Region of Waterloo

Public Consultation Centre #1 Summary

University Avenue between Albert Street and Weber Street, Class Environmental Assessment, Schedule ‘C’ and Preliminary Design

IBI

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ORIGINATOR:	Patrick Garel, Julianna Arcese, P.Eng.
REVIEWER:	Marianne Alden, MCIP, RPP
AUTHORIZATION:	Kelly Cobbe, P.Eng.
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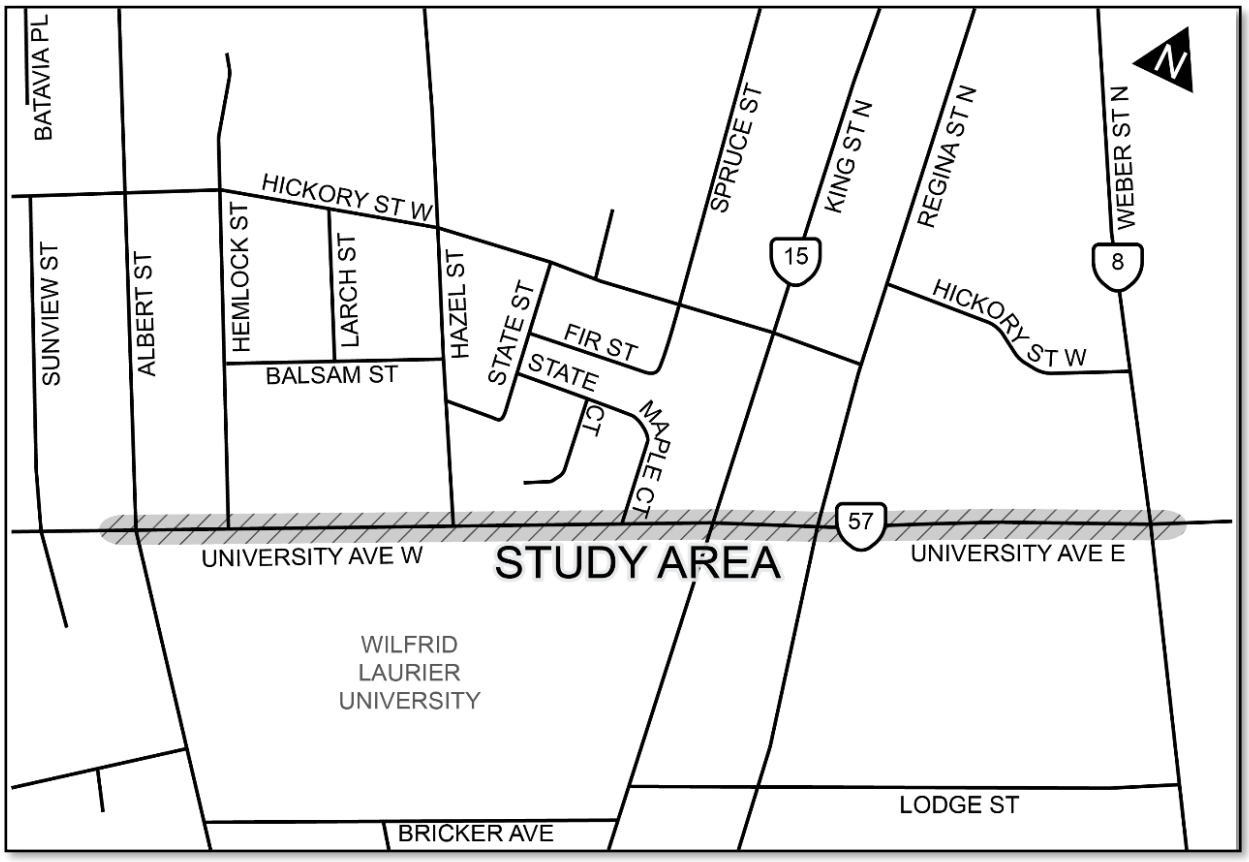
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1 Introduction

The Region of Waterloo, and their consultant IBI Group, are undertaking a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) Schedule 'C' Study, including preliminary design, for improvements of a 1.1 km stretch of University Avenue (Regional Road 57) from Albert Street to Weber Street in the City of Waterloo (**Exhibit 1-1**). University Avenue is a Regional Road, owned and maintained by the Region of Waterloo.

