

City Views

CITY NEWS

A CITY OF KELOWNA TRANSPORTATION NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2004

An Action Plan for the Future

“Building more roads to alleviate traffic congestion is like buying a bigger pair of pants to deal with obesity,”

says Jerry Dombowsky, Transportation Demand Supervisor.

If we don't want to ***“pave paradise and put up a parking lot”***, to quote Joni Mitchell, how do we meet everyone's wish for easy mobility while preserving green space and air quality?

Enter TDM. Kelowna is one of only three communities in B.C. (Whistler and Kamloops are the others) with a Transportation Demand Management function. TDM recognizes that mid-size communities are now facing the traffic congestion crunch.

Look at the Central Okanagan - a population of 150,000 accounts for 91,000 registered vehicles and the average household travels a staggering 30,000 km. a year. That gives us the dubious distinction of being the most automobile dependent region in the province.

In addition the number of licensed vehicles has grown by 3.4% annually over the past three years. At this rate we could see 90,000 additional vehicles in the next 25 years – picture 45 lanes of bumper to bumper traffic on Highway 97 between the bridge and the airport!

So how exactly does the City plan to address this growth? Certainly not just by laying down asphalt.

Dombowsky prefers a multi-level approach. “The first thing you need is to provide people with options whether it's

transit, a cycling network, pedestrian links or carpooling. The next thing you have to change is people's attitudes and behaviours.”

To begin that process, as part of the regional TDM Strategy, the City offers educational programs from elementary schools to high schools right through to the general public.

“The Annual Commuter Challenge is a good example,” says Dombowsky. “It's a one week challenge between Canadian cities to see who can get the most people to adopt alternative forms of transportation.” The Central Okanagan has won in its population category three years in a row.

Encouraging people to commit to other modes of commuting is a good start, and the benefits are far greater than simply avoiding long delays between traffic lights.

Think of preserving the natural beauty of the area, the green hillsides, the lake, the clean air. A number of ongoing initiatives are the result – the Transportation Plan, the Smart Transit Plan, the Bicycle Network Master Plan, the Sidewalk Master Plan, the Social Marketing Strategy Plan, Carpool.ca and the 2020 Road Network Plan – ***all key components in moving more people and fewer automobiles.***

Growth management and transportation needs are intertwined, hence the City's focus on creating urban centres and transportation hubs. Further development of our four urban centres – Rutland, Springfield/Hwy 97, Pandosy by the Lake and downtown – along with a more efficient transit network, will ultimately encourage more people to leave their cars at home.

Road Report

Glenmore Road Widening...

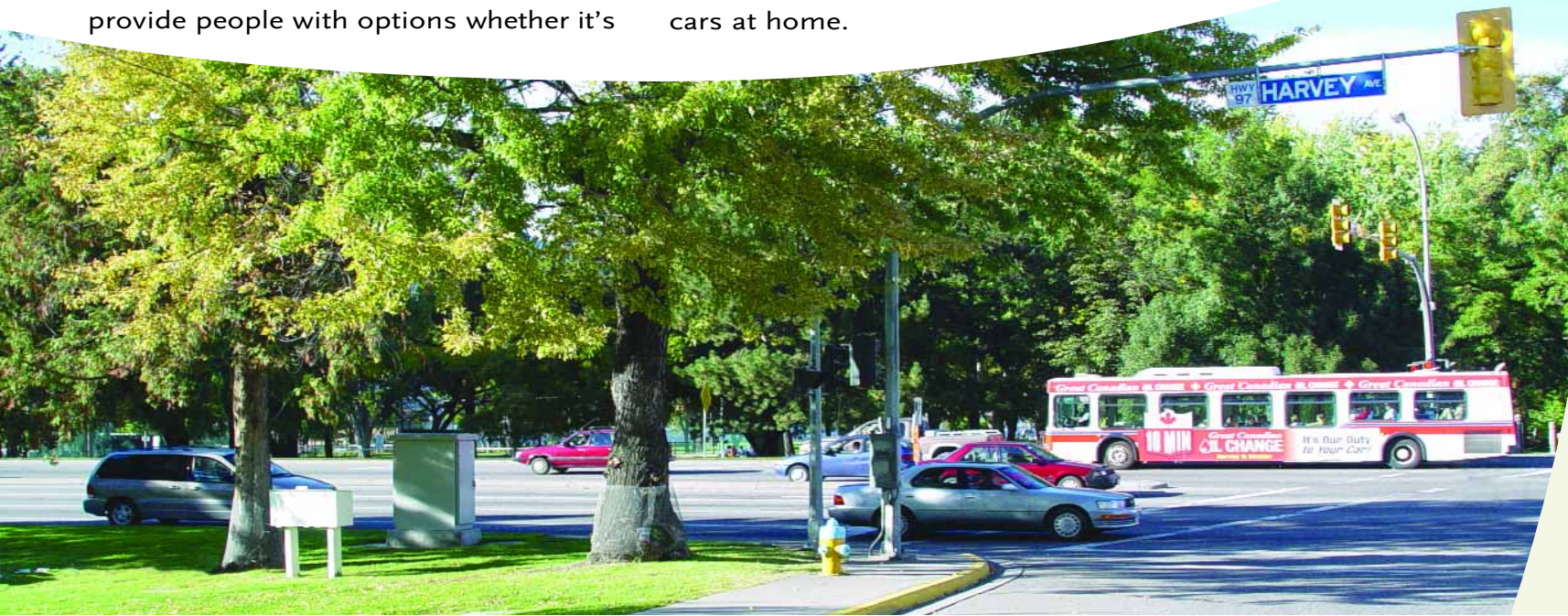
The \$4.1 million upgrade of Glenmore, between Glenmeadows and Dallas Roads, is now complete. The new four lanes of roadway offer improved lighting, sidewalks, bike lanes, concrete curbs and gutters in addition to improved traffic signals at the major intersections.

Rutland Road North...

This \$1.2 million road widening project includes a centre two-way left turn lane, aesthetic improvements with trees, decorative brick in-lay, sidewalks, new bike lanes and improved street lighting.

Central Okanagan Bypass ...

Part of the City's Major Road Network Plan since the 1970's the proposed bypass, previously referred to as the North End Connector, is scheduled to be built in phases over the next 15 years at an estimated cost of \$50 million. Construction is planned to begin in 2005 along Clement Avenue between Ethel Street and High Road, with a new 4-way intersection at Clement, High and Gordon. Further phases will create an express route or bypass of the commercial areas along Highway 97.





Okanagan Lake Bridge

The provincial government has announced a new five-lane bridge for Okanagan Lake; construction of the new bridge is expected to take place between 2005 and 2008. Plans call for the current bridge to be dismantled and removed once the new bridge is in full operation.

Three consortiums, Bouygues Travaux Publics, Okanagan Bridge Group, led by Flatiron Constructors, and SNC-Lavalin Inc. are now working on design/build proposals that must be submitted to the province by mid-December. A provincial review is scheduled for early in the new year with an announcement of the successful proponent to follow.

In the meantime the City's Roads Task Force is busy studying options to move traffic on, off and around the new bridge. A comprehensive report is expected to be presented to Council in late January.

Parents – Stop Your Engines!



It's a common scene at most schools as parents and babysitters line up in the parking lot to drop-off or pick-up students - rows of cars with idling engines.

Did you know that by avoiding idling for just five minutes each day, Canadians could prevent more than one million tonnes of carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas) from entering the atmosphere?

So next time you're waiting in your vehicle, remember that idling for more than 10 seconds costs far more than turning off the engine and restarting. For more information: www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca/idling/home.cfm

The City of Kelowna promotes an 'Anti-Idling' campaign throughout the school district. For more information contact City Hall – 763-6011.

Cash for Clunkers

Do you own a car, motorcycle, passenger van or light duty truck that pre-dates 1993? If you do and you'd be happy to get rid of it, consider trading it in for something more environmentally friendly.

The City's Cash for Clunkers program offers a variety of incentives to privately registered owners to replace their high-polluting vehicles:

- A two-year transit pass
- \$350-\$500 towards a bicycle purchase
- \$250 towards footwear (inline skates, skateboards, running shoes)
- \$250 -\$750 towards a newer vehicle with lower fuel consumption.

For program details contact City Hall or apply on-line via the City of Kelowna's website: www.kelowna.ca. The program ends March 2005.



Beam Me Up!

In a few months Bernard Avenue could have a new high tech look. Council will soon consider replacing rows of dated and high maintenance parking meters with seven foot tall solar powered machines. Since one solar dispenser would replace six traditional meters, the aesthetics of Bernard between Richter and Water would dramatically improve.

Convenience is a big plus since the solar-powered system uses cell technology wireless communication; credit cards can be authorized automatically with no minimum charge. The system also accepts all Canadian denominations, along with U.S. quarters.

Maintenance is a breeze - the machines automatically send an e-mail to staff if there is a problem and text messaging alerts users. Best yet on statutory holidays, and during other free parking times, the dispenser will even refuse to accept payment. Now that's friendly technology!

Please Park on the Grass!



Commuters may be confused this spring when they encounter the first green parking lot at the corner of Cawston Avenue and St. Paul Street. The 'Please Park on Grass' sign follows a municipal trend in Victoria and Vancouver to more environmentally friendly surface parking.

How does 'grass pave' work?
The lot is prepared similar to a gravel lot, but a mixture of topsoil and seed is

added underneath a covering layer of plastic screening material. This plastic barrier adds a component of strength comparable to asphalt while protecting the root stems, so the grass won't die as long as it's watered.

Nature will also automatically filter any impurities (oil, fluids, etc.) through the soil and the lot can easily be ploughed or mowed as required.

While the softer surface will make it more difficult to push wheelchairs and grocery carts, the benefit of more greenery should be welcomed by all.





Jump into a Carpool!

Although the water may still be shallow, the tide is turning and interest in carpooling is slowly on the rise.

Check out www.carpool.ca - this BC based website has loads of information on the benefits of carpooling, including an extensive rideshare matching system. The detailed database considers smoking preferences, gender, age, drivers only vs. passengers only as well as the obvious time, date and destination specifics.

Drop in, register and soon you may be sharing the daily commute.



Carpool Savings

To make parkade parking even easier the City has introduced radio frequency access cards called transponders.

If you're a monthly parker, not only has this eliminated the need to roll down your window to access the parkade, but groups of two or more can share a single parking stall. Each carpool member will receive a transponder so sit back and enjoy the ride until it's your turn to drive!



The Two Wheel Deal

Laurens Campbell wants to dispel the urban myth that biking to work takes a lot longer than driving. "I live in McKinley Landing and it takes only six minutes longer to bike to work downtown than it does to drive." Laurens has found the ultimate solution to traffic congestion, often passing co-workers waiting behind the wheel.

The City of Kelowna currently has over 210 kilometres of bike lanes – one of the highest ratios per population in the country. Part of that success is due to the Bicycle Network Master Plan – it's been in place since 1998 as an inventory of existing bike routes; it's also defined future projects and established criteria for prioritizing new projects. Now an Off-Road Pathways Plan takes that a step further identifying a further 103 new pathways and connections for commuters, and targeting 11 major priorities. Council will review the plan this fall.

These pathways are considered 'off-road' as they offer cyclists an alternative to the on-street bike lanes. In his capacity as Traffic Technician, Campbell recognizes a cyclist's concern for safety, aesthetic value and convenience. Consequently each chosen pathway has to provide a potential safety, time or distance advantage. "Many people aren't comfortable riding in a bike lane right beside traffic, so this is another level of infrastructure that we can look at in order to encourage people to consider cycling, walking or rollerblading as a transportation option".

The City's dedication to cyclists takes many forms, from bike racks on buses to the five bike lockers stationed in the different town centres. The lockers are available to rent for a mere \$10/month and are currently 80% occupied.

Campbell also encourages local businesses to get involved with the city's bike rack cost-sharing program. "This is just another example of our commitment to get people on a bike even if it just means a quick trip to the corner store."

Next year watch for 'Bike to Work Week' which the City intends to introduce in April. The success of the campaign will hopefully teach more commuters what Campbell already knows; biking to work is convenient, it's great exercise and you can't beat the scenery.





On the Move with Transit

New Flyers Land in Kelowna!

A new breed of bus will arrive on the streets of Kelowna in early 2005. Three hybrids (electric/diesel) will provide a positive "go-green" approach to our local transit challenges and serve as a model for transit authorities across the country.

Mike Docherty, General Manager Farwest Transit, is confident the New Flyers will deliver. "They've been tested in 37 cities in North America. Seattle Transit has just completed a year long study and ordered 230."

The hybrids, from the Winnipeg-based supplier New Flyer, will be evaluated to compare their environmental and economic benefits. Key advantages are expected to be reduced fuel consumption (approximately 58%), reduced emissions (60% fewer greenhouse gases) and lower maintenance costs.

Only two municipalities in Canada, Victoria and Kelowna, will have the hybrids thanks to pilot project grants of \$2 million from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Best on the Bus

Did you know our local bus ambassadors belong to one of the premier ambassador groups in Canada?

The Regional Transit System's Ambassador Program has received numerous commendations since the program started rolling four years ago. Ambassadors attend a variety of community events such as the Mayor's Environmental Expo, Ben Lee Park Family Days and the 55 & Alive promotion for seniors. Four drivers each serve a two-year term volunteering their time to promote ridership and a positive presence in the community.

Watch for the "Santa Bus" and Valentine's "Love A Bus" campaign. This summer's "Beach Bus" boosted ridership a whopping 21% running to and from local beaches.

"It's simple," says Bob Grebinski, Chief Ambassador. "The bottom line is to get people on board buses." But it also goes far beyond filling seats. "For some of our riders," he notes, "the Santa Bus is their Christmas. It's heart-warming to see the less fortunate of our community benefit through this initiative."



What's Perking?

What's next in the world of transit? How about hybrid buses, smart transit and express routes? It's all in the future for Kelowna as we strive to manage growth, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the lifestyle we all enjoy.

The new buzz word these days is Smart Transit. The objective is to develop a comprehensive transit plan to support a "smart growth" land use strategy. In other words transit needs to be considered at all stages of urban development, a transit priority system needs to emerge and new options such as bus rapid transit need to move off the drawing board onto the street.

The immediate need to reduce greenhouse gases is being addressed with three Double Decker buses on high traffic routes and three hybrids (diesel/electric) that are scheduled to join the fleet in early 2005. Town Centre express routes between the Queensway Transit Station, the Orchard Park exchange and the Rutland Town Centre are in the works, and neighbourhoods could soon be serviced by feeder routes accessing the high capacity express routes.

Latte, Cappuccino?

According to **Ron Westlake, Transportation Manager**, Kelowna's future includes full service transit stations with more amenities such as public washrooms, bicycle lockers and retail space for newspaper stands, coffee kiosks and bistro style restaurants. "Commuting will become more of a social experience," explains Westlake, "and will open up the transit service to a larger ridership as it has in major centres like San Francisco and Seattle."

Westlake understands the importance of offering affordable alternatives to the commuting public and has a number of options available. "The Universal Pass (U-Pass) is currently being considered as part of tuition fees for all university students. The Pro-Pass is being introduced at discounted rates for any employee group of three or more at the same workplace and Student Passes continue to be available for school children."

