



Town of Eckville *"Community of Choice"*



PEDESTRIAN NETWORK PLAN

Eckville Pedestrian Network Plan

Introduction

The purpose of the Pedestrian Network Plan is to establish a connected system of paths and sidewalks and to promote safe and healthy lifestyles by encouraging and facilitating walking as an alternative transportation and recreation opportunity. As well, pedestrian linkages will provide access to and from activity centers such as schools, recreation and community facilities, parks and playgrounds, and the downtown.

Another goal of the Pedestrian Network Plan is to ensure maximum value for pedestrian facility investments made by the Town and reduced infrastructure costs over the short and long term.

The Plan provides a vision and framework for pedestrian travel, clarifying the Town's role in addressing pedestrian issues and meeting pedestrians' needs. It recommends both new pedestrian facilities and enhancements to older facilities in order to best connect pedestrians to their key destinations.

Existing Pedestrian Network

Eckville has a variety of land use types radiating out from its downtown center. The downtown area is diverse with civic, industrial, commercial and residential uses in the immediate vicinity. Other highway commercial and industrial uses are located in pockets in the outlying areas of Town. Overall, residential is the dominant land use type in Eckville.

The present network is comprised of sidewalks that are concentrated in the area of Eckford (50) Street which includes the downtown, Millennium Park and the schools. They extend into the residential areas in the older part of Town between 48 St. and 51 St. Sidewalks are also located along the major streets of Mellisa Hollingsworth (54th) Ave., 52nd and 53rd St. with a few other sidewalks in other residential areas of Town.

Streets that have high traffic volumes are 48 St. (Hwy 766), Mellisa Hollingsworth Ave., Eckford St. and 50 Ave. from 48 St. to Eckford St. There are no sidewalks on 48 St (Hwy 766) and 50th Ave. between 48 St. and 49 St. Residential streets have relatively minimal traffic providing safe walking for most residents. The Town has a low speed limit of 40 km/hr on all streets which adds to a safer walking environment.

The existing sidewalks are in differing stages of deterioration with a number of them reaching their life span. Costs and available funding from the annual streets and sidewalks maintenance program dictate the amount of repairs and replacement done each year.

The Pedestrian Network Moving Forward

The goal is to expand on and create a system of walking routes that link together existing resources and destinations, allows for safe interaction between pedestrians and motorists, increases recreational opportunities, advances the community's mobility, quality of life, and encourages and rewards the choice to walk.

People currently walk to a variety of destinations in Town for various purposes. The major destination points include:

- Downtown – shopping, groceries, restaurants, banking, civic, industrial, commercial
- Schools
- Parks and playgrounds
- Community and recreation facilities – arena, curling rink, ball diamonds, skateboard park, library, legion, community center
- Places of employment

Each of these destinations represent important starting and ending points for pedestrian travel and provide a good basis for planning ideal walking routes.

For the most part, there exists a good sidewalk network providing connections among these destinations. There are gaps in some areas. Crosswalks exist in school zones and Eckford St. has good accessibility for children, elderly and the handicapped.

In order to balance cost and the need for pedestrian routes it is desirable that sidewalks be limited to where their presence is necessary for the safety of pedestrians and to connect to major activity centers, the downtown and schools. Instead, emphasis can be placed on the creation of pedestrian pathways over sidewalks. Pathways allow the pedestrian to take advantage of open space creating a natural recreation experience.

Pedestrian routes should be incorporated into all new developments and improvements to existing routes should be included when roadway projects are scheduled. No new roadway or development in the town is exempt from this plan and this plan will be communicated to builders and developers during the approval process.

To ensure that the pedestrian facilities are constructed, Council should allocate sufficient resources on an annual basis to regularly expand the pedestrian network and maintain the facilities as they are completed. Council currently sets aside funds in the annual budget for minor sidewalk and street improvements. This is an excellent start and the commitment should be improved and continued in the future.

Regarding subdivision development, sidewalk and pathway construction should be completed during the infrastructure development of the subdivision. While it is recommended that sidewalks and/or pathways be constructed with the rest of subdivision infrastructure to reduce costs, the Town could negotiate on a case-by-case basis with the developer.

Services from volunteers or donations of material and equipment may be provided in-kind to offset construction and maintenance costs. Other advantages of utilizing volunteers include community pride and connection to the Town's pedestrian network, and increased awareness about pedestrian safety issues.

All pedestrian routes should aim to meet the highest standards and needs of the community.

Implementation, Action Plan:

To promote the Plan, the Town can build upon an already committed and active base of citizens, pedestrians, and enthusiasts in the area.

There is existing pedestrian facilities though some changes are being suggested in the short-term. A much expanded network is suggested for the long-term and the presence of the existing network provides a strong foundation from which to build.

Ensure that pedestrian planning is integrated with other transportation planning efforts as well as with long-range and current land use, economic development, parks and recreation, environmental, and community planning.

Where development and roadway reconstruction occurs, pedestrian facilities should be incorporated to reduce the overall cost of the system.

Secure the funding necessary to undertake the short-term projects and develop a funding strategy that will allow the community to incrementally complete the suggested pedestrian facility improvements over a 10-20 year period.

Prepare an outline map identifying existing sidewalks and future proposed pedestrian routes.

Prepare a cost estimate for new construction and retrofit of the existing pedestrian facilities.

Sidewalks:

The process to determine where sidewalks are needed should include the following;

- Proximity to the major activity centers, downtown and schools
- Traffic volume (to provide safe interaction of motorists and pedestrians)
- Location to connecting roads that carry through traffic or that connect existing sidewalk networks
- When a pathway corridor is not possible

Sidewalks should be placed on both sides of the street within commercial and school areas.

Where possible, wider sidewalks are desirable around schools, downtown, senior centers, and other areas of high pedestrian traffic.

