

Engagement Summary Report

City of Courtenay

COUSINS AVENUE UPGRADES PROJECT

November 2023



CITY OF
COURTENAY

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Executive Summary

The City of Courtenay is preparing to upgrade Cousins Avenue, between Willemar Avenue and 20th Street. The project will include road improvements, repaving and replacement of underground services that have reached the end of their life or require upsizing to serve the growing community.

This upgrade project also offers an opportunity to study current traffic flow and parking challenges in the area, and investigate road and pedestrian improvements such as:

- parking
- sidewalks
- trail connections
- curbing
- landscaping



The City retained McElhanney to develop the options analysis for these upgrades, and they developed three design options for consideration. These options were presented to interest holder groups and the public at the November 18 public open house. A survey was also created to collect input on the options and how they addressed concerns in the area.

Over 45 participants attended the open house and 133 completed the survey. A variety of tools were used to invite residents to the event and participate in the survey, including: direct mail letter, social media posts, news release and a print ad.

Overall, the team received a lot of constructive feedback from residents and business owners who frequently use the area. Themes of response included:

- **Parking issues:** number one concern is parking; parking cannot be reduced and needs to be improved or increased if possible
- **Commercial traffic prioritization:** the industrial community belongs in the Cousins Avenue area – the City's efforts to improve traffic flows can't be at the expense of businesses in the area; safety/movement of large trucks should be a top priority
- **Speeding:** vehicle speeds are a major concern in the area, especially from regular/non industrial traffic

Feedback collected by staff at the event, by email after the event and via the survey has been summarized in the engagement results section below.

Introduction

1.1 Project Background


The City of Courtenay is preparing to complete above- and below-ground upgrades to a section of Cousins Avenue, including repaving the road surface. To ensure the plan ahead considers residents and businesses in the area, the City is consulting with the community on design options for the corridor.

Cousins Avenue and the area around it includes a unique mix of light industrial, single-family residential and mixed-use buildings. To address this, the three design options present different upgrades to the roadway for the residential vs. commercial/industrial sections of the road.

Feedback was collected on design options for the area via an online survey, with an open house hosted to introduce the info and answer questions. Public feedback will help the project team refine the three design options, which will then be presented to council for consideration in early 2024.

1.2 Community Engagement Goals

The goal of the community events was to CONSULT and collect feedback from the community about three design options, with a focus on: parking, sidewalks, trail connections, bike lanes, curbing and landscaping.

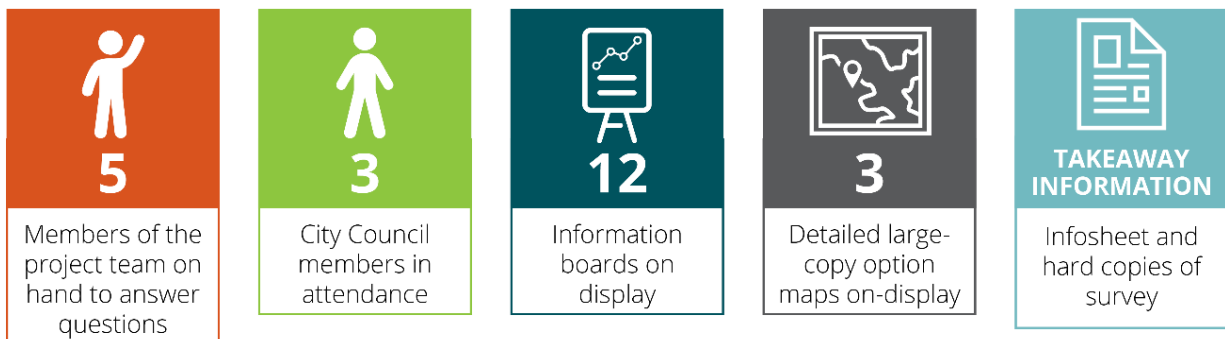


INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Provide balanced and objective information to residents.	Obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/ or decisions from residents.	Work directly with residents to address concerns.	Partner with residents to develop a preferred solution.	Place final decision making in the hands of residents.

