Staff Report

Report To: Operations Committee

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

Meeting Date: April 23, 2026

Report Code: OP-26-021

Subject: 4th Avenue West Reconstruction (15th St to 20th St) Request for Direction

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-26-012 respecting the preliminary design options for the 4th Avenue West reconstruction (15th St to 20th St), the Operations Committee recommends that City Council approve Option 3, integrating a multi-use path, as the best combination of value for investment due to its positive impact on active transportation, safety and ease of maintenance.

Highlights:

- The City is undertaking a complete infrastructure renewal on 4th Avenue West between 15th and 20th Streets.
- A prequalification phase is underway to ensure bidders at the tendering stage have the resources and expertise to successfully deliver the project.
- Staff hosted a Public Information Centre (PIC) within the project area to gather public feedback, which drew strong attendance compared to typical PICs. A second PIC was held before the March Operations Committee meeting.
- Surface design options primarily consist of on-street parking, active transportation facilities, and traffic calming; in some cases, these options are mutually exclusive.

- The main sentiment expressed by respondents at the PICs and through the project website is that there is a need and desire for increased safety. Opinion is split on how that is achieved, however.
- Most of the project costs are attributed to the underground utility replacement. Replacement of the underground utilities will result in surface disruption and removals regardless of the option selected.
- Council is seeking a recommendation from the Operations Committee in support of an option for approval.
- Staff have proposed the option (Option 3, multi-use path) that best meets the community's needs for a comparable cost.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

Strategic Plan Priority:

- A City that Moves – Facilitating sustainable transportation options and creating community connectivity.
- 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.
- Green and Resilient City - Strengthening the City's environmental, social, and economic ability to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis. Also, leveraging the city's natural resources and infrastructure to support healthy lifestyles.

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*".

The first of two Public Information Centres was held within the project neighbourhood on February 3rd, 2026. The majority of attendees walked to the venue, despite the heavy snowfall.

Two presentations have been made for the Operations Committee: at the preliminary stage, on February 19th, 2026, and to unveil the recommended alternative, on March 19th.

- Report OP-26-004 from the Director of Public Works and Engineering Re: 4th Ave. West Reconstruction (15th St to 20th St) Preliminary Design Options - Committee - Operations - February 19, 2026
- Committee - Operations - March 19, 2026 (Presentation by WSP on recommended alternative)
- WSP Power Point presentation - 4th Avenue West project recommended alternative

At the April 13th Council meeting, Council requested that the matter be referred back to the Operations Committee for recommendation of a preferred option for Council's approval.

Background:

The City has been working with WSP Canada Inc. (WSP) to design a complete infrastructure replacement on the following road segments:

- 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, primarily residential area with mixed, complementary uses, including several parks, schools, daycares, and home-based commercial. It is an alternative corridor to Eddie Sargent Parkway and was previously Brooke Township's Main Street. 4th Avenue West is also a vital link between this large residential area and the City's current downtown, and provides a major north-south pedestrian corridor.

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 appropriate time to assess opportunities to add or enhance active transportation, safety, and accessibility features for road users, bicyclists, and pedestrians, as these upgrades can be made at a comparable replacement cost to a conventional design.

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

The project is currently at 60% design and is undergoing a pre-qualification bid process. Pre-qualification provides a qualitative screening component to the construction procurement; tendering is a strictly quantitative competition and is expected to be awarded to the lowest bidder. The scope and scale of the project deemed it necessary to ensure that any bidders have the expertise and resources to successfully deliver the project, regardless of price. Staff have had difficulties in the past with contractors who were ill-equipped in some way to complete projects on time, which in the long run results in cost overruns, as inspection and administrative fees are prolonged and due to additional redesigns to mitigate constructability issues.

Ensuring quality submissions came with a trade-off: accommodating the pre-qualification step in the procurement process deferred the earliest construction date. As a result, the portion of construction to be undertaken in 2026 has been reduced to an estimated 1/3, with the remaining 2/3 in 2027. Some touch-up work may occur in 2028.

