

CITY OF NANAIMO WAKESIAH AVENUE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

Public Engagement Summary Report

APRIL 2019



WAKESIAH AVENUE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS ENGAGEMENT DASHBOARD

APRIL 2019

Project Summary

The City of Nanaimo is planning major upgrades to the Wakesiah Avenue corridor beginning in 2020. The improvement project takes in an area of approximately two kilometres along Wakesiah Avenue from First Street to Sixth Street. Residents were asked to weigh in with their opinions on components of the project design, including transportation, parking and community features. This feedback will help ensure that local knowledge is considered and informs the final design.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOCUS:

INFORM
Introduce the Wakesiah Avenue Corridor Improvement project

CONSULT
Collect feedback on the conceptual design/plans for the corridor

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

ONLINE SURVEY

Posted on the City of Nanaimo website from March 18 – April 8, 2019 and promoted on social media + via a flyer distributed to area residents

				
342	XXX	179	148	182
Residents participated in online survey	Flyers distributed to area residents	Survey respondents regularly walk along Wakesiah Ave	Survey respondents commute along Wakesiah Ave daily	Survey respondents preferred multi-use paths for cycling

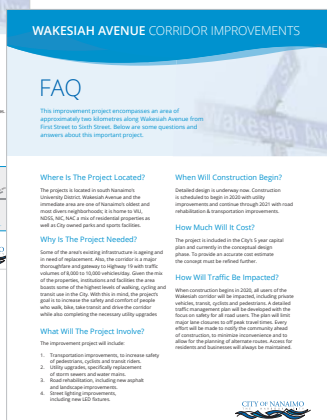
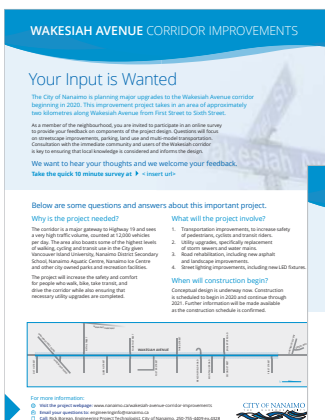
TOP 3 FEEDBACK THEMES

1. Intersection and crosswalk safety
2. Improved pedestrian and cyclist options
3. Boulevards, greenspace and landscaped medians over parking

What's Next?

The feedback received will assist the City of Nanaimo in determining a new street design that will increase the comfort and safety of people who walk, bike, take transit and drive the Wakesiah Avenue corridor.

Final design is expected in mid-2019, with construction scheduled to begin in 2020 and continue through 2021.





Introduction

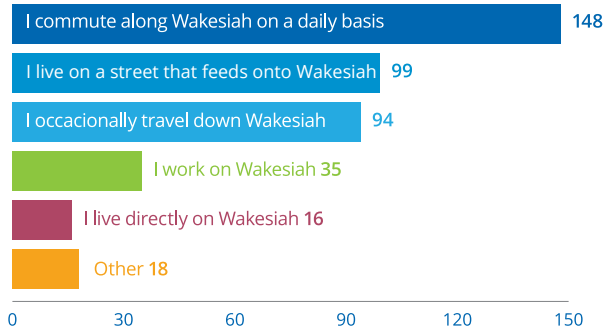
The City of Nanaimo is planning major upgrades to the Wakesiah Avenue corridor beginning in 2020. This improvement project takes in an area of approximately two kilometres along Wakesiah Avenue from First Street to Sixth Street.

The corridor is a major gateway to Highway 19 and sees a very high traffic volume, counted at 12,000 vehicles per day. The area also boasts some of the highest levels of walking, cycling and transit use in the City as it is home to Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo District Secondary School, Nanaimo Aquatic Centre, Nanaimo Ice Centre and other city owned parks and recreation facilities. The project's goal is to increase the safety and comfort for people who walk, bike, take transit and drive the corridor while also ensuring necessary utility upgrades are completed. The project will involve:

- Transportation improvements, to increase safety of pedestrians, cyclists and transit users
- Utility upgrades, specifically replacement of storm sewers and water mains
- Road rehabilitation, including new asphalt and landscape improvements
- Street lighting improvements, including new LED fixtures

In order to ensure local knowledge was considered and informed the final design, community stakeholders, area residents and the broader Nanaimo community were asked to provide their feedback with respect to components of project design. Another important objective was to use this opportunity to inform neighbours, stakeholders and the general public about the Wakesiah Avenue Corridor Improvement project and raise awareness about plans for construction in 2020 through 2021.

