

MINUTES
SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Saanich Municipal Hall, 770 Vernon Avenue and virtually via MS Teams
Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 4:10 p.m.

Present: Chair Nathalie Chambers, Sarah Anderson (via Teams), Kurban Keshvani (via Teams); Leslie Miller-Brooks, Karin Nelson, Mattias Spalteholz

Regrets: Jasmindra Jawanda, Jake Douglas

Staff: Captain Erin Stockhill, Emergency Program Officer; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; Megan Squires, Senior Transportation Planner (4:02); Amber Walker Planner (Community Planning); Glenys Verhulst, Sustainability Planner and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

The Chair read the Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by K. Nelson and Seconded by K. Keshvai: “That the Minutes of the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee meeting held May 17, 2023, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEETING DATES

The Terms of Reference were included with the agenda for information.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

The Senior Transportation Planner presented the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) Update (PowerPoint on file) and made the following comments:

- The ATP is a long-range plan to guide decision-making and investment in active transportation in Saanich. The Plan was first adopted by Council in 2018.
- Five years of implementation has occurred, and we are now updating the plan to reflect current policy and trends, as well as refreshed priorities for implementation.
- Active transportation encompasses walking, cycling, rolling, and taking transit. The ATP outlines actions and strategies to address all these modes.
- Reasons for updating the ATP include: to better reflect current policy documents and planning initiatives; incorporate up-to-date demographic and travel data; review progress toward achieving the ATP vision, goals and targets; Integrate Vision Zero and a Safe Systems approach to road safety; review and update infrastructure priorities for the next 15 years; incorporate equity into the District’s transportation planning; create a framework for a future traffic calming policy and address emerging technologies and trends related to e-bikes and micromobility.
- The update is in the final stages of engagement, it will be finalized over the summer and

sent to Council for consideration in Fall 2023. The process to update the ATP is running concurrent to the process to develop the Road Safety Action Plan (RSAP) and implementation of the Speed Limit Establishment Policy.

- Five goals have been identified in the Updated ATP. The first 4 goals are in the existing ATP but have been updated and revised based on input from stakeholders. A fifth goal was added to elevate the focus on accessibility and equitable mobility.
- The target to achieve half of all trips in Saanich taken by active modes by 2050 was established in the 2018 plan. However, the interim target of 36% of all trips in Saanich being taken by active modes has been accelerated from 2036 to 2030. This change is based on the direction provided in the 2020 Climate Plan.
- The three overarching themes of the plan are connections, convenience and culture.
- There are 95 actions which support 18 identified strategies, each falling within one of the three overarching themes.
- Some key changes include:
 - Introducing a traffic calming framework to inform future policy and program, specific references to the B.C. Active Transportation Design Guide
 - A focus on micromobility (trends and implications for active transportation)
 - New trail definitions with a focus on active transportation trails.
 - Equity analysis will be used to prioritize improvements and inform engagement.
 - Updated references to new plans BC Design Guide, Electric Mobility Strategy and the Climate Plan have been included.
 - Road safety measures were added action to monitor pedestrian and cyclist collision hotspots and identify mitigation measures.
 - A specific reference to and prioritization of Speed Limit Establishment Policy
- The criteria to determine priority sidewalk and bicycle projects was also updated to include road safety and equity-deserving areas.
- 51 km of new sidewalks are proposed by 2040. This would bring our total km of sidewalk to 339 km in 2040. The plan is to increase investment in sidewalks and bicycle facilities.
- 73 km of new cycling facilities are proposed, along with 14 km of new trails. New criteria to prioritize these projects has also been included in the updated plan.
- The next steps are to gather feedback from engagement activities and make any revisions. The updated plan will then go to Council for consideration and approval.

The following was noted in response to questions and comments from the committee:

- Some roads such have sidewalks on one side, then the sidewalk will switch to the other side without a crosswalk. Currently the sidewalks are specified on road classification, there is a recommendation to change the criteria of this system in the ATP update.
- Trail safety is an important consideration. The increase of electric mobility devices has caused conflicts, staff are investigating design guidance to accommodate all users.
- Implementing speed limits or a licencing system for bikes could be beneficial. Staff are working to reduce barriers; regulations need to be balanced.
- Education on e-bike etiquette is beneficial for all. Exploring opportunities to shift the culture and encourage safe trail sharing may lead to improvements for all.
- Damaged trails, tree roots or abruptly ending sidewalks are concerns for accessibility.
- Periodically staff perform counts to see the usage rates for specific infrastructure.

*** The Senior Transportation Planner exited the meeting at 4:57 p.m. ***

STRATEGIC OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE

The Planner (Community Planning) presented on the strategic Official Community Plan (OCP) Update (PowerPoint on file), the following was noted:

- The OCP is the primary document that guides growth and change within Saanich.