In response to Council's request to reevaluate the final design option, the submission deadline for the pre-qualification opportunity has been extended. With an already ambitious schedule, if a redesign is required, it is unlikely that enough reliable construction season will remain to justify mobilization to the site in 2026.

Analysis and Options:

The various alternatives have previously been discussed in detail and will not be repeated herein; please refer to Attachment 1 for a copy of the Staff Report that was submitted to the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. Unfortunately, the project's presentation did not proceed on the scheduled date as the committee failed to achieve a quorum. A presentation was made on the rescheduled date of April 17th; the results of which will be discussed later in this report.

Potential Cross-Section Options

The potential design configurations assessed for the reconstruction project included:

- **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

Design References

In determining the recommended option, Staff and the Consultant referenced the following:

- Public input from the PICs
- Feedback submitted via the 'Our City' Project website
- Input received from the Operations Committee Members and Council
- Owen Sound Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Policy
- Owen Sound Official Plan
- Owen Sound Transportation Master Plan
- Owen Sound Strategic Plan Vision 2050
- Owen Sound Strategic Plan Refresh
- Owen Sound Development Standards
- Owen Sound Trails Master Plan
- Owen Sound Recreation, Parks and Facilities Master Plan
- Ontario Minimum Maintenance Standards
- County of Grey Active Transportation Plan
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- 'The Universal Design Project'
- Ontario Provincial Standard Specifications and Drawings
- Ontario Traffic Manuals
- Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Geometric Design Guidelines and Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices
- TAC and Institute of Transportation Engineers Canadian Guide to Neighbourhood Traffic Calming

In addition, Staff are directly involved with the following TAC Councils:

- Mobility Council - Active Transportation Integrated Committee;

- Safety, Design & Operations Council - Small Municipalities Integrated Committee;
- Infrastructure & Asset Management Council - Maintenance & Operations Committee;

Staff have incorporated the applicable principles and best practices into the proposed design.

Design Consideration

The main priorities to be balanced in this project were:

- Accessibility and universal design
- On-street parking
- Active transportation connectivity
- Traffic speed concerns
- Operations and Minimum Maintenance Standards
- Cost
- Tree preservation

Several of the above parameters had approximately equivalent weighting across the first three options, so in addition to the above, **Safety** was added as the final factor to be considered when recommending a final design concept. Safety and traffic speed mitigation influence each other, but they are not synonymous.

Accessibility and Universal Design

The project's recommended alternative, **Option 3**, was presented at the Grey County Joint Accessibility Committee on April 17th. No actionable comments were received from the Committee.

All of the potential options will be made as accessible as possible. When reconstructing surface infrastructure, it must be brought into compliance with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements. In Ontario, this is relatively straightforward; the Ontario Provincial Standard Drawings (OPSDs) conform to AODA-compliant principles, so using standard design details and specifications is satisfactory. Modifications or deviations are allowed under certain conditions, such as if there is insufficient space or immovable conflicts. The difference between the options, therefore, is whether the design goes one step further – instead of just ensuring it doesn't pose a barrier in specific ways, it actively invites all segments of the population to safely and confidently use and enjoy the infrastructure.

A Design for All Ages

Universal design, coined by an architect named Ronald Mace, emphasizes creating spaces, products, and systems that are **accessible and usable by everyone**, regardless of age, ability, or status in life, without requiring retrofits or special accommodations. It goes beyond accessibility compliance, aiming to make designs intuitive, flexible, and simple, minimizing physical effort and accommodating diverse user needs. Examples include curb cuts, lever door handles, and adjustable digital interfaces that benefit both people with disabilities and the general population.

Section 5.9.1 of the *City's Development Design Guidelines* discusses design principles for creating universally accessible facilities. In addition to creating infrastructure that does not present a barrier for people with disabilities, it is important to keep the full range of community members in mind when designing a public space. This includes older adults, right down to toddlers, and children just learning to walk or ride, right up to experienced athletes. The following principles were excerpted from the Design Guidelines. Although in that context, the guidelines pertain more to buildings than public infrastructure, the intent has been maintained in the recommended design as a component of the built environment in general.