Q1: What statement best describes you?



The survey achieved its goal of reaching residents directly impacted by planned improvements/changes to the transportation corridor.

Q2: What is your postal code?

POSTAL CODE	# OF RESPONDENTS
V9R	232
V9T	44
V9S	42
V9V	10
V9X	8
V0J	1
V2K	1
V1Y	1
No Code	3

With the exception of six respondents, all postal codes (336) were from Nanaimo.

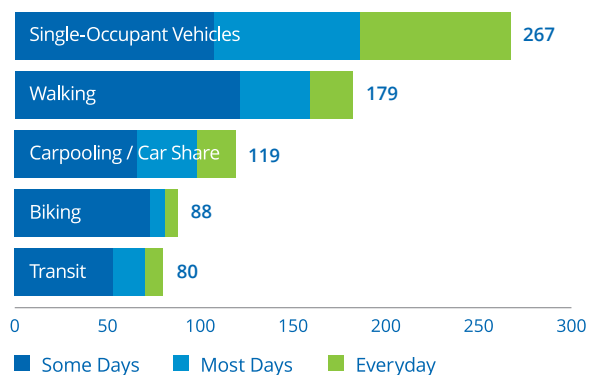
Q3: What age bracket do you fall within?

AGE BRACKET	# OF RESPONDENTS
35-49	140
20-34	89
50-64	86
65+	20
Under 19	7

Q4: Do you attend or does another individual at your residence attend either Vancouver Island University or Nanaimo District Secondary School?

Y/N	# OF RESPONDENTS
No	203 (59%)
Yes	139 (41%)

Q5: How do you travel along Wakesiah?



Q6: Overall, how happy are you with Wakesiah Avenue’s current condition?



Neutral was the most common response for almost all categories, excepting traffic conditions.



Somewhat disappointed was the second most common response for all categories, excepting traffic conditions.



41% respondents somewhat disappointed with current traffic conditions



25% respondents very disappointed with current traffic conditions + bus stops/shelters

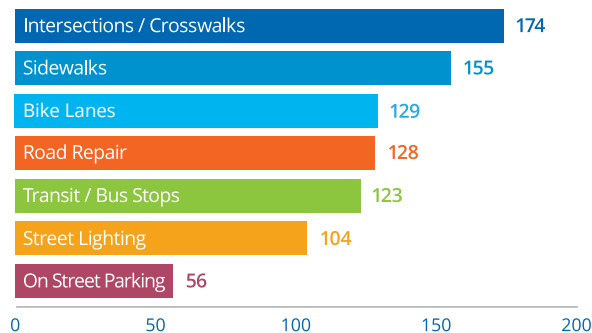


19% respondents very disappointed in parking + bike facilities



25% respondents somewhat happy with crosswalks + sidewalks

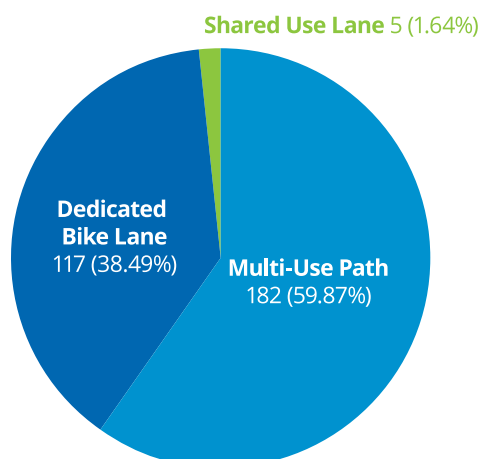
Q7: How would you rank the importance of each of the street features below to improve during the design of the Wakesiah Avenue corridor?



161 respondents also provided written comments. The following themes emerged:

1. **Traffic/congestion/crossing issues at NDSS:** The need to have pedestrian-controlled crossing lights to benefit both pedestrians crossing and motorists waiting was identified by respondents. Also, some called for an overpass rather than a crossing, for safety reasons.
2. **Bus pullouts:** The need for bus pullouts was identified by respondents, to prevent traffic from backing up.
3. **Sidewalks:** The inconsistency of sidewalks (some areas have them, some don't), disrepair of sidewalks in some areas, and lack of ability to use sidewalks in some areas after snow removal was identified by respondents.
4. **Lighting at crosswalks:** The need for better (or any) lighting at crosswalks was mentioned as a significant concern by respondents.

