

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Ramp Working Group Report

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Respectfully submitted to: Accessibility Advisory Committee – Chairperson: Councillor Bill Lawrence

Ramp Sites Accessibility Ramp Site Checks conducted at:

Bay Street and Findlay Street

City of White Rock residents and visitors have a diverse range of needs related to their specific accessibility requirements. This includes, but not limited to: wheelchair and other mobility aid users, and people with cognitive, intellectual, visual/auditory, neuro-muscular and other physical disabilities. In addition, parents with young children will want to ensure their children's safety when navigating ramps, crosswalks, promenade and beach access.

In keeping with universal design best practices, all visitors, regardless of their abilities or disability challenges, will be keen to enjoy our amazing beach, promenade, retail stores and diverse restaurants. As well, to require easy access to safe crosswalks and a public washroom.

With the City of White Rock's *Accessibility Plan*, the Ramp Accessibility Working Group proposes an inclusive, safety-focused *Integrated Ramp Accessibility* based on the following variables:

- 1) **Land use** i.e. Commercial, Residential or Mixed Commercial/Residential. All areas were deemed high traffic since Marine Drive is the main road that parallels the beach front area.
- 2) **Crosswalk Conditions** i.e. Yellow tactile surface present, need to repaint crosswalk lines, if crosswalk light or major intersection is present, curb cuts and potential blind spots.
- 3) **Accessible Parking:** Ratio of parking spaces – accessible parking, location i.e. access to parking meters, curb ramp, promenade ramps, sidewalks and public washrooms.
- 4) **Railway Crossing Ramp Accessibility:** i.e. Yellow tactile on crosswalk, crosswalk width, large print track warning signage. The overarching concern remains the safety of wheelchair users or other visitors utilizing wheeled mobility i.e. scooters. In this respect, we defer to the Working Group researching this topic and communicating with Transport Canada regarding upgrading track safety within our community.
- 5) **Additional Site Notes:** As written within our report.

City of White Rock Accessibility Plan: <https://www.talkwhiterock.ca/accessibilityplan>

Disclaimer: The Ramp Accessibility Working Group members respectfully submits our findings/suggestions to the Accessibility Advisory Committee based on our commitment to offer full support to the City of White Rock's *Accessibility Plan* related to promenade access ramps, public washrooms and Marine Drive businesses for of people with diverse abilities.

Bay Street Promenade Ramp Accessibility

Land use: Unique Site: Residential/Mixed: including City/BNSF Service area, beach visitors, small marine craft launchers in addition to emergency vehicles.

Cross street: Bay Street and Marine Drive – no traffic light.

Crosswalk: Tactile Yellow Surface – yes. Repaint Crosswalk: suggested.

Please note: It was observed that a number of vehicles attempted to enter the parking lot through the *Exit* including a small transport bus carrying seniors which then *needed to reverse into ongoing Marine Drive traffic*. We suggest enlarging the “ENTER” sign by three times and moving it to the north side of the entrance off of Marine Drive to ensure it’s highly visible and more in line with drivers’ peripheral vision in addition to addressing their potential distractibility if unfamiliar with the White Rock area.

Parking Spaces: 1100 – 1153 (53)



Suggestion: Update the signage to read: “**Accessible Parking Only**” in addition to the international accessibility access symbol as opposed to “Handicapped” or “Disabled” Parking.

Extra Safety Precaution: The Bay Street parking meter is across the parking lot. This poses a safety risk for people with accessibility challenges and lack of online computer skills to park, and then pay for their parking.



Suggestion: Designated Accessible Parking Space (AP): 1122. Suggest adding free-standing sign post related to AP to ensure greater visibility when directly entering the parking lot.

Update the signage to read: “Accessible Parking Only” rather than “Handicapped” or “Disabled” terminology in addition to the International symbol of access prominently displayed.

Promenade Access: The square-shaped bollards at ramp way next to accessible parking space # 1122 are dark-coloured (challenging for people with visual impairments to discern). There is also chipped paint and corrosion evident. It was noted there are a few loose paving stones located on the right side of the park bench just before promenade access. Generally, the paving stones seems to be in good condition.



People with visual disabilities: Example of bollard creating higher visibility than darker-coloured bollards especially without reflective banding.



Bay Street Access Road (South)

This access road includes a sidewalk on the westside until mid-point on the access road leading to a crosswalk toward the east-side sidewalk that continues to the railway tracks.