1. Equitable Use – The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

   a. Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not;
   b. Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users;
   c. Provisions for privacy, security and safety should be equally available to all users; and
   d. Make the design appealing to all users.

2. Flexibility in Use – The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

   a. Provide choice in methods of use;
   b. Accommodate right or left-handed access and use;
   c. Facilitate the user's accuracy and precision;
   d. Provide adaptability to the user's pace.

3. Simple and Intuitive Use – Use of the facility is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.

a. Eliminate unnecessary complexity;
b. Be consistent with user's expectations and intuition;
c. Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills;
d. Arrange information consistent with its importance;
e. Provide effective prompting and feedback during and after task completion.

4. Perceptible Information – The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

a. Use different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information;
b. Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings;
c. Maximize legibility of essential information;
d. Differentiate elements in ways that can be described (i.e. make it easy to give instructions or directions);
e. Provide compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations.

5. Tolerance for Error – The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

a. Arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements, most accessible; hazardous elements eliminated, isolated or shielded;
b. Provide warnings of hazards and errors;
c. Provide fail-safe features;
d. Discourage unconscious action in tasks that require vigilance."

The recommended alternative meets universal design criteria in the following ways:

- The separated path on the boulevard maximizes the distance between motorized traffic and pedestrian/non-motorized users. The

barrier curb adds additional safety by keeping vehicles on the road away from people.

- The separation provides a buffer for error, for example, if a cyclist were to veer off the path or fall over, they won't immediately be in the path of traffic. This is also helpful for families with children and those with pets.
- Paths are easy to understand and use, which provides familiarity, consistency, and contrast between the edge of the hard surface and sod, and at the interface points with road crossings, which will be designed in the standard AODA-compliant configuration as much as possible. Tactile plates will be employed to signal to visually impaired people that a change in surface is occurring.
- To further improve accessibility, the addition of benches sporadically sited along the path will allow people with limited walking range, or anyone needing a rest, to stop and take a break. They will be set back an appropriate distance so that someone sitting on the bench does not obstruct the path.

Feedback from school representatives indicated a strong need for safer routes for students who walk to the school or the daycare (including before and after-school care) housed there. They were highly in favour of pedestrian corridor improvements, as well as for the protected crossing they have been advocating for several years. The crossing was on the capital program as a standalone project for 2024, but was subsequently incorporated into this project.

Community engagement has clearly reflected the desire for creating travel paths that support motorists, pedestrians and cyclists coexisting in harmony. A multi-use path is the best way to achieve both the comfort and accessibility objectives that the residents desire.

A Word on Salvaging

The condition of the existing sidewalk on the east side has been cited as a rationale for not removing it. This should not be considered an advantage of Option 1, as the sidewalk would need to be replaced even under the status quo option for several reasons.

1. The primary need to replace all of the sidewalk is not the replacement of the pedestrian corridor at all; it is due to the number of service line cuts that require excavation through the sidewalk. As shown in Attachment 2, service lines vary in location

for each lot, but on average, there would be sidewalk excavation approximately every 20 feet (6 metres). The resulting short segments of new sidewalk would not be suitable for machine slip-forming; they would require hand-built formwork, hand pouring and finishing. This means that preserving the remaining sidewalk would be labour-intensive, slow progress, and could even be more expensive than complete replacement due to the resulting amount of handwork.

2. Moreover, without removing all of the sidewalk, it will not be possible to reprofile the boulevards (roadsides) to optimize drainage. This may result in ongoing ponding issues, ice formation across the sidewalk, and poor integration with the adjacent private properties.

While the sidewalk within the Phase 1 project limits (15th to 20th Streets) is approximately 1.5 metres throughout, this is considered a minimum width by today's standards. With the presence of the school, 1.8m width is arguably a more appropriate width. North of 20th Street, the sidewalk width narrows to 1.2m, so it must be replaced.

A final comment on sidewalk width: as the proposed multi-use path is 2.7m in width through the most constrained segments of the project, it represents a mere 0.9m additional width over the recommended sidewalk width, and accommodates bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Technically, bicycles are considered vehicles and should not be on a sidewalk, although it is common practice for young children to ride on the sidewalk, particularly along busy roads. The proposed configuration is the best of both worlds, by allowing more vulnerable road users to stay away from vehicular traffic in a legal way, coexisting with pedestrians within the same corridor.

