



Municipality of Port Hope

Staff Report

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Report Title: Walton Street Reconstruction Update #2

Report to: Council

Date of meeting: September 3, 2024

Report Author:

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Department responsible:

Works & Engineering

Report Number: WE-06-24

Recommended Action:

That Report WE-06-24 be received for information.

Highlights:

- The Walton Street reconstruction project is a substantial undertaking that includes the replacement of significant aging infrastructure including watermains, sanitary sewers, and the accompanying streetscape.
- All underground infrastructure including watermain, sanitary sewer and storm sewer has been installed. The project remains on track to be opened in November and is currently within budget.
- Downtown will continue to be open for business this Fall. Residents and visitors alike are being encouraged to support our local businesses and stay connected with everything happening as part of the Walton Street Reconstruction.

Background:

Phase 2 of the Walton Street reconstruction project commenced on April 22, 2024 which consists of replacing all underground infrastructure between Queen Street and Cavan Street. This work is being completed by Clearway Construction. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the status of construction and the actions that have been implemented to communicate and engage stakeholders on a regular basis about the Walton Street reconstruction project.

Discussion:

The Walton Street reconstruction project represents a significant, challenging, generational project that will replace some of the oldest and most complicated infrastructure in the Municipality. To date, Clearway Construction has installed 267m of sanitary sewer and 292m of watermain, both of which are now complete. The contractor

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is currently focusing on replacing the existing storm sewer with a new twinned storm system that is anticipated to be completed in September. Following the installation of the watermains and sewers, the contractor will begin work on underground electrical, the installation, curb, sidewalk, asphalt paving, and landscaping. The existing streetlights have been salvaged and refurbished and are planned to be re-installed later this year as part of the project.

To facilitate the necessary work, a full closure of Walton Street between Cavan Street and Mill Street has been required. A temporary mid-block crossing was installed at the start of the project at Ontario Street to facilitate pedestrian movement while the street and sidewalks are closed. This crossing was intended to provide easier access across Walton Street during the initial phases of construction.

As the project has advanced and the work has become more complex, the mid-block crossing had to be removed. The construction zone requires full access for crews to move equipment and vehicles efficiently throughout the site. With multiple construction teams often working simultaneously, the entire area is needed to ensure the project progresses within scheduled timelines.

The Municipality has been actively advocating for the reinstallation of a mid-block crossing, even if available only on weekends or in an alternate location. However, due to the ongoing construction demands and the time and resources required for installation, it has not been feasible to reintroduce a permanent crossing.

The Municipality remains committed to exploring options and opportunities for Walton Street access and increased pedestrian connectivity as the project continues into the Fall.

Initially, the construction plans for the Walton Street project included the eventual partial reopening of Queen Street to allow one-way traffic from Queen onto Walton and across the Walton Street bridge to Mill Street. However, as the project has progressed, the construction team has determined that this is no longer feasible. The roadway has been graded to direct rainwater into newly installed structures designed to help mitigate flooding in the basements of Walton Street buildings and businesses. With these structures currently open, it is unsafe for both vehicles and pedestrians to navigate the construction area west of the bridge. Additionally, large blue standpipes used for water main commissioning are blocking the site.

If an opportunity arises to allow for increased traffic flow from Queen Street to Walton Street, the Municipality will promptly share that information with the public. Substantial directional signage has been strategically placed to guide both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, including directions to nearby parking lots. Ramps have been provided to ensure continued access for pedestrians to residences, businesses, and other areas affected by the construction.

A project information office located at 90 Walton Street was established in June. One key goal of creating this location was to help provide information and support to residents, businesses, and visitors during the work. Staff from both the Municipality (including two summer students) and CIMA+ have occupied this space since it opened. It is anticipated that the office will remain in place until the end of the project.