Engagement Overview

2.1 Community Open House

The event took place on Wednesday, October 18 from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm in Courtenay at the Florence Filberg Centre. It involved:



Information from the events, including the information boards and the infosheet, was also posted to the project page.

2.2 Promotion

The following blend of tools was used to invite participation in the open house and survey:



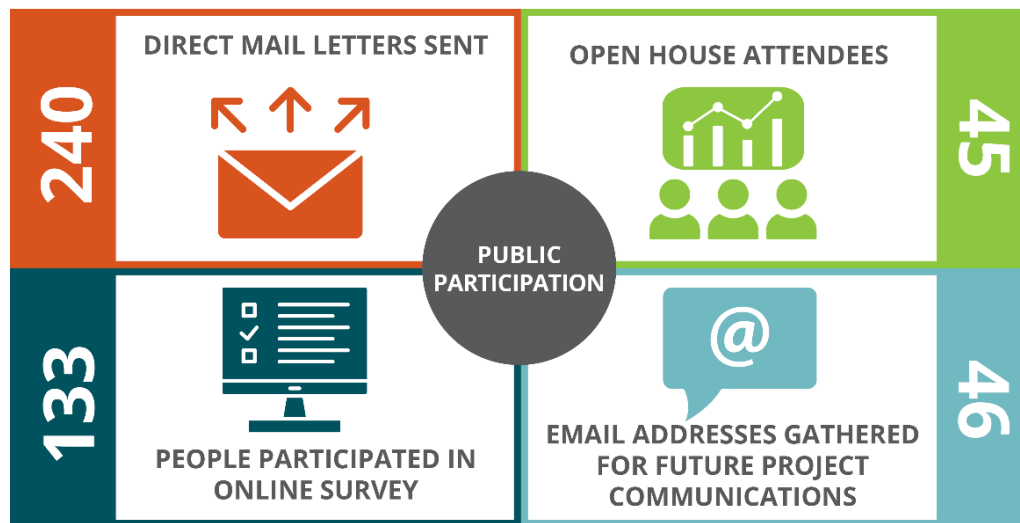
Engagement Results

The below section is intended as an overview of general feedback collected. To view all survey responses, including detailed comments, please review the 'Survey Report' in the appendix.

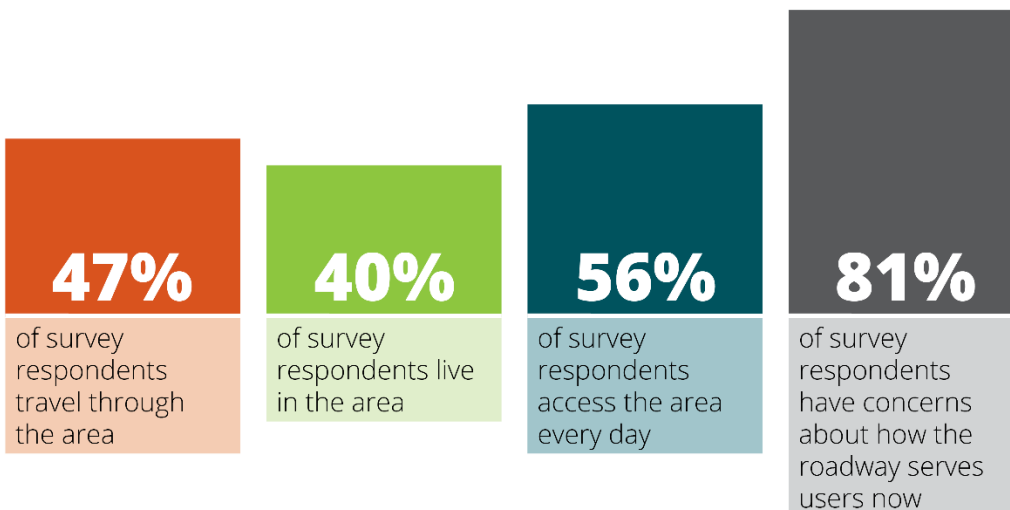
3.1 By the Numbers

The numbers below highlight key data collected through the events.