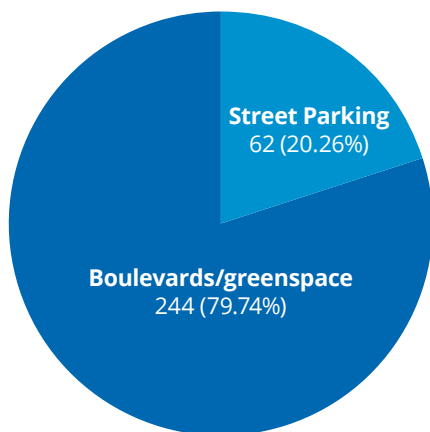
Q8: What type of cycling infrastructure would you prefer to use if cycling through the Wakesiah Avenue corridor?



Q9: The Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan (NTMP) supports the installation of dedicated bike lanes on Fifth Street, from Wakesiah Avenue to the Nanaimo Parkway, to improve connection to the College Park area. Would you make use of these bike lanes?

Y/N	# OF RESPONDENTS
No	163 (53%)
Yes	146 (47%)

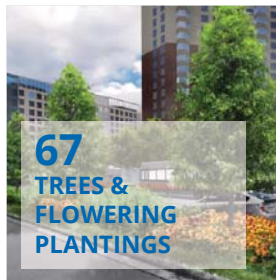
Q10: The lack of parking in the neighbourhood is often brought to our attention. Additional space along Wakesiah Avenue could be used for on-street parking, but also for boulevards and greenspace. Which land use would you like to see given a higher priority?



Q11: One concept for the corridor is to eliminate on-street parking along Wakesiah Avenue between Third Street and Fifth Street. This would give a stronger character to the streetscape along Vancouver Island University and Nanaimo District Secondary School, while also providing a greener corridor and improving cyclist and pedestrian safety. Do you support this approach?

Y/N	# OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	273 (90%)
No	32 (10%)

Q12: We are considering including landscaped medians along the corridor to improve vehicle/pedestrian safety and aesthetics. Which of the following options would you prefer? (Maintenance Costs \$)



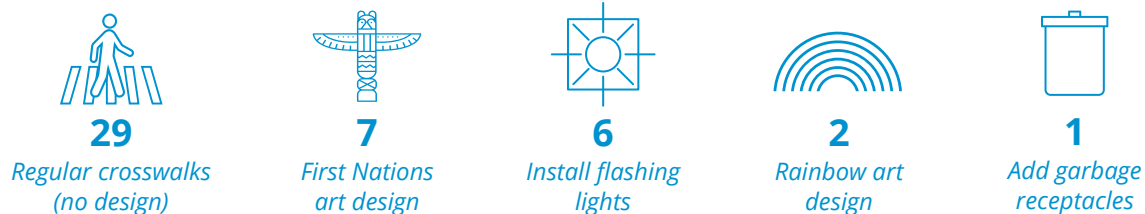
Q13: Rain gardens (Bioswales) are features used to provide quality improvements and quantity reduction in drainage runoff. Do you support the installation of these features where appropriate?

Y/N	# OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	285 (94%)
No	17 (6%)

Q14: Decorative designs for crosswalks are known to provide a sense of identity to a community. A decorative art design is being considered for the crosswalk at Wakesiah and Foster to reflect the Nanaimo District Secondary School. Would you be supportive of this approach?

Y/N	# OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	234 (78%)
No	65 (22%)

Q15: If you answered no to the above question, are there any other themes beyond regular crosswalks that you would like to see installed?

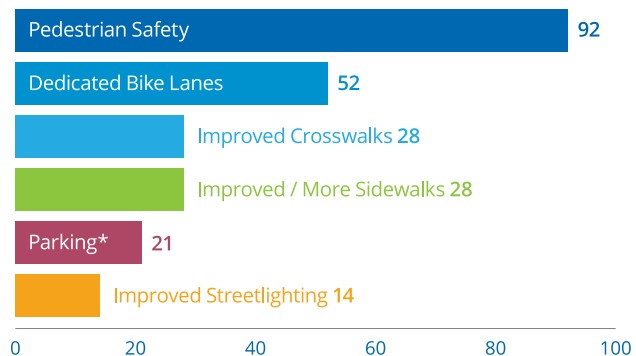


The remaining responses were divided among those wanting a contest, having VIU or NDSS students decide, installation of an overpass instead, local artists donating free artwork, etc.

