

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CIVIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING ON JULY 20, 2015
FROM:	EDWARD SOLDI, P.ENG. DIRECTOR, ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION
SUBJECT:	QUEBEC STREET BRIDGE – PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

RECOMMENDATION

That on the recommendation of the Director, Roads and Transportation, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
--

- None

BACKGROUND

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to respond to Civic Works Committee about the possibility of installing a pedestrian railing on the Quebec Street Bridge to improve pedestrian safety for students travelling to Bishop Townsend Public School from the south side of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks.

DISCUSSION

The Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) has identified plans to close Lorne Avenue Public School on the south side of the railway (west of Quebec Street). This closure will require students to travel to Bishop Townsend Public School which is located on the north side of the railway (just north of Mornington Avenue). This trip to school will have students travel over the Quebec Street Bridge each day on their way to and from the school.

Existing Conditions

The Quebec Street Bridge is located mid-way between Oxford Street & Dundas Street permitting pedestrians, cyclist and vehicles to travel over CP Rail lines uninterrupted. The average daily vehicular traffic on the bridge is 13,000 vehicles. The bridge was originally constructed in 1964 to accommodate four lanes of traffic (two northbound & two southbound) and two adjacent sidewalks.

The bridge was rehabilitated in 2010. The rehabilitation project included structural changes to improve the road for vulnerable users such as cyclists and pedestrians. With Quebec Street being defined as a primary bike route under the Bicycle Master Plan, the roadway and the bridge was converted to include cycle lanes from Mornington Avenue through to near Dundas Street. As a result, the current bridge was reduced from four to three lanes of traffic (two northbound and one southbound) and two 1.8 m cycle lanes were added. The east sidewalk was widened by 0.35 m and street lighting was upgraded.

Below is a photo of the current bridge and pedestrian zone typical of both sides of the bridge.



The narrowing of the road from four lanes to three and addition of wider than standard cycle lanes (1.8m) between the lanes and sidewalks has provided pedestrians with a significant buffer from vehicular traffic.

Pedestrian Safety Assessment

The placement of a barrier such as a railing or guiderail at the edge of the sidewalk was considered to define the travel area for pedestrians, but there are a number of concerns associated as follows:

- A railing would restrict / confine the pedestrian into a narrower space as the posts would have to be placed on the sidewalk platform. Alternatively, the sidewalk would require widening of the bridge and no structural work is currently planned;
- A railing system would present a hazard to cyclists in the adjacent cycle lanes who may contact it with handlebars;
- A barrier would be a hazard to the rare errant vehicle on the roadway; and,

- A barrier would confine the snow clearing operations for the sidewalk / roadway and it will be susceptible to snow plow damage.

As per the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) Roadside Safety Manual guideline, use of a barrier curb is considered effective as a vehicle restraining system at posted speeds less than 60 km/hr. Considering the maximum posted speed on Quebec Street is 50 km/hr, the concrete barrier curb is considered an effective barrier for errant vehicles on the roadway.

Collision records indicate since January 1, 2008, there have been only five (5) collisions on the bridge and they are summarized as follows:

- 2 rear end vehicle collisions;
- 1 vehicle lost tire which hit other vehicle;
- 1 cyclist cut in front of moving vehicle; and,
- 1 vehicle lost control on ice

No collisions involving pedestrians were recorded. This collision history is indicative of a roadway with satisfactory safety performance.

Active and Safe Routes to School

Safe student travel to school is a priority. The City is a partner in the Active and Safe Routes to School Program. This program is identified in London's Road Safety Strategy. The program promotes and finds solutions to encourage children to walk or cycle to school. One such solution is the Walking School Bus which coordinates children and adult volunteers into an organized group walk to school. Staff has initiated discussions with London Block Parent Program who will discuss in more detail with the current Walking School Bus Program volunteers at Lorne Avenue School, as well as the Principal at Bishop Townsend School to get support and start planning for new student travel patterns.

CONCLUSION

The recent road improvements have created a better environment for school students by adding wide cycling lanes and creating an increased buffer between the vehicle lanes and the sidewalks. Upon review of the MTO Roadside Safety Manual and a satisfactory safety performance on the bridge, the City does consider pedestrian travel over the bridge to be acceptable without any new barriers.

To assist with the pending school closure and transition to a new school, Transportation staff has been in contact with the London Block Parent Program to initiate discussions with the current Walking School Bus Program volunteers at Lorne Avenue School and the Principal at Bishop Townsend School to get support and start planning the new route.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared with assistance from Karl Grabowski, Transportation Design Engineer in the Transportation Planning & Design Division.

PREPARED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
DOUG MACRAE, P.ENG DIVISION MANAGER, TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & DESIGN	EDWARD SOLDI, P.ENG. DIRECTOR, ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION
REVIEWED AND CONCURRED BY:	
JOHN BRAAM, P.ENG. MANAGING DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES & CITY ENGINEER	

KPG/

c: Maureen O'Halloran, Executive Director - London Block Parent Program