

THE CORPORATION OF THE  
**CITY OF WHITE ROCK**  
CORPORATE REPORT



**DATE:** April 26, 2021

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Jim Gordon. P.Eng., Director, Engineering & Municipal Operations

**SUBJECT:** Marine Drive Lane Closure

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**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council receive this corporate report for consideration and potential direction to staff.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Marine Drive is an important collector route serving more than the restaurant areas along the beach, as it connects East and West White Rock and provides access to the beach for residents and visitors. Council requested that staff investigate options for lane closures and one way traffic along Marine Drive to provide opportunities for restaurants to offer expanded outdoor patio dining and to provide expanded socially distant space for pedestrians.

This report considers both eastbound and westbound closures. Details during the investigation revealed numerous challenges. These challenges pose barriers for potential closure due to safety concerns, impact on residents, reduction in available parking for visitors, logistical challenges for loading restaurant supplies and unbudgeted costs. If lane closures are desired, closing the westbound lane will have fewer negative consequences than closing the eastbound lane. Staff would work to mitigate impacts presented by a closure.

If Marine Drive to westbound traffic were to close, important details including permitting for expanded patios, boundaries for temporary expanded liquor service areas, and permitting and liability insurance for closed travel lanes need to be concluded with individual merchants and with the White Rock Business Improvement Association (BIA). Staff will follow up at the next Council meeting with these details, should the westbound closure concept be approved.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION**

<b>Motion # &amp; Meeting Date</b>	<b>Motion Details</b>
2021-210 April 19, 2021	THAT Council requests for a staff corporate report, for the next Council meeting, regarding Marine Drive temporarily being changed to a one (1) way with one lane closed to traffic; allowing for restaurants to expand their patio use area and there to be more area for pedestrians to social distance; included would be safety & liability elements.  Carried.

### **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

Staff investigated options for lane closures and one way traffic along Marine Drive to provide opportunities for East Beach and West Beach restaurants to provide expanded outdoor patio dining that may assist with social distancing measures. The following options were considered:

1. Eastbound Lane Closure (refer to Appendix A).
2. Westbound Lane Closure (refer to Appendix B).

#### **Eastbound Lane Closure**

This option involves closing the eastbound travel lane and reallocating that space for westbound traffic, thereby providing pedestrian space in the lane adjacent to the north sidewalk. The existing sidewalk along the northside of Marine Drive would be used for the expanded patio space. The westbound lane would need to transition to the south shortly after Ash Street and return to the northside before Balsam Street. A second transition to the south side will be after Foster Street and then return before Vidal Street. Proposed alterations to traffic can only occur west of Finlay because eastbound Marine Drive east of Finlay is within the City of Surrey's municipal boundary.

The eastbound travel lanes were closed between Cypress Street and Johnston Street during the recent closure of Marine Drive for road stabilization. This closure was extremely difficult to manage due to the likelihood of drivers refusing to comply with traffic control measures. Extra barricades and extended on site traffic control staffing were required to maintain safe conditions.

Eastbound and Westbound closures share significant challenges; however, the following concerns specific to an Eastbound closure preclude its selection as an option:

- The relocation of the westbound travel lane to the south side of the street to facilitate patio space adjacent to restaurants poses a serious safety risk both at the transition points and along its full length. This would be especially significant during nighttime hours when drivers could become disoriented.
- Access and egress from a shifted lane would not be possible for the West Beach parking lots south of Marine Drive and east of Elm Street due to the tight turning radius required for the southern (westbound) lane of Marine Drive.
- Parking lot access and egress in East Beach would also be made difficult to impossible by the shifting of the westbound travel lane to the south to accommodate restaurant patios.
- Pedestrians could be confused and look the wrong way when crossing the street not expecting that westbound vehicles are shifted to the usual eastbound lanes.

For the reasons described, staff do not recommend an eastbound lane closure.

### **Westbound Lane Closure**

A westbound lane closure would have fewer challenges and consequences and could provide opportunities for increased patio dining and socially distant pedestrian space. If the westbound travel lane is to be closed, it is recommended that this closure extend between Maple and Vidal Streets, as a parking lane closure west of Vidal Street should suffice for patio expansion in this area.

While the concept of a westbound lane closure between Oxford and Vidal Streets presents challenges, it could more easily accommodate expansion of restaurant and pedestrian space than an eastbound closure.

Challenges and concerns for a westbound lane closure include:

- A lane closure through the commercial areas of East and West beach would complicate access for Police and Fire during medical emergencies.
- Westbound traffic blocked at Maple Street would reroute via Victoria and Columbia Avenues potentially causing congestion, parking, and traffic disruptions for residents along these streets.
- Many residents on Marine Drive between Cypress and Balsam Streets (the “Hump”) park either along the north side of Marine Drive or access parking garages along the north side of the roadway. Their access would be impacted..
- Restaurants rely on delivery vehicles blocking one lane of traffic while they unload. Arrangements would need to be made to temporarily open the closed lane for delivery vehicles to park and unload. Pedestrians, furniture etc. would need to be cleared and barricades removed for every delivery. This could potentially be scheduled for early morning hours but would require coordination to remove barricades. Unlike East Beach, West Beach does have a loading bay south of Marine Drive, but it is not likely to be available for all deliveries.
- Buses would need to be rerouted, as was done during the Hump construction.
- Arrangements for access to the closed lane would need to be made with individual strata properties for garbage collection.