Active Transportation Connectivity

The County's *Active Transportation Plan* and the City's *Official Plan* reflect an active transportation route along Eddie Sargent Parkway. The routes in these high-level planning documents are open to interpretation and adjustment as projects arise, with the expectation that the general intent and purpose be preserved in the finished product. The upper-tier roads would have served as the default corridors for regional-level active transportation routes; however, that need not be the case. Staff requested that the consultant assess 4th Avenue West as a potential substitute for the active transportation route, given its complementary land uses (institutional and residential) and that

two objectives could be achieved at once by implementing traffic calming, specifically constricting road width, by converting existing pavement to active transportation use.

To address comments relating to the network "going nowhere" or "not connecting to anything", the City's overarching statutory documents demonstrate that there is planned connectivity for an active transportation corridor along 4th Avenue West between 15th Street and 20th Street.

Transportation Master Plan Conformance

In the City's *Transportation Master Plan*, Attachment 3, Exhibit 4.8 (Walking Network) and 4.9 (Cycling Network), there are east-west links connecting 4th Avenue West to the trail through Kelso Beach at Nawash Park (referred to in short as Kelso Beach) via 19th Street West. Similarly, the *Recreation, Parks and Facilities Master Plan* recognizes these potential links, as shown in Attachment 4.

Staff have interpreted 4th Avenue West as having a better alignment between 15th Street and Kelso Beach than Eddie Sargent Parkway, as adding bicycle lanes to a major arterial road/urban highway would ideally require a widening or dedication of a lane for the cyclists' protection. For pedestrians, Eddie Sargent is not suitable at all, and all traffic is routed via 14th Street West up 2nd Avenue West to the pedestrian bridge north of the West Side Boat Launch, then through Kelso Beach at Nawash Park.

A more direct link to the rail trail, marina and Kelso Beach is provided by a multi-use path on 4th Avenue West. Connections to the east are at 19th Street (existing) and, in the future, 23rd Street West, where a potential crossing could be made in the vicinity of Mary Miller Park. This would provide excellent connectivity between St. Julien Park, throughout the neighbourhood, to the rail trail, Kelso Beach, and ultimately further afield, such as Grey Road 1 north of the City boundary (a popular bicycle route) or into the Downtown Core/River District.

This improved mobility would also reduce some of the pressure for parking in the residential area near the park for highly attended events such as Canada Day celebrations and Summerfolk, as it would be convenient to walk or ride to the park from a more widely dispersed area.

Owen Sound Recreational Trail Master Plan

The City's *Trails Master Plan* also has a suite of stated priorities that were used as guidance in recommending a solution for this project.

"5.1 PRIORITIES

The implementation of this Plan is intended to positively impact **citizen health, our environment, accessibility, tourism, our sense of community pride, and the creation of an overall sense of place**. The RTMP (Recreational Trail Master Plan) map now forms a schedule in the City's updated Official Plan.

Main priorities establishing the goals in this plan are as follows in Section 5.1:

5.1.1 **Connectivity, accessibility**, a high standard of design, and **functionality** should be a consideration in all trail development and maintenance.

5.1.2 New and existing trails should cater to people of **all abilities, strengths, and adventure levels equally,** where possible.

5.1.7 **Connectivity between new and existing trails should be established and maintained** within the Trails Network and with the City's Transportation system to provide links across the municipality."

The proposed recommended design meets all of the above criteria in the following ways:

- There is demonstrated connectivity to pedestrian generators (residential area) and attractors (parks, school, marina, downtown), and between destinations provided in part by the proposed corridor.
- The proposed multi-use path would be accessible and usable by all ages, abilities and skill levels, as it will be wide enough for wheelchairs, double strollers and mobility scooters to pass, and being asphalt will be a smoother, easier ride for people on wheels of any kind. Cues for people with hearing or visual impairments will be provided, and the separation between the active transportation corridor and the road will provide an additional measure of safety.
- A multi-use path is easier to maintain year-round and has a lower maintenance standard burden than on-road bicycle lanes.