In other areas sidewalks should be constructed on the side of the street where it is most beneficial to pedestrians and wherever feasible should be constructed on both sides of the road in high traffic areas.

All sidewalks should possess curb cuts at intersections.

Marked crosswalks should be used when a sidewalk crosses a high traffic road and in school zones.

Pathways:

Pathway routes include off-road pedestrian facilities, typically taking advantage of open space and provide excellent alternative transportation and recreation options through a more natural setting. Pathways also provide a safer route away from streets and major traffic routes.

The focus of these routes will be to provide access and connectivity between residential and recreational pedestrian environments. Short connectors between destinations connect with other connectors to the next destination. In the end, long corridors are created from this distribution of linked destination points. The Town can capitalize on easements and open space for locations and development of these routes.

To the maximum extent possible pathways should be made accessible to people with physical disabilities.

Regional Network:

A regional pathway network shall be encouraged connecting points of interest within the Town and Lacombe County to concentrations of residential development, natural features and other locations of cultural or recreational value. Efforts will be coordinated with Lacombe County to ensure regional pedestrian and trail connectivity.

Other Actions:

Require developers to provide pedestrian connections between developments to provide connectivity.

Encourage schools to designate, improve, and publicize safe routes to school and to implement a safety program that coordinates student safety patrols and adequate traffic safety programs.

Encourage the inclusion of nature elements along with street furniture, landscaping, and lighting in pedestrian improvement projects and promote land uses and site designs that make walking convenient and enjoyable.

Maintenance and Upkeep:

Once the proposed Pedestrian Network Plan has been adopted by the Town and efforts to implement the network are underway, focus should be directed towards the maintenance and enhancement of the system. Well maintained and managed facilities are critical elements to the long-term success and accessibility of the Town's pedestrian network.

Regular maintenance of the community's pedestrian facilities will be essential to maintain the safety of the facilities and their overall usability. To facilitate the practice of regular maintenance, the Town should allot adequate funding for maintenance out of its yearly budget and develop a schedule of maintenance activities for the pedestrian network.

Local civic groups could contribute by "adopting-a-trail" and regularly maintain trail segments. Many of the basic maintenance tasks, such as debris removal, can be combined to reduce the number of hours needed to complete tasks and maximize the use of Town resources.

It should be the responsibility of the owner or occupant of private property to keep their property and adjacent sidewalk/pathway free of litter and debris. Basic cleanliness should be maintained by local residences and businesses. Properly-placed garbage cans can help encourage clean sidewalks and pathways.

Funding:

Sidewalks and pathways can represent a significant capital expense for construction plus an ongoing cost for maintenance. Costs and available funding usually dictate the number of sidewalks and pathways that are built over a particular time period.

The Town will explore all approaches to the funding and provision of a pedestrian network. The long term success of this plan will almost certainly depend on the dedication of a local revenue stream for pedestrian projects. It is important that the Town fully evaluate its available options and develop a funding strategy that can meet community needs without overburdening the property tax base, maximize local resources, and leverage outside funding. Financing will be needed to administer the continued planning and implementation process, and manage and maintain the facilities.

Property Taxes:

Property taxes generally support a significant portion of a municipality's activities. Full use of property taxes to fund a pedestrian network could limit the Town's ability to fund other essential services and infrastructure. Note, taxpayers are generally concerned about high property tax rates.

Federal/Provincial Grants:

Research capital and operational grant programs that may be available for development of pedestrian networks. Acquiring these funds should be a priority whenever possible.

Subdivision development:

It is the responsibility of the developer to build the pedestrian facility that crosses through their property, or adjacent to the property being developed.

Partnerships:

Another method of funding pedestrian systems is the formation of partnerships with public agencies and private companies and organizations. Partnerships engender a spirit of cooperation, civic pride and community participation. The key to the involvement of partners is to make a compelling argument for their participation, for example, the benefits of walking, name recognition.

Capital Works Program:

A yearly appropriation for pedestrian route development in the capital improvements program is another option. The network can be developed over many years through a dedicated source of annual funding.

Local Sponsors:

A sponsorship program for pathway/sidewalk amenities allows donations to be received from both individuals and businesses. Cash donations could be placed into a trust fund to be accessed for certain projects associated with the pedestrian network. Some recognition of the donors is appropriate and can be accomplished through the placement of a plaque, the naming of a pathway segment, and/or special recognition at an opening ceremony. Types of gifts other than cash could include donations of services, equipment, labor, or reduced costs for supplies.

Volunteer Work:

It is expected that many citizens will be excited about the development of a pedestrian network. Individual volunteers from the community can be brought together with groups of volunteers and/or organizations to work on pathway development. Volunteers can also be used for fund-raising, maintenance, and programming needs.

Conclusion:

This plan provides a complete picture of the nature and design of the pedestrian network. The implementation of the Pedestrian Network Plan is important and difficult. The large number of sidewalks and pathways needed is a long-range goal and will likely take many years to complete. Its completion, however, will have lasting beneficial effects to the community's residents and visitors.

A series of existing plans recommend and support pedestrian improvements and enhancements. These plans include the IDP (Intermunicipal Development Plan), MDP (Municipal Development Plan), Land Use Bylaw, Eckville Recreation Plan, and Eckville West Outline Plan.

Adoption of this plan gives Council greater authority in shaping local land use decisions so that they achieve the goals and vision of this plan.

Adopted by Council: September 27, 2010

Resolution No.: 344/10

- PARKS
- SIDEWALKS (existing)
- TRAIL SYSTEM
- MEDICINE VALLEY PROPOSAL (green space, trail system)

TOWN OF ECKVILLE

BASE MAP

FEBRUARY 2008
SCALE 1:7000
PARKLAND COMMUNITY PLANNING SERVICES