### **Westbound Lane Closure – East Beach and Hump Residents**

East Beach and Hump residents will be able to access their parking garages by travelling in the open eastbound lane and crossing over the closed westbound lane. This could potentially cause delays and backups when pedestrian volumes are heavy.

Residents approaching from the east will likely want to use Victoria Avenue and then Balsam Street to access Marine Drive if they live on East Beach. Travel access could occur along the eastbound lane to access their parking. Balsam is a steep, narrow street and not suitable for heavy traffic use and would easily become congested due to lane closures.

It is proposed to leave Marine Drive between Balsam and Cypress Streets as a two way street and have concrete closure barriers placed at Cypress. This will enable access to the Cypress Parking Lot for those travelling from the East via Balsam Street.

A major concern with the Westbound lane closure is that residents that park along the Hump will not have parking access other than to parking garages accessed from the eastbound travel lanes.

Approximately 60 residential on street parking spaces will be lost. Consideration was given to leaving this section of road open for local on street parking access, but it is not a safe option, as it would result in residents (and those who would ignore the local access restriction) making unsafe three point turns and U turns into the eastbound travel lane. In addition to these serious safety concerns, such maneuvers would contribute to congestion and conflict during peak times.

Hump residents could be given parking passes for the Cypress parking lot, however, this is not likely to meet their needs and will fill the approximate 60 spaces in the lot reducing visitor parking availability as well as impacting City revenue.

A westbound lane closure in East Beach would also result in the loss of approximately 20 on street parking spaces affecting nearby businesses, such as the liquor store, that rely on this parking. This would impact visitors, businesses, and City parking revenue.

### **Marine Drive Access Limitations**

A suggestion was made about the feasibility of Closing Marine Drive from Oxford Street to Maple Street when parking capacity is reached during the following hours:

- Fridays, from 4:00 p.m. -10:00 p.m.
- Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.

This is possible with staffed barricades at Maple Street in the east and Oxford Street in the west and someone monitoring capacity of the parking lots. When the lots are full or determined that the area is at capacity, further vehicle entry would be blocked. Staffed barricades would also be needed at the intersections of Columbia Avenue/Victoria Avenue; Victoria Avenue and Balsam Avenue; and Johnston Road and Victoria Avenue to prevent bypassing.

The cost for monitoring access restriction during each weekend is estimated to be \$30K to \$40K.

### **Alternatives, Challenges and Consequences**

Lane closures are not recommended due to potential safety concerns, impact on residents, reduction in available parking spaces for visitors, logistical challenges for loading restaurant supplies and unbudgeted costs. If lane closures do not proceed, this would negate opportunities for patio expansions.

Closure of the eastbound lanes is strongly not recommended due to the safety reasons outlined in this report.

Closure of the westbound lane is also not recommended; however, subject to resolution of logistical challenges, permitting and insurance details, this closure could result in increased outdoor dining opportunities and additional socially distant pedestrian space. Impact and consequences to consider include:

- Significant parking and traffic volume increases and disruption to residents along Victoria and Columbia Avenues.
- Disruption for over 226 residential properties.
- Removal of 60 on street parking spaces on the Hump.
- Loss of 20 on street parking spaces in the East Beach commercial area, as these are only accessed by westbound traffic.
- Challenges for coordinating restaurant deliveries via the closed lane.
- Access challenges for Canada Post.

- Emergency access challenges for Police and Fire during medical emergencies.
- Traffic congestion and potential safety issues on Balsam Street.
- No visitor spaces in Cypress parking lot due to accommodation of 60 Hump parking spaces.
- Expanded seating on the sidewalk area and limited vehicular access may make take-out and delivery food services from restaurants difficult to access, as well as limit the amount of queuing space for patio patrons while they wait for their table to be ready.
- Buses would need to be rerouted, as was done during the Hump construction.
- Arrangements for access to the closed lane would need to be made with individual strata properties for garbage collection.
- Unbudgeted costs, although these could possibly be recovered from COVID funding.

### **Next Steps if Council Decides to Close Westbound Lanes**

The cost of enacting the closure of the westbound lanes is estimated at \$50K. As the traffic control devices are rented, the costs will increase depending on the duration of the closure. Cost recovery through the COVID-19 funding would need to be confirmed. Additional costs for 24-hour flagging services (minimum \$1,000/day), and digital messaging boards may be necessary if motorists disobey signage and ignore barricades as was the case during the Hump construction.

If Council wishes to proceed, staff will need to commission a traffic management plan (\$1,000), refine the cost estimate, develop a communications plan and ultimately install the necessary signage and barricades for the closure.