To help support business continuity, visitor attraction, community life and morale during the Walton Street Reconstruction Project, the Municipality has been collaborating with a number of community organizations to establish events and activations throughout the project. Some of the notable events and activities include:

- Canada Day enhancements included activating Queen Street with a variety of interactive games and an art installation on two large pieces of concrete infrastructure which were later installed on Walton Street
- HBIA and partner initiatives include Busker and Linger zones, Shabby Chic Summer Event, Summer window display contests
- Critical Mass and partner initiatives include Pick Me Up Coffee mornings, Saturday Art Activations in Lent Lane, Community Engagement installations (Love Notes, Lego Tower and Community cross stitch), Summer Youth Artist Residency, Artzie (monthly publishing)
- Capitol Theatre and partner initiatives include Shop, Dine and Show Program, Christmastown Festival of Trees
- Chamber of Commerce and partner initiatives include hosting a 150th Birthday Party in conjunction with the Port Hope Arts Festival, Chamber Scramble
- Arts Festival enhancements this year included an expanded vendor market (50 vendors attended), 10-Minute Play Series and the Chamber 150th to act as anchors in attracting a wider event audience. Art Around Town featured the work of 30 artists in 26 different downtown businesses from August 10 until August 22. A digital festival map was created to help folks discover all locations. Capitol and HBIA volunteered as wayfinding ambassadors on August 10 to assist in person navigation in the downtown
- Outdoor Movie these were chosen with downtown reconstruction in mind and promotion included prompts to explore the district
- Road to Cultivate put together a dynamite line up for their weekly concert series in Memorial Park this summer. New this year, After Parties have been implemented within local establishments in the downtown to keep the vibe alive – and drive concert goers directly into restaurants.
- Other events and activations to draw people to the downtown include weekly drum circle gatherings, Cameco community BBQ, Library Summer kick off, Diversity Festival and Port Hope Jazz Festival.

The community has rallied to support and animate the downtown and the momentum is strong and will continue into the fall. Upcoming events include Run Salmon Run, Port Hope Fall Fair, Steel Pan Concert, Port Hope House Tour, Pumpkin Parade and Trick or Treat, Candlelight Festival, Santa Clause Parade and Saturday wagon rides as well as other art and activations being planned.

In the early stages of the project, the Municipality retained the services of In Good Company, to work with each of the businesses effected by the project, not just on Walton but in the surrounding impacted areas to understand the individual challenges, areas of concern and opportunities. This information has been invaluable in directing Municipal efforts to support the downtown businesses throughout the project to date.

As a catalyst to bring together the business community, the Municipality worked with interested businesses and local not for profits to develop the Port Hope specific shop local program “Be Walton” that is both marketing campaign and banner under which a series of activities, events and installations have been and continue to be developed.

To ease the impact of construction, effective May 1, transit fees were waived on Transit Routes A and B within the boundaries of the Municipality, which will continue through the completion of the Walton Street Reconstruction project. This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to support local businesses and to promote environmental benefits through increased use of public transit.

As part of the Municipality’s commitment to maintaining a vibrant and welcoming downtown area, in June, the Municipality announced that 75 percent of parking ticket revenue collected from parking enforcement throughout the Municipality, from May 1 to November 1, will be reallocated to the Heritage Business Improvement Area (HBIA). This initiative aims to support downtown beautification projects and events during the ongoing Walton Street reconstruction period. A number of giveaways and contests have also been run over the summer as part of the shop local campaign.

The Municipality remains committed to minimizing the burden and impact on downtown business owners during the reconstruction. Despite delays caused by poor weather, additional work related to Bell infrastructure, and unexpected challenges with rock removal, the project is generally on track for a November opening for both vehicle and pedestrian access. This target has been consistent since the project's inception.

To address the delays, additional crews have been brought in as needed, and staff will continue to advocate for this extra support when necessary. Some work, including landscaping, is expected to extend into December, with any deficiencies being addressed in the spring. This work will not require a full road closure but may involve short-term parking lane closures while the work is being completed.

In June 2022, following additional public engagement and outreach to stakeholders, a special meeting of the Works and Engineering Committee was called in order to consider the design options associated with Phase 2. The calling of a special meeting allowed for a more focused opportunity to discuss and deliberate the options related to the design elements associated with Phase 2 and further recognized that this project was of significant importance to the public and business community.

The special meeting included a comprehensive summary of community and stakeholder engagement up to that moment in time. The [report and presentation](#) provided to Committee included the overall community engagement timeline, an assessment of the key themes identified through the narrative comments received from the community, and a full list of comments received by the public. Further, the agenda materials also included the results of the traffic studies and traffic simulations conducted in relation to potential design alterations.

