

City of Regina Projects – Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), COVID-19 Resiliency Stream

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| Date | March 3, 2021 |
| To | Executive Committee |
| From | City Manager's Office |
| Service Area | Office of the City Clerk |
| Item No. | EX21-17 |

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Approve the application to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program for the Bus Operator Driver Shields and Self Securement Mobility Stations for a total funding of \$2,571,177.
2. Approve the allocation of \$686,505 from the Asset Revitalization Reserve to fund the 26.7 per cent of City’s contribution to the funding.
3. Authorize the City Clerk to execute all agreements with the Government of Saskatchewan and Government of Canada upon review and approval of the City Solicitor.

ISSUE

On November 4, 2020, the City of Regina applied for funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream for two transit projects in an effort to enhance the safety of transit passengers and operators in response to COVID-19. The two proposed projects are the installation of permanent bus operator driver shields and self-securement mobility stations on Regina transit. These projects will increase physical distancing between bus operators and passengers. As well, the driver shields reduce the risk of physical altercations between operators and passengers.

The proposals are currently moving through the review and approval processes of the Provincial and Federal Governments and, at this stage, Council approval of the projects is required.

IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact

The installation of self-securement stations in all Regina transit buses will allow for greater independence for those using mobility devices on public transit. While all transit buses are currently equipped with securement stations, the self-securement system recommended in this report allows customers using mobility devices to secure their device without the assistance of a bus operator, thus, practicing safe distancing between individuals.

Financial Impact

Infrastructure funding from other levels of government allows the City to leverage additional sources of funding to support the City's high-priority needs. Eligible projects within the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream include retrofits, repairs, and upgrades of assets to support physical distancing.

The total cost of the two projects is \$2,571,177. Through the ICIP program, the federal government would fund 40 per cent, the Provincial government 33.3 per cent and the municipality would be responsible for 26.7 per cent, or \$686,505, for the two proposed projects.

The recommendation is that the Asset Revitalization Reserve be used to fund the City's portion of the projects. The Asset Revitalization Reserve is intended to fund strategic capital priorities to assist in managing the growth and revitalization of the capital assets and infrastructure of the City. The current projected yearend balance of the reserve is approximately \$14 million. Utilizing the reserve to cover the City's cost would result in the reserve balance being approximately \$13.3 million, within the target range of \$500,000 to \$30 million.

Policy/Strategic Impact

COVID-19 has changed how the Transit & Fleet department is delivering transit services. A large component is ensuring that employees and customers are safe, which included the installation of temporary driver vinyl barriers on all buses to help minimize the potential transmission of COVID-19. The driver vinyl barriers are a temporary barrier and not a long-term solution.

Self-securement mobility stations support the recommended actions in the Transportation Master Plan, specifically:

3.31 Continue to improve and increase accessibility of customer service and trip planning tools.

Environmental Impact

Increased accessibility and safety on the transit fleet will support increased usage of the transit system, thus lowering reliance on the private automobile and the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere.

OTHER OPTIONS

1. To not seek funding from the other levels of government, which would require the City be responsible for the full cost of the projects (\$2,571,177), an additional \$1,880,000 million.
2. To not proceed with the projects.

COMMUNICATIONS

The City will work with the other levels of government to announce the projects if approved.

DISCUSSION

The applications being considered through ICIP are part of a one-time stream of funding announced by the Province last September. The COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream is for shovel-ready projects that could be started by September 2021 and completed by December 31, 2021. The proposed driver shields are requested with the intent to improve the safety of transit operators and passengers. At present, temporary vinyl barriers have been installed on all transit buses to help limit the spread of COVID-19. Although effective, they are not a long-term solution as they do not protect bus operators from physical interactions. Transit has had four physical assaults in the past two years. Although physical assaults have been rare in Regina, there is a growing number of instances of violence towards bus operators in Canada. These driver shields have been installed in most Canadian municipalities with a population of over 500,000. These shields would be installed on all 121 transit buses and will be standard for any future bus additions.

All transit buses are equipped with securement stations to transport customers using mobility devices. Traditional securement stations require a bus operator to help secure a customer in the bus by physically touching and attaching securement straps to the customer's mobility device. This method, although effective, does not promote safe physical distancing. There have been advancements in technology that allow a passenger to be secured with no physical interaction by the bus operator.

Transit currently has 13 self-securement systems in transit buses. The operator can secure the passenger by the press of a button once the passenger positions themselves in the device. These devices are growing in popularity amongst transit systems as it is the best hands-free mobility securement unit for public transit. In addition, the self-securement stations will assist in promoting the use of transit to customers who are currently reliant on paratransit, as Paratransit has been challenged with meeting all of its customer demand.

The request is to retro fit 66 buses. Any new bus purchases will have this securement system installed from the factory.

DECISION HISTORY

In March 2019, Council approved a number of projects to be funded through the ICIP program in order of priority (CR 19-23). Most of these projects were longer term projects that were not shovel ready.

The recommendations contained within this report require City Council approval.

Respectfully Submitted,



Leah Goodwin
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Respectfully Submitted,



Chris Holden
City Manager

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