Q16: Improvement of the sidewalk near Cat Stream (west side, between Second Street and Third Street) would require the removal of a few Poplar trees as shown below. Improvements to the Cat Stream riparian area would be completed to offset the loss. Do you support the removal of these trees to increase pedestrian safety here?

Y/N	# OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	273 (91%)
No	27 (9%)

Q17: What 2 things about Wakesiah Avenue do you think are the top priorities to address during the design process?



*Parking was divided between those who wanted more parking, those who wanted less on-street parking, those who wanted resident-only and other parking infractions better enforced, and those who just wanted parking issues “solved”.



Q18: Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns?

There were 121 responses to this call for further comments, questions or concerns, generating a wide variety of general responses, varying from “no additional comment” to “thank you for providing this survey” to a couple of mentions of poplar tree removal (covered in Q16).

Specific themes that emerged were:

- **Requests for dedicated bike lanes**
- **Parking requests:** more parking, on-street parking reduced
- **Pedestrian considerations:**
 1. Sidewalks (respondents wanting better maintenance/repair/snow removal)
 2. Addition of trees, landscaping, pedestrian-first planning, improving walking paths, etc.
 3. Lighting
 4. Crosswalks



THEMES OF FEEDBACK

1. Intersection and crosswalk safety:

Addressing intersections and crosswalks was ranked as the highest priority for respondents. Significant concerns were expressed about pedestrian crossing issues at Nanaimo District Secondary School, with many respondents suggesting the need for pedestrian-controlled crossing lights to benefit both pedestrians crossing and motorists waiting, with some calling for an overpass rather than a crossing, for safety reasons. Lighting at crosswalks and improved street lighting generally is highly supported.

2. Improved pedestrian and cyclist options:

While respondents most commonly travel along the corridor in vehicles, strong support for design features to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety was expressed. Respondents are overwhelmingly in favour of separating pedestrian and cycling infrastructure from vehicle traffic through installation of a multi-use path. Improving sidewalk infrastructure is also important to respondents. The inconsistency and state of disrepair of existing sidewalks was a common comment. Similarly, respondents noted the importance of pull-outs for transit buses, again to improve transit rider and vehicle safety.

3. Traffic conditions and congestion concerns:

Traffic conditions and congestion were cited as significant concerns by respondents, specifically the volume of traffic along the corridor and congestion at Nanaimo District Secondary School. Respondents are seeking improvements to congestion through the corridor project.

4. Boulevards, greenspace and landscaped medians over parking:

Respondents expressed strong support for the installation of boulevards, greenspace and landscaped medians along the corridor. Respondents are supportive of eliminating street parking in order to install boulevards and greenspace to allow for a greener corridor and improve cyclist and pedestrian safety. Hardscape/drought resistant medians are preferred. Respondents also supported the installation of rain gardens (bioswales) where appropriate.

5. A desire for consistent approach to corridor design:

Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current “patchwork” infrastructure along Wakesiah Avenue, and are supportive of a consistent approach to infrastructure components, such as sidewalks, cycling lanes and crosswalks along the entire length of corridor.



Conclusion

The engagement exercise received a good level of public participation and generated valuable feedback on the corridor's conceptual design and potential project components. The survey achieved its goal of reaching residents directly impacted by planned improvements/changes to the transportation corridor.

Based on the feedback and comments received, the City of Nanaimo can move forward with confidence towards finalizing project design incorporating a consistent approach to pedestrian, cycling and transit infrastructure along the length of the Wakesiah Avenue corridor, while undertaking road rehabilitation and incorporating "greener" landscape improvements. The primary consideration for respondents is improving pedestrian and cyclist safety along the corridor.

Next Steps

1. Follow up with survey respondents and project stakeholders:

Ensuring that the results of this public engagement are shared with survey respondents and project stakeholders is key to building trust and positive long-term relationships. A summary of the survey results should be shared on the project webpage and provided directly to those who included their email address to receive further project updates.

2. Prepare for the next stage of the project:

With this engagement complete, the project team should turn its attention to preparing for the construction phase of the project, which includes development of a communications strategy to keep the community informed of project progress and identification of potential opportunities for further engagement.