- The long-term vision is a livable community based on shared values and sustainability.
- This is a legally binding overarching framework for all other District policies and plans.
- Decisions made within its scope are required to conform to its policy direction.
- Most of the plan content is still relevant, so a strategic update was preferred to build on recent processes and adopted policy/Council direction. This is a more effective use of limited resources and allows for priority updates in a short time frame.
- Updating the OCP will incorporate integrate new demographic data, update land use framework, refine sustainability and strengthen monitoring/implementation.
- Currently the project is in phase 2 where it will be refined. It is expected to go to Council for consideration in fall/winter 2023.
- “Three Pillars” (Environmental Integrity, Social Well-being, and Economic Vibrancy), “One Planet Living” and the “15-minute Community” are the three main sustainable foundation frameworks that complement and guide the policy direction.
- Climate change response is incorporated as a plan foundation that recognizes achievable targets and implements adaptation strategies.
- The four strategic land use direction looks to maintain the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB), accommodate most new development in the primary growth areas, to expand housing diversity in the local neighborhoods and ensure a 15-minute communities.
- The housing section’s main goal is to improve the housing strategies and outcomes.
- Urban plazas and urban parks will provide accessible green spaces and walkable parks.
- The 3-30-300 rule (3 trees for every home, 30 percent tree canopy in every neighborhood and 300 meters from the nearest public park or green space) is the guiding principle that focuses on the crucial contributions of the urban forest and other urban nature to our health and well-being, as well as climate change adaptation.
- An active transportation network will provide more access to amenities.
- Our history with the First Nations Peoples is acknowledged in the OCP, focusing on reconciliation, revised history, Indigenous Relations, and policies woven throughout the document. A consultation is planned for spring 2023.
- The public is encouraged to participate and provide input on various platforms such as webinars, open houses, and digital workshops. A survey is available online and in printed form.

The following was noted in response to questions and comments from committee members:

- The value statements from the front of the document were incorporated in other ways.
- Staff confirmed that our ecological footprint will be a consideration in the OCP update.
- The sales of goods and services at a neighbour to neighbour level is addressed by temporary use permits. This type of exchange of local goods and services promotes a car light lifestyle.
- Protecting agricultural land for farming and protecting it from industrial use is important.
- Consideration of a solar shade bylaw would help to ensure that those who install solar panels are protected, as the urban tree canopy growth targets and electrification may conflict.

*** The Planner (Community Planning) left the meeting at 5:40 p.m. ***

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & EXTREME HEAT

The Emergency Program Officer and the Sustainability Planner presented on Extreme Heat Planning and Response in Saanich. The following was noted:

- The Capital Regional District (CRD) provides regional climate projections, their coordination provides downscaled climate projections specific to the south island.
- A Climate Projections Report for the region is released approximately every 5 years, the last report was from 2017, with the next due this fall.

- Within the next 30 years we expect to see hotter summers, tripling of number of days above 25 degrees (which is where buildings need mechanical cooling and heat related health impacts increase significantly), longer dry spells, an increase in tropical nights (not cooling down) and an increase in the number and severity of major storm events.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released the final part of its Sixth Assessment report, which delivers a stark warning on the climate crisis.
- It is believed that this will be the last IPCC assessment while the world still has a chance of limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, beyond which damage to the climate becomes irreversible.
- The IPCC report speaks to the impacts of climate change - it found that half of the global population now experiences severe water scarcity for at least part of the year and many areas are already reaching the limit to which we can adapt to such severe changes.
- 2021 brought a series of devastating extreme weather events fueled by climate change. These included several unprecedented heat waves, wildfires and flooding across BC.
- 2022 continued to see extreme heat, wildfires, storms and rainfall events across BC that are projected to increase, causing major impacts in terms of health and infrastructure.
- These extreme weather events resulted in hundreds of deaths, thousands of evacuations, destruction of infrastructure, buildings and homes, major disruption to supply chains, impact to livestock and agriculture and millions of dollars of damage.
- Saanich Emergency Program (SEP) actions during a heat emergency must follow the lead of provincial health and emergency authorities. As a result of extreme heat events experienced in 2021, several steps have been taken to improve public education, communication and support during heat related events.
- The BC Health Effects of Anomalous Temperatures Coordinating Committee (BC HEAT Committee) was established in January 2022 to support planning and response efforts related to the public health impacts of significant heat events in British Columbia.
- Provincial oversight allows for the same procedures across the province.
- The BC HEAT Committee is led by members of the BC Centre for Disease Control, the B.C. Ministry of Health, and Health Emergency Management BC.
- The key priorities of the BCHEAT committee were to identify consistent public health actions and messages for the heat alerting system in BC and to create a second level of heat alert criteria that would trigger an elevated response. These priorities evolved into the creation and implementation of a two-tier heat alert and response system (HARS) for the province. This two-tiered standardized warning system aims to protect those most vulnerable in extreme heat and inform people on how to protect themselves.
- The tiered system can be used by Local Governments (including Saanich) to increase communications and consider potential response actions. The province is prepared to issue alerts through the Provincial Emergency Notification System, Alert ready which is currently used to issue amber alerts and tsunami, wildfire and flood warnings.
- A heat warning is triggered when temperature forecast calls for a daily high of 29 degrees with a minimum overnight low of 16 degrees for at least two days.
- An extreme heat emergency is when temperature forecast meets the criteria for a heat warning with temperatures continuing to increase over a 3-day period.
- Public education is necessary to help prepare for emergency events. BCHARS includes key messages and recommended actions that can be utilized pre-heat-season, during a heat warning or a heat emergency. These key messages and recommended actions support the region in aligning public messaging.
- The Emergency Program is committed to providing public education and preparedness messaging to all residents to ensure they have the resources to get prepared and stay safe in an emergency, including an extreme heat event.
- The Province has developed an Extreme Heat Preparedness Guide (handout) targeted at helping individuals prepare their residences for extreme heat, providing advice on staying safe when temperatures rise. The multilingual guide was created in partnership with the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC). In addition to adding the electronic