Expansion of individual patio permits and spaces, if exclusive to a particular restaurant, would likely need to include staff review of the individual proposals to confirm sufficient delineation for temporary expanded liquor services areas (a Provincial requirement), accessibility/curb ramps, and distance from City infrastructure, etc. These new seating areas would also need to meet any configuration requirements from WorkSafe BC, Fraser Health, the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch, and the Provincial Health Officer, which may limit the number of additional seats possible in the expanded sidewalk area. Given the average frontage of a business is 9.14m, and the sidewalk width is approximately 2m, the expanded seating area may accommodate up to four seats per business. Approximately 20 restaurants could benefit from this arrangement if they all decide to participate.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

A preliminary estimate of the costs is \$50K.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

A communications plan is an integral part of any significant change, including changes in traffic flow, access and disruption to residents and visitors. Some potential communication approaches include messages on the three LED signs at the Waterfront, information at [www.whiterockcity.ca](http://www.whiterockcity.ca), social media posts, media relations, advertising, an update for community partners, signage at the Waterfront and a new banner on the White Rock Pier. Residents and businesses affected by traffic changes will require direct outreach.

## **INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS**

This report was prepared in consultation with Planning and Development Services, Communications, Financial Services, White Rock RCMP, and White Rock Fire Services.

### **Comments from Fire Chief Wolfe**

Marine Drive is an emergency response route, and any closure of the westbound lane may negatively impact accessibility and response times.

Any emergency response required within the westbound lane closure area would result in a complete closure of Marine Drive due to staging of apparatus for the duration of an incident.

Events such as medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents or mechanical breakdowns occurring within the westbound lane closure area would result in a total closure of Marine Drive creating grid lock and potentially blocking and/or trapping emergency response vehicles.

### **Comments from Staff Sergeant Kale Pauls- White Rock RCMP**

The impact to response times and emergency vehicles potentially blocking the travel lane without the ability for personal vehicles to maneuver past are the same as mentioned by Chief Wolfe.

The potential impact of driver's choosing to disobey traffic control devices and/or flaggers, as seen at a low level during the recent hump construction, will place greater expectation on the police to monitor and enforce. This will create an additional demand on policing resources where the community has already identified other priority areas that they would like more police road safety enforcement.

If the one-way is approved, great consideration to robust protection of pedestrians with physical barriers in the areas with restaurants should be implemented. Although the majority of driver's can operate a vehicle safely, a very small minority may be impaired by alcohol/drugs, temporarily confused, experiencing a medical condition, or willfully neglectful.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

More congestion would equate to increased climate change implications.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

Improving opportunities for restaurants is consistent with the Strategic Priority of Our Economy

## **OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES**

If closures do not occur, this would negate opportunities for patio expansions.

Staff do not recommend closure of the eastbound lanes for the safety reasons outlined in this report.

Closure of the westbound lanes is possible, while having to address the challenges and in consideration of the consequences noted.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff investigated options for closing travel lanes to facilitate expansion of patio space for restaurant business and increased socially distant pedestrian space. If lane closures are directed by Council, staff would need to commission a traffic plan, refine the estimate, develop a communications plan and ultimately install the necessary signage and barricades for the closure. Management of access for restaurant deliveries would need to be carried out externally. Staff

suggest reaching out to the White Rock BIA and the South Surrey and White Rock Chamber of Commerce.

Following the development of a transportation logistics plan, staff would need to review individual patio proposals to confirm sufficient delineation for temporary expanded liquor services areas (a Provincial requirement), accessibility/curb ramps, and distance from City infrastructure, etc. These new seating areas would also need to meet potential configuration requirements from WorkSafe BC, Fraser Health Authority, the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch, and the Provincial Health Officer, which may limit seating capacity in the expanded sidewalk areas.

The Marine Drive lane closures are not recommended due to potential safety concerns described, impacts on residents, reduction in available parking spaces for visitors, logistical challenges for loading restaurant supplies and unbudgeted costs. If lane closures are desired, the westbound lane closure would have fewer negative consequences than closing the eastbound lane and staff will work to mitigate impacts presented by the closure.

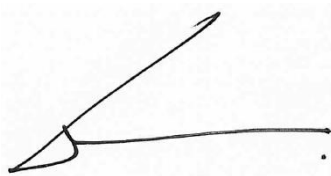
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Gordon', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Jim Gordon, P.Eng.,  
Director of Engineering & Municipal Operations.

#### **Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer**

This corporate report is provided for information purposes.

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Guillermo Ferrero  
Chief Administrative Officer



Appendix A – Eastbound Lane Closure



**Legend**

-  Lane closed
-  Parking or loading impacted by lane closure
-  Driveway or access impacted by lane closure
-  Intersection



Appendix A – Eastbound Lane Closure





Appendix A – Eastbound Lane Closure





Appendix B – Westbound Lane Closure





Appendix B – Westbound Lane Closure





Appendix B – Westbound Lane Closure