Suggested Safety Precaution: It's imperative that small vegetation i.e. shrubs growing along the east-side crosswalk remained pruned to be no higher than 2.50 feet. (Estimated minimal height of a wheelchair user or small child) to ensure wheelchair users are clearly seen by BNSF track maintenance crews who may be performing maintenance on the tracks or turning north off the tracks onto the Bay Street laneway. So far, this vegetation is well-maintained. It's noted the railway crossing arms do not deploy and create a barricade when BNSF trucks are on the tracks.

Safety Precaution: During multiple site visits, Ramp Working Group members observed BNSF maintenance vehicles parked directly on Bay Street access road (south) without using orange safety pylons. During one site visit, BNSF trucks parked directly over the crosswalk leading to the east-side Bay Street sidewalk on the north side of the tracks.

On another site visit, a firetruck on scene appeared to be somewhat impeded by the narrow space in which to park on Bay Street access road (used orange safety pylons). As a result, there was also less space for drivers to exit the Bay Street Parking. Beach visitors were also walking in close proximity which contributed to this scene looking somewhat chaotic and at a higher safety risk for all concerned.

On a separate site visit, a police vehicle was parked in the parking lot roadway while investigating a specific parked vehicle. **Suggestion:** Discuss the safety and feasibility of constructing a semi-circular “critical incident” dual access lane situated directly west of the Bay Street laneway specifically for emergency/service vehicles and BNSF service trucks to lessen congestion and increase safety for all beach visitors including people with accessibility challenges.

Railway Crossing Ramp #1

The Bay Street Accessibility Ramp is situated at one of the most major railway crossings due to its width and lane access for BNSF maintenance vehicles.

The Ramp Accessibility Group looks forward to the Railway Working Group’s important findings related to improving the safety of our residents and visitors, especially those with accessibility challenges, when traversing railway tracks.

Suggested Safety Precaution: Many of the East Beach railway ramp crossing sites have this sign posted: **LOOK, LISTEN, LIVE** in a visible location on both sides of the railway ramp access sites. Our working group propose this excellent track warning signage be posted at the Bay Street Railway ramp since it’s the most visible, impactful railway track warning sign.



Bay Street Access Road (South-side)

There is a narrow turn-around for service trucks and other vehicles.

The current yellow-painted cement barricades serve as an excellent barrier. **Suggestion:** Relocating the “No Exit” sign posted on the yellow barrier closer to the front entrance of Bay Street laneway - Marine Drive to avoid turn-around traffic congestion that pose a safety risk to pedestrians.



Suggested Safety Precaution: On the westside of the yellow cement barriers is a steep drop-off to the rocky beach below. Yellow bollards are widely spaced resulting in a potential wheelchair user/child potentially falling through the space to the rocks below. **Suggestion:** Potential location to develop an additional accessible beach access since there is no place within close proximity for visitors to safely climb down to enjoy the more meditative, naturalistic environment away from the more crowded beach/tourist area.

In the meantime, the Ramp Working Group suggests mitigating risk by the addition of additional yellow cement barriers to replace the current bollards until a decision has been made regarding that specific site’s future development. In addition, after the railway track fence on the westside, the cement ends and there is an abrupt drop to the unpaved trail heading west paralleling the beach



South of the railway tracks - eastbound

Beach Access: There is an unpaved trail that parallels the BNSF fence on the north side.

Boat Launch: there is a wide ramp that continues to offer people entry to the waterfront to launch their small marine crafts such as dinghies and kayaks.

Rick Hansen Foundation Website: Accessible Ramp Requirements:

<https://www.rickhansen.com/sites/default/files/downloads/acp-862-universal-design-recommendationsaccessible-ramps.pdf>

Bay Street – Public Washroom Accessibility – closest washroom is located at the cross streets of Oxford and Marine Drive - an approximate thirteen-minute manual wheelchair journey/slow walk.

Access is achieved by taking the ramp located on the northside of the promenade outside the Pump House station. **Suggest:** Public Washroom directional signage located next to all parking meters in addition to a braille placard for the visually impaired (example shown on page 7 of this report).

Findlay Street Promenade Ramp Accessibility

Land use: Unique Site: Residential, beach visitors.

Cross street: Findlay Street and Marine Drive – Intersection traffic light: **(No)**

Crosswalk: Yes, suggest repainting.

Tactile Yellow Surface: Recommend adding.

High traffic area: Ramp working members noticed, and reported to the City of White Rock, that a south-side free-standing crosswalk sign had been tilted to North/South-facing and no longer facing east-west traffic.

