

Preferred location of the Lake-to-Lake Bike Route – have we heard from you?

(Penticton, BC – October 14, 2020) – The City of Penticton is nearing the end of a one-year process to identify a preferred route to locate a bike lane travelling from Skaha Lake to Okanagan Lake. With the supporting community engagement process set to wind-down this month, City staff are again reminding residents to reach out.

“Have we heard from you? Creating a lake-to-lake bike route that meets the requirements of an All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Bike Lane remains a central focus of this project, but equally important is exploring how the chosen route can successfully integrate into existing streetscapes, building access, traffic patterns and parking usage,” said the City’s Communication Manager, Philip Cooper.

“Communicating your feedback now will benefit and influence upcoming discussions concerning how the bike lane is designed along a preferred route and what that design will cost. If you have any concerns, please call 250-490-2586 or send an email to getconnected@penticton.ca to ensure your feedback is heard and understood.”

By way of thousands of comments collected over a twelve-month period, similar inquiries have often emerged, including the following top five most frequently asked questions and answers. A full Q&A document is available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca or at City Hall.

Does the community support a lake-to-lake all ages and abilities bike route?

At the start of this project, the City invited residents to complete a questionnaire to gauge their interest. The City heard from 1,068 participants and 82 per cent supported the creation of this route. While the City was pleased with this initial level of participation, the reason the City is pursuing this work is to support active transportation in Penticton for the health and environmental benefits as well as to support affordable and alternative modes of transportation. This was identified as a priority for the community in the creation of the 2019 Official Community Plan.

Do we have enough cyclists to support a route?

Through the initial questionnaire, the City learned that the number one reason that Penticton residents don’t cycle today is fear for their safety. This is consistent with other communities and the reason behind the creation of the All Ages and Abilities (AAA) route criteria. The creation of protected routes is not intended to support those that cycle today but those that would cycle if they felt safe and if it was convenient.

Why was the path by the channel not considered?

The path by the channel is outside of Penticton city limits on land owned by the Penticton Indian Band. This is a great path for recreational riders but it does not meet the goal of this project to provide direct and convenient access to popular destinations and economic centres throughout the city.

Why is the City identifying a location for the lake-to-lake route during the pandemic?

There are several reasons for completing the work to identify the location for the lake-to-lake route now:

- The work began in 2019 before the pandemic. To not complete the work to identify the route risks wasting this initial investment. Additionally, once the City determines the route, Council can decide when and how they would like to see it implemented.
- The provincial and federal governments have announced a number of grants to support economic recovery. Some of these grants are designed to support the creation of green infrastructure and active transportation. The City needs to have a completed plan in order to be eligible for these grants.
- There is a surge in interest in cycling as a result of the pandemic. Local bike shops are struggling to keep up with demand and cities such as Kelowna that have counters on their bike routes are seeing an increase in use of up to 50 per cent. There is a growing interest in cycling as a form of transportation and recreational activity.
- The work to identify the lake-to-lake route is one of many initiatives that the City has underway. While the priority is on addressing the crisis created by the pandemic and collaborating with all levels of government to address the homeless and addiction issues in Penticton, the City is also looking to the future and advancing many initiatives such as restoring flood protection on the Penticton and Ellis Creeks, developing a plan to address the childcare shortage, upgrading or replacing water and wastewater infrastructure, improving the safety of intersections and roads, and planning for active transportation needs.

How will it be funded?

If the location is approved and Council decides to proceed, the project will need to be part of the City's 2021-2025 Financial Plan. The City will apply for grants from the provincial government to fund a portion of the project. The remainder may be funded through taxation, the Electrical Dividend, Gas Tax funds and potentially borrowing. A number of factors will need to be considered by Council in making their decision on whether or not to proceed with the route including funding required for other capital projects.

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