Exhibit 1-1. Study Area



Improvements along University Avenue are being considered to improve roadway and underground infrastructure (watermain, storm sewer and sanitary sewer), active transportation facilities and traffic operations along the corridor.

The 2018 Regional Transportation Master Plan identified this section of roadway for rehabilitation to address deteriorated pavement structure and provide active transportation and intersection improvements. Also, the City of Waterloo's watermain and sanitary sewer systems require replacement. The Transportation Master Plan identified this section of University Avenue from King Street to Weber Street for cycling infrastructure installation to complete the cycling network connectivity in this area.

2 PCC Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this Public Consultation Centre (PCC) is to have interested stakeholders and the public learn about, and provide input on:

a) The needs and opportunities for improvements on University Avenue;
b) The project environment (natural, social, cultural/heritage, and economic);
c) The alternatives for improvements being considered by the Project Team;
d) How the alternatives for improvements will be evaluated and how a preferred alternative will be selected; and
e) Future opportunities for public input.

The objectives of PCC #1 were to present:

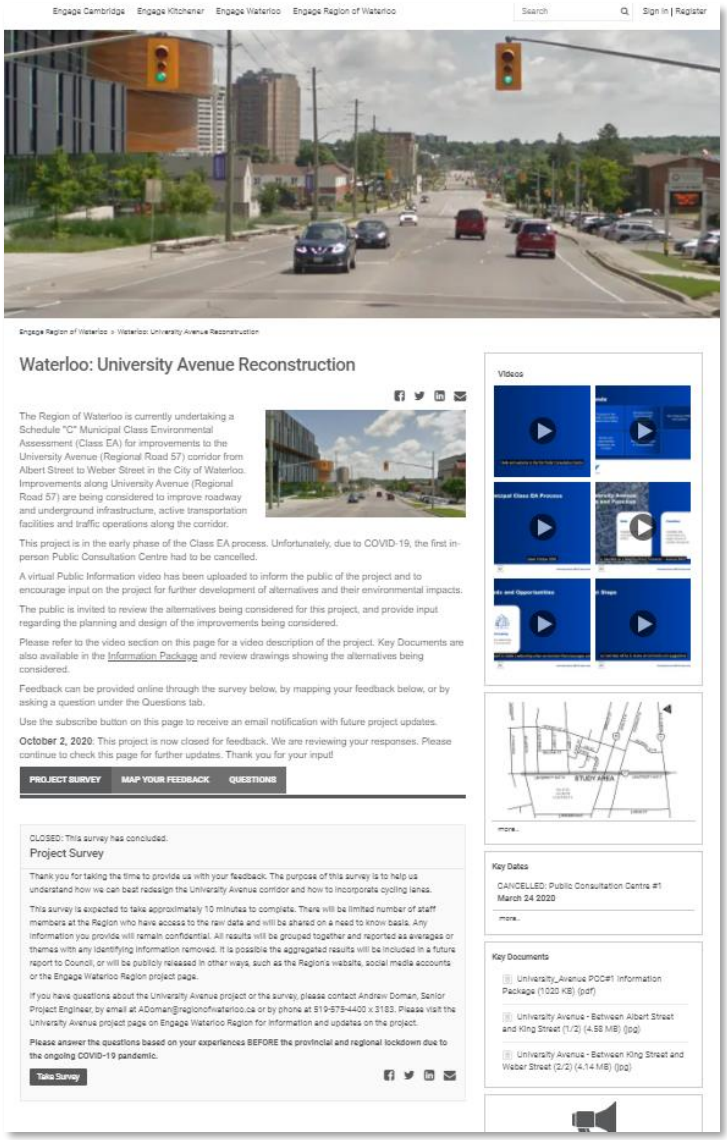
- The Problem/Opportunity statement;
- Existing environmental conditions;
- Alternatives being considered; and
- Receive feedback from the public and stakeholders.

3 Notifications

The original Notice of PCC #1 was published in The Waterloo Record on March 10 and 17, 2020 and in the Waterloo Chronicle on March 12 and 19, 2020. Notices were also mailed to over 50 residents within and bordering the study area, and mailed to identified agency, stakeholder groups, and Indigenous community representatives on March 6, 2020. However due Covid-19, PCC #1 was postponed, and a cancellation notice was mailed on March 16, 2020. On August 11, 2020 the rescheduled PCC #1 notice was mailed. There were no newspaper publications for the latter notices. All notices and the contact lists are in **Appendix A**.

All notices were posted on the Study's EngageWR webpage (www.engagewr.ca/University-Ave). A snapshot of the webpage is in **Exhibit 3-1**.

Exhibit 3-1. EngageWR Study Webpage



The original PCC #1 notice invited all interested parties to participate in the study and provided information on the:

- Study background;
- Study Process (subject to the requirements of the Municipal Class EA Schedule C process);
- Community Involvement;
    - The Region's website and the Study's EngageWR webpage;
    - How to actively participate in the study through the virtual PCC and/or by requesting to be added to the project mailing list;
    - Comment period for virtual PCC #1;
- Contact information for the Region and consultant project leads;
- Accessibility requests; and,
- Respondent privacy as subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

The Region also used social media to advertise the PCC. This included Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

4 Public Consultation Centre #1 Details

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 public meeting restrictions, PCC #1 was held online between August 12 and October 2, 2020, and hosted on the Region's EngageWR website (https://www.engagewr.ca/University-Ave). The PCC was provided as an accessible video presentation, where interested parties could watch and listen to the 20 presentation boards, as well as the PCC #1 Information Package.

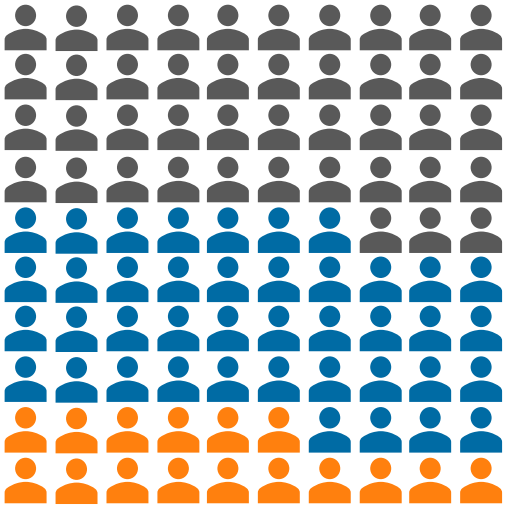
Participants were encouraged to engage with the Study Team through a variety of means:

- PCC# 1 Public Survey (focussed on their University Avenue experience);
- Location based comments on Study Area map. Visit the following weblink for more information: https://www.engagewr.ca/University-Ave?preview=true&tool=map#tool_tab);
- Question and Answer page;
- Comment forms/emails; and
- By phone.

The Region's and Consultant Team's Project Managers' contact information were provided for direct questions, requests to be added to the mailing list, or to request further information about the study.

During the period of PCC #1, the Study's EngageWR webpage was visited 568 times. The survey and breakdown of participation is presented in **Appendix B** and summarized in **Exhibit 4.1.**

Exhibit 4-1: Summary of EngageWR Study Webpage Engagement During PCC #1



324 Informed Visitors

Viewed documents, images or multiple pages (Includes Engaged Visitors)

90 Engaged Visitors

Participated in the online survey, submitted mapped feedback and/or asked a question

85
Participated in the PCC #1 Survey

54
Viewed the PCC #1 Presentation

14
Visited the Key Dates page

2
Submitted Questions to the Q&A

28
Viewed the Detailed Study Area Map

207
Visited Multiple Project Webpages

9
Placed Pins on the Map

133
Downloaded a document

568
Visited Project Webpage

5 Information Presented

A video with presentation boards and voice over was used to present information about the study. The boards provided an overview of the study, including the Problem/Opportunity, study area limits, the Class EA process being followed (Municipal Class EA, Schedule C), existing challenges and constraints, potential solutions including preliminary unit costs, and how the alternative design concepts will be evaluated. A summary of the boards presented is provided in **Exhibit 5-1**, with copies of the boards included in **Appendix C**.

Exhibit 5-1: Summary of PCC #1 Display Boards

#	Board Title	Description of Board
1	Title Board	Name of study, type of EA, date and duration, direction to sign in and complete a comment sheet
2	Agenda	Overview of the information presented
3	Purpose of Public Consultation Centre	Provide stakeholders with an opportunity to participate; and present and receive input on needs and opportunities, environment, alternative solutions and future opportunities.
4	Study Area	Map of Study Area
5	Purpose of the Study	Purpose of study and considerations for evaluating potential improvements
6	Municipal Class EA Process	Overview of the Municipal Class EA process to be completed
7	Municipal Class EA Process	Flow chart of the Municipal Class EA process, including the current state of the project, study timeline, and steps to be completed for this study
8	Problem Statement	Problem to be addressed through the Class EA process
9	University Avenue: Role and Function	Classification of University Avenue as identified in the Regional Transportation Corridor Design Guidelines, including its roles and function
10	Active Transportation	Existing conditions and challenges with respect to sidewalks, cycling infrastructure, and public transit
11	Natural Environment and Cultural Heritage	Summary of environmental conditions considered as part of the EA process
12	Needs and Opportunities	The three main opportunities identified for improvement: streetscaping, active transportation and traffic
13	Alternative Solutions Under Consideration	Summary of the 4 four alternative solutions considered and evaluated to address the needs and opportunities.
14	Alternative 1: Do Nothing	Reconstruct University Avenue, maintaining the existing conditions along the Study Area corridor
15	Alternative 2: Separated Bike Lane with a Painted Buffer	Reconstruct University Avenue, maintaining on-road bike lanes between Albert Street and King Street North, adding on-road

#	Board Title	Description of Board
		bike lanes between King Street North and Weber Street North (0.3m painted buffer between outside traffic lane and bike lane), and widening sidewalks to 2.1 m (where possible)
16	Alternative 3: Separated Bike Lane with a Raised Physical Barrier	Reconstruct University Avenue, with raised physical barriers (flexible bollards) between the outside lane of traffic and bike lanes, and widening sidewalks to 2.1 m (where possible)
17	Alternative 3a: Separated Bike Lane with a Physical Barrier	Reconstruct University Avenue, with physical barriers (curbs) between the outside lane of traffic and raised bike lanes, and widening sidewalks to 2.1 m (where possible)
18	Alternative Solutions Evaluation Criteria	Summary of the categories each alternative will be evaluated against: traffic operations and user comfort, natural environment, socio-cultural environment, economic environment, and regulatory environment
19	Next Steps	Summary of next steps to be completed as part of the Study, including review of comments and suggestions, confirm preferred planning alternative, develop and evaluate design solutions, present the preferred alternative at PCC #2, prepare Environmental Study Report; issue Notice of Completion and 30-day public review, complete final design, go to tender, and proceed to construction
20	Contact Information	Study team contact information and link to the University Avenue Project EngageWR webpage

6 Comments from the Public

Input from the public was collected through an online questionnaire survey and directly emailed comments, as discussed in detail in this section. The questionnaire results, comments received at the PCC and subsequent responses received by email are tallied and summarized in **Appendix D**.

6.1 PCC #1 Survey and Submitted Comments

This survey was conducted online through the EngageWR Study webpage to collect information on where respondents reside, the frequency of their travel along the corridor, the mode of travel used, the purpose of their travel, their primary concerns about the existing corridor, and which proposed option(s) would improve their overall feeling of safety.

A total of 85 PCC #1 online surveys were submitted between March 11, 2020 and September 30, 2020. The list of survey questions, copies of the completed surveys and a detailed summary are included in **Appendix E**.

6.1.1 Survey Respondent Profile

Four of the survey questions were aimed at identifying the profile of the respondent. The vast majority of the respondents are from the City of Kitchener and City of Waterloo, using a mix of travel modes. Respondents traveling along the corridor less than a few times per month represent the largest group, followed by those who travel a few times per week and a few times per month. Residents make up the largest group of respondents, followed by commuters, then students, respectively.

The profile of the PCC #1 Survey respondents is summarized in **Exhibit 6-1**.

6.1.2 Breakdown of Survey Response Themes

Respondents expressed strong preference for separating cyclists from both motorists and pedestrians, and varying opinion on availability of space at transit stops.

Top concerns include:

- Conflict between cyclists and autos;
- Busy intersections for pedestrians to cross;
- Speed of vehicles;
- Traffic being stopped by turning vehicles;
- Narrow sidewalks; and
- Poor visibility at intersections.

Desired improvements include:

- Longer advanced turning signals for vehicles;
- Improved visibility at intersections;

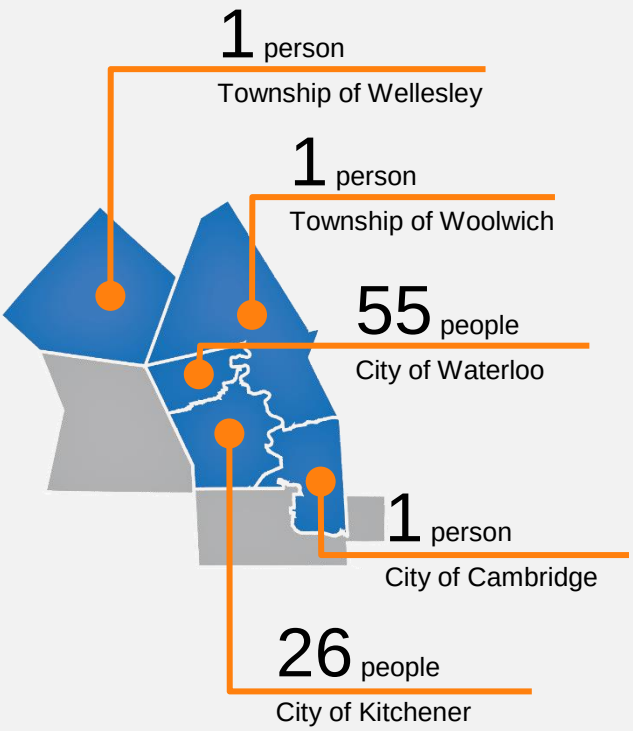
- Longer crossing times for pedestrians;
- Improved lighting on sidewalks; and
- Longer turning lanes for vehicles.

The most preferred alternative is Alternative 3a: Separated bike lane (off roadway) with concrete curb and enhanced sidewalk (2.1m wide where possible).