Suggest: Adding overhead crosswalk signage to avoid any potential mischief which may cause safety issues in addition to flashing crosswalk lights when activated. Since Findlay Street is a high pedestrian traffic cross-street entering a higher density beach area. Drivers may be distracted/disorientated while entering the beach waterfront area. As a result, further safety measures to direct drivers' attention to the crosswalk would be prudent in order to mitigate risk. (The addition of a multi-coloured Rainbow crosswalk would add social significance and further increase crosswalk visibility. An auditory signalling device for those with visual impairments/attention deficit challenges would also be necessary.



Please note: There is a blind spot created by parking space 4610 especially when a Ford truck with an extra height canopy is frequently parked there. There is an estimated approximate 40% less visibility for drivers being able to see the entire crosswalk when driving

westbound on Marine Drive.

Parking Spaces: 3224-3247 (23)

Designated Accessible Parking Spaces (AP): 3246 and 3247. Suggest adding free-standing sign post related to Accessible parking (AP) to ensure greater visibility when directly entering the parking lot.) Excellent use of cross-hatch to increase safety when visitors utilizing those spaces. It was also noted that the parking meter is in very close proximity providing further accessibility for people with disabilities.

Suggestion: Update the signage to read: "Accessible Parking Only" along with the international accessibility symbol rather than "Handicapped" or "Disabled" Parking.

Promenade Access Ramp: Directly next to the accessible parking.

Suggestion: Street curb ramps – upgrade required? Example: City of Vancouver Accessible Street Design- page 13: *Curb ramps are to be installed at all corners, preferably a double design with a maximum grade of 8% (ranges between 5% and 7% are best). Any grade less than 5% may be undetectable to a pedestrian who is blind or has low vision, thus removing a cue that they are leaving the sidewalk*

City of Vancouver weblink: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/accessiblestreetdesign.pdf>

Suggestion: Wayfaring station at parking meter stand for people with visual impairments providing guidance to take the first ramp rather than the general public stairs entrance to the beach promenade. As well, another braille placard to be placed on the north side of the Cypress Street train crossing ramp to create awareness that a public washroom is located in close proximity to this promenade location. **Example shown:** Translink placard in braille.



Suggestion: Increase wayfaring guidance for people with visual impairments by painting the ramp railings either white or yellow with reflective banding to guide people with needed accessibility supports to take the safest route to the beach promenade.



Findlay Street dual ramp: Suggest: International symbol of access signage posted on accessible ramp railing.

Railway Crossing - Ramp #8

Based on its central location, the Findlay Street Accessibility Ramp is likely the highest visitor traffic railway crossing ramp on East Beach due to the northside Findlay Street residential area walkway.

As at all railway crossings situated within the City of White Rock, we look forward to the Railway Working Group's findings related to improving the safety of our residents and visitors when traversing railway tracks- especially for those people utilizing wheeled mobility aids.

Similar to other East Beach railway ramp crossings, this railway ramp crossing has excellent signage: **LOOK, LISTEN, LIVE** posted in a visible location on both sides of the railway ramp access sites.

South of the Railway Crossing- Westbound: promenade entrance.

Directly South – The Bear statute, while a wonderful example of civic art, may provide a safety hazard since a Ramp Working Group member observed a mother allowing a child to climb on it. It's also a potential hazard due to light grey colour for people with visual impairments.

Suggested Safety Precaution: Rocky slope beach has signage "Caution Steep Slope" Ramp Working Group doesn't possess present knowledge of this specific beach access' purpose.

Findlay Street (East Beach)– Public Washroom Accessibility

People accessing the public washroom or closet ramps are often in close proximity to moving vehicles.

Photo: Older visitor using a cane for support in the Balsam Street parking lot looking warily at nearby passing vehicle.



Suggested Safety Precaution: It's estimated that approx. 90% of East Beach public washroom users must enter an active parking lot by walking behind parked vehicles, or in the lane itself with active drivers to enter/exit the public washrooms.

East Beach Public Washroom Access Findlay Street to Cypress Street/Promenade Ramp

The Ramp Promenade Working Group suggest that the closest public washroom in safest proximity to the Findlay Street Ramp is located at the Cypress Street Ramp. Access is achieved by taking the beach promenade railway crossing ramp located at Cypress Street and then slightly backtracking to the public washroom. (It was noted that the paving stones buffering the tracks need repair to avoid wheelchair users' wheels becoming potentially stuck.) Beach visitors may walk on the green space and not in the parking lot (except during snow/muddy conditions) but it was noted that visitors often still walk in the

drier parking lot.) The grass surface is also currently somewhat uneven – especially for those with mobility challenges.

Suggestion: Add more accessible parking stalls within Cypress Parking since it is currently the safest parking area for people with disabilities. i.e. **3016** and **3015**.