Public Participation



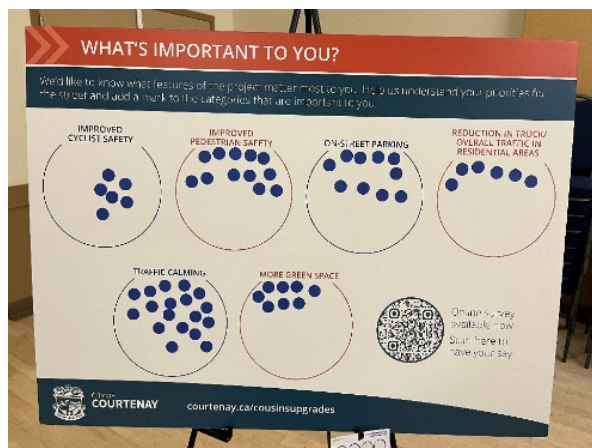
Survey Responses



In-Person Feedback

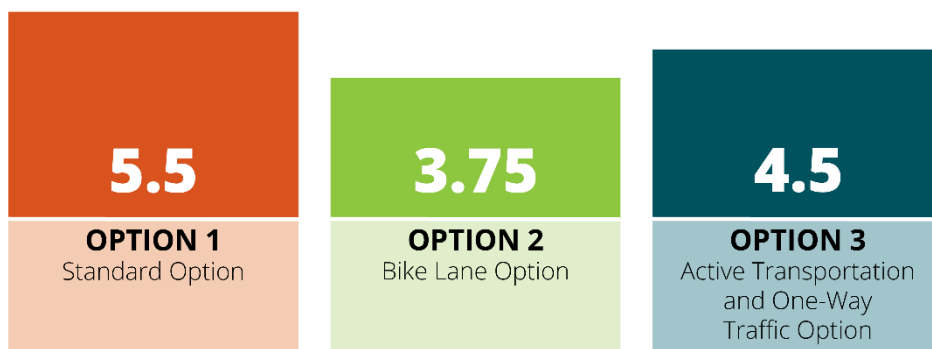
Residents were asked to place a marker on the features of the project most important to them. This showed the top three with strongest support as:

- traffic calming (18)
- improved pedestrian safety (12)
- on-street parking (10).



3.2 Survey Results: Options Ranking

Respondents were asked to rank each option on a scale of 1-10. This ranking showed the following averages:



Similarly, a question asked respondents to rank the three options in order of preference. This ranking showed Option 1 as the preferred option by respondents:

	1	2	3	Total	Score
Option 1: Standard Option	40.66% 37	37.36% 34	21.98% 20	91	2.19
Option 2: Bike Lane Option	21.98% 20	34.07% 31	43.96% 40	91	1.78
Option 3: Active Transportation and One-Way Traffic Option	36.96% 34	29.35% 27	34.07% 37	98	2.03

While the support for Option 1 is not overwhelmingly stronger than Option 3, it does rank higher in both questions. Further, the feedback relayed in short answer questions and at the in-person event, supports the data here, with strongest support for Option 1.

3.3 Themes of Feedback

This section of the report summarizes themes of feedback gathered from staff at the events, from email submissions and from short-answer survey questions.

The results of feedback illustrate the challenging nature of this upgrade, with differing input based on individuals' main use of the area. Users/owners in the commercial/industrial area have specific concerns about truck safety and movement – they want to ensure there is appropriate parking, turning space and travel lanes for large trucks.

On the other hand, residential users are generally more concerned about pedestrian safety, speed and parking. There was mixed response concerning bike lanes, with majority of respondents opposed to the option. Some commuters expressed interest in bike lanes, but more users expressed concern about reducing road width and parking spaces in the already over-subscribed area. There was also significant feedback on the intersections at both ends of the project (at Cousins/Willemar and Cousins/20th), with many residents noting that both are in need of increased safety measures (suggestions for 4-way stops, flashing crosswalk etc.). Support for reducing speed limits through the area was strong across the board.

Below is an expanded summary of this feedback.