- A well-designed multi-use path can have additional benefits of encouraging a sense of place and vibrancy in the neighbourhood, encouraging outdoor physical activity, and stimulating tourism.

Parking

While parking concerns were voiced by several people during the public outreach process, short-duration parking concerns like those associated with Summerfolk, do not, in Staff's professional opinion, override the benefit of mitigating excessive traffic speeds in the neighbourhood year-round.

During the public engagement phase, Staff collected input from residents and property owners within the project area (and potentially outside, as those submitting questions on the Our City platform are not required to self-identify). Staff observed the area multiple times during the pre-design stage, referenced Google Street View back to 2009 and the City's aerial photography for 2020 and 2015. Very few vehicles were observed parking on the road. In Google Street View, aside from vehicles related to construction projects, vehicles on the road were parked there out of convenience rather than need, as there were empty driveways adjacent to the parked vehicles. There were three (3) in 2024, one (1) in 2023, one (1) in 2009 and zero (0) in 2015. No vehicles were parked on the road in the 2020 aerial photography, but one group of renovation-related parking appeared in 2015.

<u>Summerfolk</u>

In contrast, Summerfolk is an annual 3-day festival. It attracts spectators from outside of Grey-Bruce, but many attendees and volunteers are local. The Summerfolk organizers and City Staff work together to secure parking in underused parking lots throughout the event.

As shown in Attachment 4, the walking distance from Kelso Beach to the Inner Harbour Park (Train Station) Lot is equivalent to Phase 1 of the project.

Summerfolk also arranges public parking at the Family Health Team, Legion, and Timothy Christian School for the event, and Public Works continues to close a lane on Eddie Sargent Parkway for the festival to use it for parking. With the other options available, Staff recommend that parking on 4th Avenue West within the project area is not critical to the event's success.

Residential Parking Concerns

Staff understood that some residents expressed trepidation on the loss of parking for contractors, service deliveries, or when clearing snow from their driveways. Staff offer that short-duration uses such as these may still be permissible, as no parking is less restrictive than no stopping. If the vehicle remains attended, for example, when snow clearing or to briefly deliver a package, that is different from parking the vehicle, turning the engine off and going inside.

In Ontario, **"No Parking"** allows temporary stopping to quickly load/unload passengers or goods, provided the driver remains with the vehicle. Leaving your vehicle unattended or waiting/lingering, even if sitting inside, is prohibited. Enforcement usually allows time for the driver to move the car before issuing a ticket.

"No Stopping" prohibits stopping completely, even for a moment to pick up or drop off passengers. No Stopping zones are highly restrictive to maintain traffic flow, while No Parking ensures traffic isn't blocked by long-term parking.

The appropriate restrictions would be determined in consultation with By-Law Enforcement before the end of construction, when the installation of signage occurs.

When residents need additional parking for large parties or gatherings, the parking available on the side streets is proposed to be enhanced where possible. There is also additional parking within the area at the parks (Harrison Field, Kelso Beach, St. Julien Park). For context, the blocks through this project area are very short, at approximately 135m. Therefore, at no point is anyone more than about 225 feet from a side street. It may just require a bit more planning for people to carpool or walk from a side street or public parking area. Attachment 4 shows the relative distance between the blocks within the project area and potential parking areas.

As noted above, for people dropping off or picking up individuals with mobility limitations, the lack of a parking lane does not automatically prohibit pulling over to help them load/unload.

Traffic Speed

Staff followed a more robust public engagement process than what is strictly required for this type of project. It was considered crucial to balance the residents' desire to influence the project and meet the stated objectives without negatively affecting the adjoining roadway system.

Based on the comments received and Staff's previous involvement in concerns regarding student safety, traffic conflicts, and excessive speeding, there was sufficient justification to consider traffic calming as part of the project. Despite the deplorable condition of the pavement within the project area, traffic monitoring has revealed there is a mild speeding problem in the corridor, as the 85th percentile speed was 46 km/h. While this is still less than 50, during school hours, the speed limit drops to 40km/h. This indicated that once the road was resurfaced to a nice, smooth finish, speeding was likely to increase exponentially, unless something was done to prevent it.