Suggestion: Consider adding “Public Washroom Access” directional signage on the south side of the East Beach promenade (currently only Cypress Street) will allow all beach visitors, including, wheelchair users, to notice access to the East Beach public washrooms.



Suggested Safety Precaution: The Ramp Working Group suggests as a preliminary safety measure that a sidewalk be constructed directly from the Cypress Street railway/promenade ramp leading to the public washrooms for safer access for all visitors including for seniors, people with accessibility requirements including wheelchair users and parents with small children. **Photo:** Cypress Street green space east of beach promenade ramp.

East Beach Washroom Access – Findlay Street to Balsam Street/Promenade Ramp

Suggestion: Consider extending the **Balsam Street promenade ramp** directly west to the East Beach public washrooms would allow visitors - including those with disabilities and parents with small children, to safely access the East Beach public washrooms entering from East Beach promenade (southside) rather than directly walk in the pathway of moving vehicles in the Balsam Street parking lot.





Photo: Balsam Street rockery garden bordering parking lot. BNSF property on south side.

Suggestion: Conduct safety/feasibility study re: removing the garden rockery bed within the Balsam Street parking lot to construct a four-foot wide sidewalk with barrier to protect pedestrians/wheelers in front of parked vehicles – rather than visitors including people with disabilities and small children walking behind parked/moving vehicles.

General Pedestrian/Accessible Street Design Reference – Canadian Standards Association (CSA) with a focus on Clause #8 *Exterior, spaces and amenities*:

https://www.csagroup.org/wp-content/uploads/B651-18EN.pdf?srsltid=AfmBOorvdRK_h7BofhvWkzn65z6cF1_A2Qywvu1z8r2Z0jaTKNH_SAI

Integrated Accessibility Promenade Ramp Report

Suggested Key Safety Considerations

1) Integrated Accessibility Planning: City of White Rock residents and visitors with diverse accessibility requirements deserve the same opportunities to access/enjoy all civic amenities that our city's beautiful waterfront has to offer. After multiple promenade ramp site visits, our working group affirms that taking an *Integrated Accessibility Planning* is integral to increase both accessibility, and mitigate safety risks.

2) Signage: The Ramp Accessibility Working Group suggests safer access for people with disabilities to utilize the Bay Street parking station. As well, implementing Accessible Parking free-standing signage that reflects the current language related to people with disabilities. **"Accessible Parking Only."** Consider enlarging the **"Enter"** and **"Exit Only"** signage for people with visual impairments/drivers with higher distractibility due to witnessing driver error during several Bay Street Parking site visits.

3) Bay Street Promenade Ramp Access – Consider developing an accessible **beach access ramp** to increase safety for all beach visitors. A **semi-circular Critical Incident access laneway for BNSF and emergency vehicles** is suggested to avoid first responders and service vehicles working in close proximity to beach visitors which could impede a critical incident or cause beach visitor safety issues - especially for wheelchair users, due to being a high traffic area.

4) East Beach Public Washroom Access – a) Extending the **Balsam Street promenade ramp** directly west to the East Beach public washrooms would allow visitors - including those with disabilities and parents with small children, to safely access the East Beach public washrooms entering from East Beach promenade (southside) rather than directly walk in the pathway of moving vehicles in the Balsam Street parking lot. Our working group proposes that a study be conducted to determine if the rockery garden should be replaced with a four-foot wide sidewalk. b) **Connecting the Cypress Street promenade ramp with a sidewalk** on the current green space leading east to the public washrooms would provide a safe passage for all beach visitors – including people with disabilities.

5) Findlay Street Crosswalk – Current safety concerns due to south-side crosswalk signage being recently vandalized, and lack of curb ramp yellow tactile surface. Suggested adding overhead crosswalk signs and flashing lights plus an audible crosswalk signal for people with visual impairments.

6) We thank both the City of White Rock Mayor and Council, Engineering Department and AAC working group members for their continued communications with both Transport Canada, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and BNSF itself to ensure that all railway crossings are safer while accessing promenade ramps. Hopefully further research related to railway track retrofits may provide increased safety measures for wheelchair users and (and others utilizing mobility aids) to safely cross railway tracks at all beach promenade sites.

7) City of White Rock Accessibility Plan (Year Two) – Our working group has strived to ensure our findings and subsequent suggestions for safety/accessibility upgrades related to both the Bay Street and Findlay Street promenade ramps are in alignment with the mandate and initiatives related to the *2023-2026 Accessibility Plan*.

The Ramp Accessibility Working Group expresses their gratitude in advance for reviewing this report.