



Wheelability

ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Uptown & Downtown New Westminster

Prepared: August 31, 2010

An Update on the 'Wheelability' Assessment Project

Background:

On March 2, 2009, City Council endorsed "a resolution indicating its full support of the project and a willingness to provide overall grant and financial management." Based on the endorsement, an application was made under the Built Environment and Active Transportation (BEAT) Community Grant Planning Program. On March 20, 2009, the City received word that its application had been approved for \$25,000.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of the project was to improve mobility and enhance active transportation options for people who are reliant on scooters, wheelchairs, walkers, walking sticks and other mobility aids. While the project specifically targeted seniors, it will benefit all people with mobility limitations or who utilize wheeled devices.

The project had the following objectives:

1. To assess the 'wheelability' of the Uptown and Downtown neighbourhoods, which are home to 42% of the seniors in New Westminster. Of this population, 57% report having "difficulties with daily activities."
2. To involve the target population, City staff and elected officials in two assessment days to facilitate educational opportunities and knowledge exchange.
3. To prepare a 'wheelability' map to assist mobility aid users in making informed decisions about possible routes to key destinations.
4. To share the results of the two assessment days with the relevant City Departments. These results will inform City policies, practices and design decisions.

Assessment Process:

The assessment process involved over 200 people, the vast majority of whom use a mobility aid:

- 10 people participated on the working group which guided the project;
- 45 people participated in the two assessment days;
- 121 people completed the 'wheelability' survey; and
- 40 people attended the open house and forum at Century House.

It also involved two City Departments (Development Services and Engineering); two Advisory Committees to Council (Seniors Advisory and Special Services and Access); and the Seniors Services Task Force. The latter body is comprised of older adults and agency representatives and its mandate is to coordinate and communicate the needs of an aging population.



For more information, contact John Stark, Senior Social Planner, City of New Westminster, 604-515-3777

Products:

1. Developed a pre-assessment and an assessment audit tool.
2. Developed a map (insert) which documented street gradients and identified the locations of accessible bus stops, cross slopes and curb ramps.
3. Documented the complaint process and identified key contacts within the City to share concerns, insights and suggestions related to 'wheelability.'
4. Produced a video based on the assessment days which is being used for staff orientation and training purposes.
5. Raised community awareness about the needs of mobility aid users and of the challenges they face in moving about the built environment. Methods included a forum, media releases, presentations and a video.
6. Shared all pre-assessment information, including intersection audits, with the Engineering Department. This information is being used to address identified deficiencies and to inform design decisions.



For more information on the project, including the map and video, go to:

http://www.newwestcity.ca/business/planning_development/social_planning/articles219.php

Progress:

1. The City has allocated \$50,000 on an annual basis (2010 to 2014) to undertake accessibility upgrades, including curb ramp installation and replacement. The City has also allocated \$75,000 in 2010, \$100,000 in 2011 and \$150,000 in subsequent years for sidewalk upgrading and replacement.
2. The City is actively addressing deficiencies as identified through the 'wheelability' assessment project. Recent examples include the replacement of the north sidewalk on Carnarvon Street between Eighth and Tenth Streets and the replacement of curb ramps at the intersection of Carnarvon and Eighth Streets.
3. The City is reviewing the design of transportation infrastructure as it relates to 'wheelability.' This review has resulted in a number of changes, including the discontinuation of inlaid decorative brick in sidewalks.
4. The City is working with post-secondary institutions to improve mobility and enhance active transportation options for the targeted population. For example, the City is in discussions with SFU Gerontology regarding its participation in a 'Demonstration of Community Mobility for Seniors' Project.

Insert: Example Section of 'Wheelability' Map



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