Traffic speed is determined by driver psychology. For better or worse, all drivers will default to a speed they feel is appropriate for a given road. Wide open, smooth roads are more conducive to excessive speed, as there are few perceived obstacles, so the driver has a sense of safety.

Explained in a more technical way, the design aspects of the roadway influence a motorist's perception of the appropriate driving speed. A contributing factor to speeding is the relationship between the optical width of the road and the height of vertical elements within or adjacent to the road allowance, such as trees, bollards, and buildings. Research indicates that vehicle speeds are slower in areas where vertical elements are greater than the perceived width of the road, so the installation of vertical elements, either separately or in conjunction with other traffic calming measures, will increase their overall effectiveness.

In addition to adding vertical elements, constricting the width of the road surface assists in altering this height-to-width ratio. For this reason, Staff have suggested for analysis the notion of **reducing the excess pavement width to a standard 2-lane section, and taking advantage of the additional real estate for the active transportation corridor**.

In addition to the calming effects of vertical elements within the road allowance, the installation of trees and other street furniture also improves aesthetics, improves liveability and the environment, makes the measures

more evident, and provides an additional buffer between pedestrians and vehicles.

In some areas, the visual cues can be delivered by line painting on the pavement, visually constricting the road without physically changing the cross-section. Bicycle lanes can fill this need in some cases, or coloured pavement longitudinally or at intersections can indicate a need for awareness. However, as a Winter City, the pavement markings would be obscured/not visible for much of the year. As such, this option has not been moved forward in the recommended alternative.

Operations and Maintenance

As discussed in more detail in previous reports, bicycle lanes pose a problem operationally, especially in the winter. According to the Minimum Maintenance Standards, a slightly less rigorous standard for bike lanes applies compared to its related road classification. As the bicycle lane is contiguous and undivided from the vehicular lanes, it is all plowed at the same time; however, inevitably, the bike lane ends up being the snow storage lane. Once the patrol circulates and notices that the bank needs to be pushed back, it must be identified as out of service until returned to a good state of repair (i.e. the snow and ice removed to restore an acceptable condition). Alternatively, the bicycle lanes could be seasonally closed, but this is counterproductive to encouraging citizens to use active transportation year-round.

In this respect, the multi-use path offers more flexibility. Currently, City 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. These corridors would be maintained independently by sidewalk plows, just like a normal sidewalk, and would be subject to the same standards and level of service.

It should also be noted that the wider surface will result in less sod repair, long term; this is an extremely labour-intensive task at the change of seasons when neither Parks nor Public Works has extra staff to dedicate to the work to complete it faster.

Cost

The majority of the project's expected cost is due to the underground utility replacements. In addition to the road reconstruction, which has received all the attention thus far, there are millions of dollars' worth of sewer and water replacements. The storm system is being resized according to recommendations of the Stormwater Management Master Plan, and the sanitary sewer and watermains are to be replaced to current standards.

As such, the cost does not differ significantly among the alternatives. The cost difference between a concrete sidewalk and an asphalt path, or between a wider road platform and a path, is unremarkable. If any options are more costly, it would be Option 1 (status quo) and Option 4, due to the slightly larger area of road asphalt being placed.

Long-term operational cost, as previously discussed, is higher for Option 2 due to the bicycle lanes, and Option 1, as sod damage is more likely with a narrower corridor to navigate.

Tree Preservation

The corridor is known for its mature tree canopy, so WSP has been tasked with minimizing the removal of healthy trees. The design has advanced sufficiently, however, to confirm that there will be some loss due to underground infrastructure conflicts.

The number of trees to be removed differs only slightly among the designs. This is often due to the disruption involved in removing and replacing underground utilities (i.e. sewer and water services), conflicting with the spread of the root zone. Even if a tree isn't directly affected, if enough of its roots are damaged or disturbed, the tree could still suffer and, over time, eventually die. To avoid affecting brand-new concrete and asphalt, the project team will proactively remove these trees so replacement trees can be incorporated into the final design.

