burden. In the future, a barrier could be added, at which time a decision must be made whether to remove the barrier in winter or to procure suitable equipment and develop a procedure for clearing the snow to meet the Minimum Maintenance Standards. A final option is to close the bicycle lanes seasonally; however, this is counterproductive to enabling citizens to use active transportation year-round.

There is more flexibility with the multi-use path. Currently, Council has recognized a level of service for these paths that equates to one pass with the sidewalk plow. This reduces the winter-maintained width from 3m to 1.5m. This was determined to be adequate based on usage demand (paths are typically used slightly less in winter than in other months), and it also provides some unmaintained width for those who wish to pull a toboggan, cross-country ski, or snowshoe.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

The recommendation supports the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

While the construction of the proposed infrastructure will generate carbon emissions, a smoother driving surface and reduced speeds will reduce fuel consumption, and the enhancement of active transportation within the corridor will encourage greener modes of transportation and active outdoor living.

Tree preservation and replanting will maintain or enhance the urban canopy, providing shade and relief from heat and sun, which in turn may reduce dependence on air conditioning use in the area.

Storm sewers and other infrastructure systems will be sized appropriately to account for the effects of climate change (i.e. less frequent, more intense storms).

Communication and Engagement:

This project places strong emphasis on communication, given the area's cultural and historical significance. It was made clear during the procurement

process and at the startup meeting that community engagement would be a key component of the project.

The consultant on this project is WSP of Owen Sound, which has assigned two of its most senior staff members. On the City side, a project team approach has been implemented to ensure the smooth delivery of design, contract administration, and construction.

Staff employed an innovative approach to public engagement on this project. Instead of having a Public Information Centre (PIC) at City Hall before a regular Operations Committee Meeting, a dedicated date and time were set to hold a PIC within the project area, with the aim that it would attract more interest and be more convenient for the affected residents, thereby ensuring as much public input as possible. The PIC was held at First United Church (4th Ave W at 21st St W) on February 3rd, 2026, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The PIC was well attended, with most attendees walking to the venue despite the wintry weather.

A second PIC is planned for March, and input is being solicited from the Operations Committee and Council.

The timing of the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee may not be ideal for gathering input early in the project; however, the design will be based on the most current Accessibility Standards. The earliest possible Accessibility Committee Meeting is Thursday, April 2nd, at 2 p.m., which will be the target for this project.

The Communications team is supporting the project through media releases, assistance with publications such as newsletters and notices, and the use of the City's "Our City" public engagement platform.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

Project Team: Mason Bellamy, Ashley McNeil, Sofin Lalani

Project Consultant: WSP

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 - Project Limits Map
2. Attachment 2 - PIC Tableaux by WSP

Submitted by:

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Submission approved by:
Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works and Engineering at lwiddifield@owensound.ca.