- guide to the Saanich website, SEP obtained hard copies to provide to residents at public events and personal preparedness workshops to better prepare residents.
- SEP is actively engaged with internal and external partners to ensure preparedness messaging reaches those most vulnerable in heat events, including seniors and people living in isolation. This includes traditional outreach and social media channels.
 - To help guide local authorities' heat response planning, the CRD is coordinating a regional heat vulnerability data and analysis project to better understand vulnerability and explore to extreme heat in the capital region, funded by a \$150,000 UBCM grant.
 - UVic and CRD, with support from Victoria, Saanich, and Colwood are exploring how the 2021 heat dome event affected vulnerable populations and how those lived experiences can inform policy in the future. A survey and a series of community conversations were held, analysis is ongoing this summer and results will be shared with decision makers.
 - Other initiatives from the Sustainability Division include:
 - o Dedicated climate adaptation staff (currently vacant)
 - o Top up incentives for heat pumps and building upgrades (including upgrading Saanich residential rental properties)
 - o Submitting feedback on BC Building Code updates regarding overheating
 - o Building Retrofit Strategy (in development) includes overheating considerations.

The following was noted in response to questions and comments from the committee:

- Heat warnings are issued based on a statement from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). It was noted it would be favourable if the ECCC considered the implications of heat index rather than just the temperature.
- Outreach for unhoused during extreme heat or extreme cold events is important. Police can increase bike or foot patrols, ensuring unhoused persons are aware of warnings.
- SEP and Saanich Police collaborate with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre to ensure they have the information they need to support their community during extreme heat and cold weather events. Additional outreach options are always being explored.
- Reaching seniors or those in isolation can be difficult, SEP strives to connect with all.
- Saanich does not have the ability to limit the number of natural gas connections. The new building code may help to reduce the number of connections in new construction.
- Retrofits will help with electrification, education and incentives are useful tools.
- The UVic Lived Experience research will be presented to the committee once available.

*** The Emergency Program Officer and Sustainability Planner exited at 6:09 p.m. ***

PLANT BASED CITIES MOVEMENT

Committee member K. Nelson presented on the Plant Based Cities Movement, the following was noted:

- Plant Based Cities Movement is a national non-profit organization; their mission is to motivate cities and citizens to go plant-based for the health of people and the planet.
- We are in a time of seeing our planet and the climate changing at an unprecedented rate. Saanich has a strong Climate Plan and has declared a Climate Emergency.
- Multiple Saanich Plans, including the Climate Plan and the Saanich Agricultural and Food Security Plan could be enhanced by increasing policies for local plant-based food.
- Animal agriculture is responsible for 28% of total Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, methane being one of the largest components.
- Other issues connected to animal agriculture are land use, carbon sequestration, water use, eutrophication, climate resilience of food system, human disease and food security.
- There is significantly less GHG emissions created per gram of protein created by plant-based options than there is for animal proteins.

- Animal agriculture is an inefficient and resource intensive way to produce protein in times of climate concerns, biodiversity loss and health emergencies. Approximately 50% (% varies with studies) of farmable land is used to grow feed for livestock.
- The more plants-based proteins we eat, the less land we use to sustain ourselves.
- There are many benefits to moving to practices such as regenerative crop rotation, using less irrigation, vertical gardens and using less pesticides on feed crops.
- There are several changes that Saanich could implement seamlessly at little or no cost, which would build on existing plans, support local food production, help meet climate targets, make Saanich a leader at the municipal level and still allow people to choose.
- Saanich implementing a policy to commit to making 70% of food purchases plant-based by the end of this year would be a relatively easy change with a big impact. This could include:
 - o Food for events and festivals run by District would offer 70% plant-based food options. When ordering meals for meetings and civic business, 70% of the time they would be plant-based.
 - o Business Units like the golf course would transition their menu to offer more plant-rich menu items.
 - o Future holdings and investments be focused on the plant forward economy.
 - o Grants, subsidies and incentives would be 70% focused on encouraging plant-rich food production.
- Saanich having a large rural component means there is more opportunity to support local farmers and BC producers which reduces transportation and animal based GHG's.

During committee discussion, it was noted that the recommendation included for consideration was supportable and would help Saanich meet the goals outlined in the Climate Plan. The process to bring this item to Council was discussed, it was committee consensus that the Chair should bringing the topic forward as a notice of motion. The presenter is also planning to give a presentation to Council through the delegation process.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from L. Miller-Brooks the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.

Nathalie Chambers, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary