

Report

City of Merritt
SPECIAL Council Meeting
September 29, 2020

File Number: 1853

To: Mayor and Council
From: Sean Smith, Chief Administrative Officer
Date: September 24, 2020
Subject: Investing in Canada Infrastructure – Grant Applications

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council direct staff to submit an application for the West Merritt Active Transportation Path – Phase 1 project through the *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – Community, Culture and Recreation* stream;

AND THAT Council support the project and commit to the City's share of project costs (26.67%), which equals \$614,864 of the total project cost of \$2,305,451.

THAT Council direct staff to amend the 2020-2024 Financial Plan to include the preparation of engineering plans to upgrade the Kengard well, with costs to come from Gas Tax funds.

THAT Council authorize the Mayor to provide an updated letter of support to the Nicola Valley Theatre Society to accompany their ICIP grant applications.

Background:

Investing in Canada Infrastructure Grant

In 2018, the Federal Government entered into an agreement with the Province of BC to create the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). This program is aimed at improving and constructing infrastructure that drives economic growth. Under this program, both parties contribute funds and the Province administers a grant application process that is open to non-profit groups, First Nations and local governments.

The City is currently targeting grant applications through three different streams of the ICIP program:

1. [Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure](#) (closes on October 1, 2020)

Proposed Project

West Merritt Active Transportation Path – Phase 1

- Funding split – 73.33% Federal and Provincial, 26.67% Municipal
- Staff is recommending application for the full build of the project - Option 2 **without amenities**
- Total project cost - \$2,305,451
- City share - \$614,864
- Cost to prepare plans and grant application - \$7,881

Alternate Options (see attached figure):

- a) Option 2 - Including amenities
 - Total project cost – \$2,732,101
 - City share – \$1,041,514
- b) Option 1 – Without amenities
 - Total project cost – \$1,419,951
 - City share – \$378,701
- c) Option 1 – Including amenities
 - Total project cost - \$1,846,601
 - City share - \$805,351

Project Description

The City is currently in the process of finalizing its Active Transportation Plan. An important focus during the planning process was ensuring connections to parks, schools, and community destinations and creating more loops for exercise and recreation.

This proposed project includes the installation of active transportation facilities (multi-use pathway and on-street protected bicycle lanes). Additionally, the project could include installing new recreational facilities along the route, including outdoor exercise equipment, a community garden, a futsal court, and a public washroom. However, we have received notice that the project has a greater likelihood of being funded if these elements are not included in the application. As these components would likely be paid out of pocket if we proceeded at this time, staff recommends continuing without the extra amenities and considering them for a future grant application.

The project extent is broken down into the following sections:

- Main Street between Canford Avenue and Quilchena Avenue – The existing multi-use pathway located south of Canford Avenue through Voght Park would be extended on east side of Main Street for two blocks.
- Quilchena Avenue between Main Street and Cleasby Street – The multi-use pathway will continue along Quilchena providing a shared active transportation facility connecting to Fairley Park. If this option were selected, the installation of recreational facilities would within the available City owned right-of-way including a community garden plot, a fitness park, and a futsal court. The project will also use the available right-of-way to create a walking and cycling connection to Coldwater Avenue and creating an important connection to Merritt Secondary School.
- Coldwater Avenue between Cleasby Street and Voght Street – A multi-use pathway facility is proposed on the north side of Coldwater Avenue.
- Voght Street between Coldwater Avenue and the existing multi-use pathway along Coldwater River – A protected bicycle lane is proposed on the west side of Voght Street adjacent to Merritt Central Elementary School. South of the school, where the right-of-way widens and there is no existing sidewalk facility, a multi-use pathway is proposed. This pathway will connect in with the existing Coldwater River Pathway. If the option were selected, a new public washroom facility would be constructed at the Coldwater Trail parking lot.
- Coldwater River Trail and Quilchena Avenue (west of Main Street) – There is an existing pathway located adjacent to Coldwater River between Main Street and Quilchena Avenue. The pavement quality of this pathway needs to be replaced to ensure a smooth and accessible surface. The project also proposes extending a on street bikeway on Quilchena Avenue between Main Street and the existing pathway. As this section of Quilchena Avenue has low vehicle volumes and speeds, a neighbourhood bikeway is an appropriate all ages and abilities facility.