Concerns About Current Roadway:

Parking Challenges:

- Not enough parking is a safety issue
- Issues with industrial businesses using the curbed area in front of their businesses as parking
- Issues with commercial traffic parking in Rosewall Crescent and also vehicles parking on sidewalks



Safety Issues:

- Respondents noting poor visibility through the area and blind spots, due to large trucks and parking on both sides of street
- Difficult sight lines exiting Rosewall in either direction, due to curve in road and cars parked on both sides
- Concerns about sight lines at the intersection of 20th and Cousins, largely due to hedge; and at the intersection of Willemar and Cousins
- Cars travel very fast through the area, especially around the curve in the road – makes turning from and into sideroads challenging
- Issues with commercial vehicles blocking traffic for unloading, creating congestion and safety hazards
- Challenges with snow clearing due to parked cars and limited space for snow storage

Pedestrian/Cyclist Safety:

- Issues with parked vehicles blocking access to sidewalks

- Area is missing sidewalk connections/there is no safe crossing space
- Currently not a safe road for cyclists to use

Road Conditions:

- Many respondents noted the terrible condition of the road, including potholes and poor drainage

Feedback On Options 1, 2 & 3:

Parking:

- Concerns that these options are not adding parking, when it is already lacking – the project area needs more parking spaces
- Concerns about reducing street parking with bike lanes and putting added pressure on residential parking areas
- Concern that sidewalks and boulevards will force parked cars that currently park on the curb to go into the street, which will further clog street parking
- Some suggestions for angled parking



Bike Lanes:

- Most respondents in opposition to adding bike lanes; prefer a focus on improving traffic flow and parking (due to commercial/industrial nature of area)
- Some respondents in favour of bike lanes, concerned that Option 1 would improve safety for pedestrians but not bikers
- This area is not part of the Cycling Plan and bike lanes in this area would not link up to other bike lanes
- Concerns about safety of bikers in commercial/industrial area, with large trucks and poor sight lines, even with addition of bike lanes
- Concerns about placement of bike lane in between parked cars and traffic, preference to have parked vehicles (and the lane itself) provide a buffer
- Several respondents expressed interest in cycling lanes being added to Willemar, instead of Cousins Ave

Safety:

- Suggestions to ensure the intersections at each end of the project are studied and included, both are currently dangerous
- Strong support for reducing speed limit through the area
- Support for traffic calming measures
- Full frontage access is important for commercial businesses on Cousins Ave

Pedestrian Safety:

- Lots of support for additional crosswalks, especially near trail access points, Cousins Park and in residential area

- Support for improved sidewalks

Boulevards:

- Concern about boulevards narrowing the driving lanes, commercial users would prefer more space to move safely
- Some providing support for more green space, increasing the aesthetics of the area
- Some respondents noting that losing paved areas and introducing landscaped areas is not suited for an industrial area
- Concern about trees reducing visibility, especially for commercial trucks

One-Way Traffic:

- Mixed support for one-way traffic. If one-way is implemented, most prefer one way on Rosewall as well. A few suggestions to keep two-way on Cousins but make Rosewall one-way.
- Many respondents preferring not to route additional commercial traffic through Rosewall; concern that this would confuse drivers and cause more traffic on Rosewall Cres and in other residential areas, as well as cause safety issues for residents (i.e. children)
- Support for keeping trucks in the residential section of Cousins Ave and slowing speed limits
- More support for one-way from residents who live on Cousins Ave in the residential section, less support from commercial users

Conclusion

The road upgrade will impact residential and business owners, and has the potential to greatly improve traffic flow and safety for pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Generally, the feedback showed that Option 1 best balances the commercial and residential interests of users. The open house was successful in bringing 19% of direct-mail recipients to the in-person event. Similarly, the number of survey responses (133), illustrates the high level of interest from affected community members. This degree of feedback will help provide Council with valuable information from those directly affected by the plans.

Next Steps

- Early 2024: Presentation to Council, including summary of public feedback
- 2024: Report back to the community

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey Report

Appendix 2 – Information Boards

Appendix 3 – Promotion Samples

Appendix 4 – Direct Mail Letter

Appendix 5 – Survey

Appendix 6 – Infosheet