Hydro Pole Relocation

Similar to tree conflicts, hydro poles are fairly uniformly affected by the project, no matter the option. This is because, again, there are poles immediately adjacent to other infrastructure that need to be resolved, curb radii at intersections must be brought more in line with current standards, and drainage improvements must be incorporated.

Solution Selection

The intent of the preliminary/initial circulation was to resolve fundamental issues before formally identifying a preferred alternative and presenting it to Council and the public.

Project initiation letters were delivered to all affected properties, introducing the project, informing them of the alternatives being considered and inviting them to the first PIC.

The Operations Committee was invited to provide comments relating to their priorities for allocating space within the road allowance at the March Operations Committee meeting. Support for every alternative was noted, and while there were a few contrary opinions voiced, there was no strong sentiment in opposition to any particular priority.

Comments were collected via all methods of communication up to the date of the second PIC. There was no option for which the responses were predominantly supportive or negative upon which Staff could base the recommendation to Committee. As such, Staff applied a scoring matrix to determine the alternative with the highest benefit. The categories used in the scoring matrix were those discussed in this report, with scores ranging from 0-5, where the higher the score, the better, to assist with an empirical decision selection, as the public and council input was inconclusive.

Scoring Matrix:

	Option			
Factor	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Accessibility and universal design	5	4	5	5
On-street parking	5	2	2	2
Active transportation Connectivity	1	4	5	5
Mitigates Traffic speed	0	1	5	5
Operations & Minimum Maintenance Standards	3	1	5	4
Cost	3	3	4	3
Tree preservation	3	3	2	1
Hydro Pole relocation	4	3	2	1
	24	21	**30**	26

As demonstrated in the matrix, Option 3, the recommended alternative, scores the highest amongst these criteria. Staff have followed a process that included a comprehensive methodology, with both subjective and objective components to determine the outcome.

It should be noted that, in addition to having the highest score, the criterion of safety can be layered into the discussion. Based on Staff's experience and knowledge gained through operational and technical endeavours such as participating in national working groups on active and multi-modal transportation, the safest option, in Staff's opinion, is Option 3 as well, for the reasons noted throughout this report.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

As noted, the majority of the construction cost relates to the underground utility replacement. The road reconstruction is secondary, despite being the more visible component.

The estimated cost (Class D estimate) prepared by the Consultant indicates that, at this time, the approved budget should be sufficient to execute the project. Confirmation will be possible once bids are opened at the tendering stage.

As noted elsewhere in this report, capital cost does not differ significantly among the options; **Options 1 and 4 would have the highest costs** due to the additional road surface.

Operational costs would vary somewhat, with **Option 2 being the most labour intensive and costly in the long term**, especially if the bike lanes were divided from the road by a barrier of some type in the future.

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.

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

Proposed Project Timeline:

Due to its size and complexity, a pre-qualification bid has been added to the procurement process. The proposed project schedule is expected as follows, unless a redesign is required. **Should redesign be required, construction will not proceed in 2026.**

- Preparation of 60% Design: February to March 2026
- Contractor Prequalification and Award: March to April 2026
- Public Information Centre #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

The recommended alternative does not require any additional equipment, changes to policies or standards, or staff to maintain.

Other options would require changes to operational practices, policies, levels of service, and potentially equipment and staffing.

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 placed 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.

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 was held in March, and input was solicited from the Operations Committee and Council.

No comments were received from the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee; however, the design will be based on the most current standards.

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.

Staff have provided several opportunities for public engagement through this process. Invitations were sent to every affected property, inviting their comments and/or attendance, and every comment received was logged and considered in the evaluation of the proposed solution.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

Project Team: Mason Bellamy, Ashley McNeil, Sofin Lalani

Project Consultant: WSP

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 – 4th Avenue West Reconstruction Report to GCJAAC
2. Attachment 2 – Service Locations
3. Attachment 3 – Pages from Owen Sound Transportation Master Plan
4. Attachment 4 – Map from Owen Sound Parks, Recreation & Facilities Master Plan

Submitted by:
Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works and Engineering

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 or 519-376-1440 ext. 1201.