Though not directly connected to this application, it is also possible that the City could subdivide and rezone a large number of small home lots from the railway right of way, the sale of which would support the City's housing affordability aims and significantly (if not entirely) offset the costs of this project.

2. [Rural and Northern Communities](#) (closes on October 22, 2020)

Proposed Project

Voght Street Phase 2

- Funding split – 90% Federal and Provincial, 10% Municipal

- Project information will be presented to Council, including the request for a resolution, in October.
3. [Investing in COVID-19 Community Resilience](#) (This special stream was recently announced, but full program information hasn't yet been released. Projects must commence no later than September 2021.)

Eligible Infrastructure Projects:

- Retrofits, repairs and upgrades for municipal, territorial, provincial and Indigenous buildings, health infrastructure and schools;
- COVID-19 response infrastructure, including measures to support physical distancing;
- Active transportation infrastructure, including parks, trails, foot bridges, bike lanes and multi-use paths; and
- Disaster mitigation and adaptation projects, including natural infrastructure, flood and fire mitigation, and tree planting and related infrastructure.

Proposed Project

Kengard Well Upgrade

- One of the eligible criteria for this proposed stream is "disaster mitigation and adaptation projects". Staff is working to confirm that drought mitigation on the Coldwater would be sufficient to meet the intent of this program.
- Staff will bring forward a report to Council seeking authority to apply for this grant when more information is known.

There may be other projects that would also be suitable under this stream, particularly in the area of active transportation.

To prepare for this future grant opportunity, staff is seeking Council authority to proceed with preparing engineering plans to upgrade Kengard well, which would increase its maximum pumping capacity and introduce manganese filtration. The planning for this project is currently scheduled for 2021, so the effect of staff's recommendation is to commence planning approximately one year earlier than anticipated to bring the project to shovel ready status in advance of the launch of this grant opportunity.

Nicola Valley Theatre Society – Letter of support

The Nicola Valley Theatre Society will be applying to both the Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure and Rural and Northern Infrastructure Streams, with hopes of receiving funding for their downtown theatre project.

The City of Merritt has provided letters of support for this project in the past, but an updated letter of support has been requested and may increase the Society's chances of success.

Options / discussion

West Merritt Transportation Plan – Phase 1

Council could approve a resolution in the same form used in the original recommendation, amending it as desired by inserting the dollar figures associated with the other options.

Alternatively, Council could direct staff not to apply under the Community, Culture and Recreation infrastructure stream.

Kengard Well – Engineering Plans

Council could maintain the current plan of proceeding with engineering design in 2021, though this may jeopardize the City's ability to apply for infrastructure funding under the COVID-19 Community Resilience stream when it opens.

Alternatively, Council could direct staff to prepare shovel ready plans for an active transportation project that would also be eligible under the COVID-19 Community Resilience stream.

Nicola Valley Theatre Society – Letter of support

Council could choose not to provide an updated letter of support. Staff doesn't anticipate that providing such a letter will have an adverse impact on City applications, though we are also not privy to specific considerations that go into funding decisions.

Financial / Risk Implications:

For any grant application, Council must commit to funding its share of project costs. As shown in the attached 2020 reserve and surplus estimate, the City has sufficient funds in its accounts to support the grant application proposed.

Specific engineering costs for the Kengard Well upgrade project are not yet known, but we understand that in the worst-case scenario, costs will not exceed \$250,000. The City has sufficient Gas Tax funds to support the creation of these plans.

Attachments:

- West Merritt AT Path – Plan Layout
- West Merritt AT Path – Cross Sections
- West Merritt AT Path – Class "C" Cost Estimates
- 2020 Reserve and Surplus Estimate

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Smith
Chief Administrative Officer