At this special meeting, along with the summary of public feedback on each element, design elements related to Phase 2 were presented for consideration individually. The Works and Engineering Committee worked through each individual recommendation and identified their preferred design alterations. This included consideration specifically

related to the bump-out and curb extension options identified through the design process and included for consideration throughout public engagement efforts.

The background on options provided, and subsequently voted on individually, was expanded on in a presentation by the design and engineering consultant CIMA+ and further clarified following any questions from Works and Engineering Committee members. The minutes of this meeting can be found [here](#), and provide for greater clarity as to how direction related to individual design elements was provided to staff.

The direction provided to staff on the design elements at this time, almost exclusively, was to proceed with the reconstruction of Phase 2 in a manner that replaced existing streetscape as it was found before construction. In other words, the streetscape of Walton Street for Phase 2 is to be replaced as is. Options related to bump-outs and curb extensions were not supported.

Following the special meeting, Council [confirmed](#) the direction of the Works and Engineering Committee at their meeting on July 5, 2022 and instructed staff to proceed with the completion of detailed design drawings for Phase 2.

Financial Considerations:

This phase of the project has been awarded to Clearway Construction for \$4,852,855. In addition to the tendered amount, the budget includes extra requirements for contract administration and inspection, communications, streetlight refurbishment, wayfinding signage, material testing, and contingencies. These additional items bring the total budget to \$5,997,375. The approved capital budget for this phase of the project is \$6,409,000, meaning the project remains within the approved budget.

A grant application was submitted to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev) through the Tourism Growth Program for \$270,000. This grant was intended to support community continuity planning, destination marketing, and community stakeholder mitigation planning for the Walton Street reconstruction project. However, the Municipality has been notified that the application was unsuccessful, so the expenses incurred to date will be covered by the project's Capital Budget.

The Municipality has also applied for a grant through the My Main Street Community Activator stream to support additional activation and event opportunities in the downtown core to further encourage tourism and commerce. Details about this grant, and indication of whether or not it was successful are still pending.

The Municipality has received a small number of damage claims related to sewer back ups and flooding because of intense rainfalls. While some claims have been settled, a few are still under review. Staff continue to work with the impacted property owners and the municipal insurer to resolve concerns as quickly as possible.

Additional funds will be needed in the 2025 budget to proceed with Phase 3 of the project, which will cover the area between Cavan Street and Pine Street.

Communication and Public Engagement:

The reconstruction of Walton Street Phase 2 is a significant infrastructure project that has garnered a considerable amount of interest from the public and business community. As part of the construction work, a number of plans have been developed to communicate construction activities, including road closures, detour routes, business continuity, pedestrian access and parking, and construction progress.

The plans have been executed via dedicated social media channels on Facebook and Instagram (@PortHopeDigsWalton) that provide daily updates and downtown business features, on-street signage, public notices on the website, dedicated construction progress newsletters, Council updates, media interviews, and the Municipality's eNewsletters, including The Mayor's Corner and Business Community updates.

A dedicated webpage (porthope.ca/Walton) has also been created and updated as needed as the project progresses.

Project questions and concerns from the community are being fielded by staff through a number of mediums:

- Online form: Members of the community can submit a question or concern online at porthope.ca/report-an-issue and selecting the category "All About Walton Street". These requests are monitored and responded to by Walton Street project staff.
- Email: Walton Street questions are also being fielded by staff through the Works and Engineering general email inbox publicworks@porthope.ca, which is monitored by multiple staff to ensure a timely response.
- Telephone: A dedicated phone number for the Walton Street project was established when the construction commenced. This number has been shared widely with the public.
- In-person: As noted above, a dedicated construction office space was established for the duration of the project. The office is staffed during regular working hours and members of the community are encouraged to visit the office with any questions or concerns.

Conclusion:

The Walton Street reconstruction project offers a chance for the Municipality to carry out essential and time sensitive underground infrastructure improvements, revamp the streetscape and modify traffic patterns, implementing concepts outlined in previous planning documents. This will result in a safer, pedestrian-friendly environment that improves the area's appeal and attracts more residents and visitors. Additionally, it will help promote downtown Port Hope as a hub for businesses and shopping well into the future.

Attachments:

None.