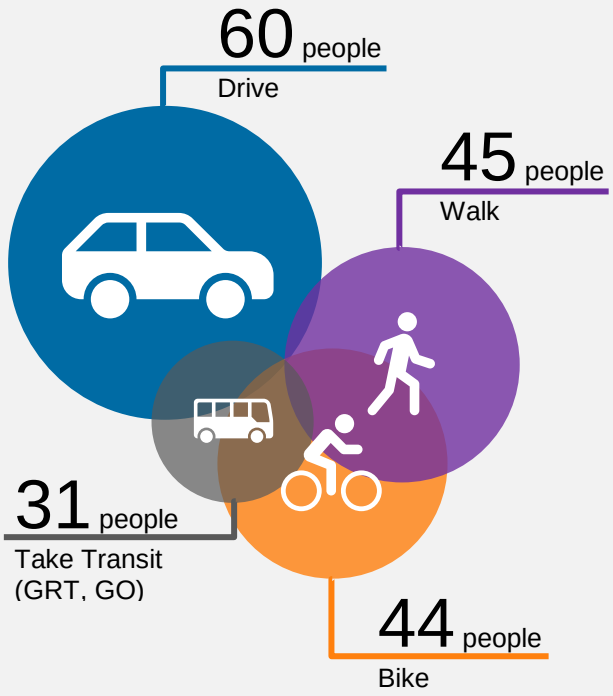
Exhibit 6-2 and **Exhibit 6-3** illustrate survey respondent preferences. **Exhibit 6-4** summarizes comments received.

Exhibit 6-1: Summary of PCC #1 Survey Respondent Profile

Where do you live?

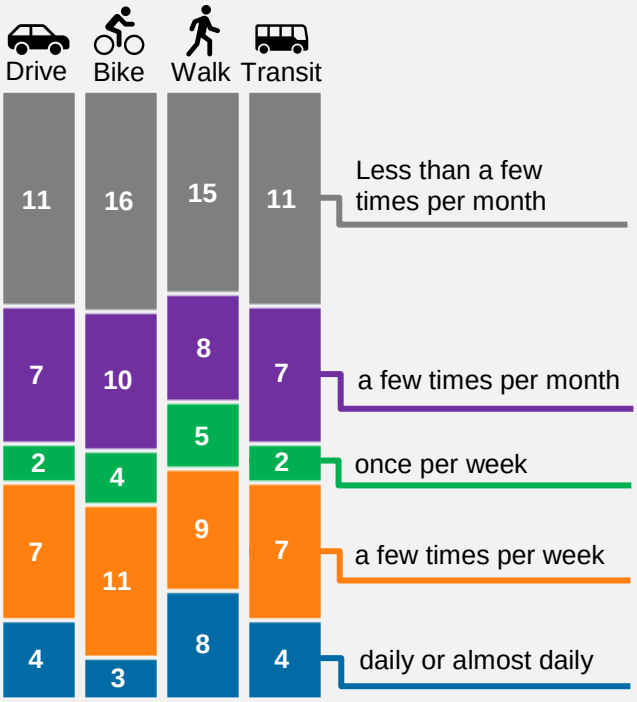


How do you most often travel?



(Some respondents use more than one mode of travel)

How often do you travel along University Avenue?



Which of the following best describes how you live or interact with the University Avenue area?

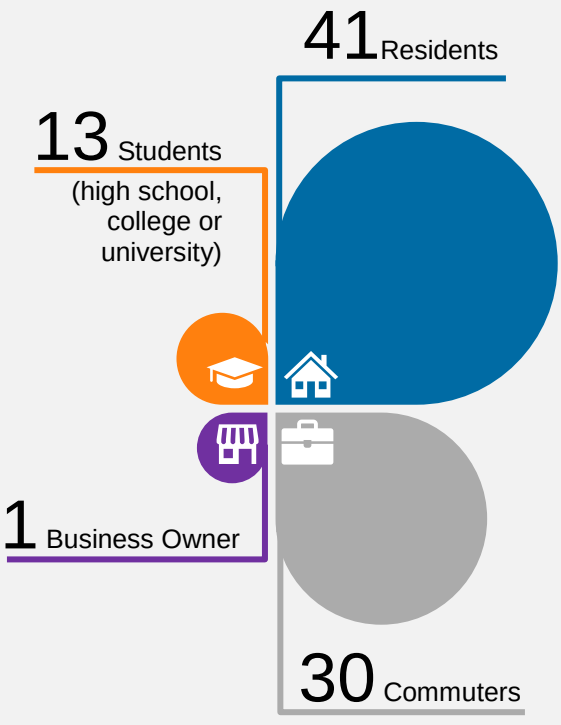
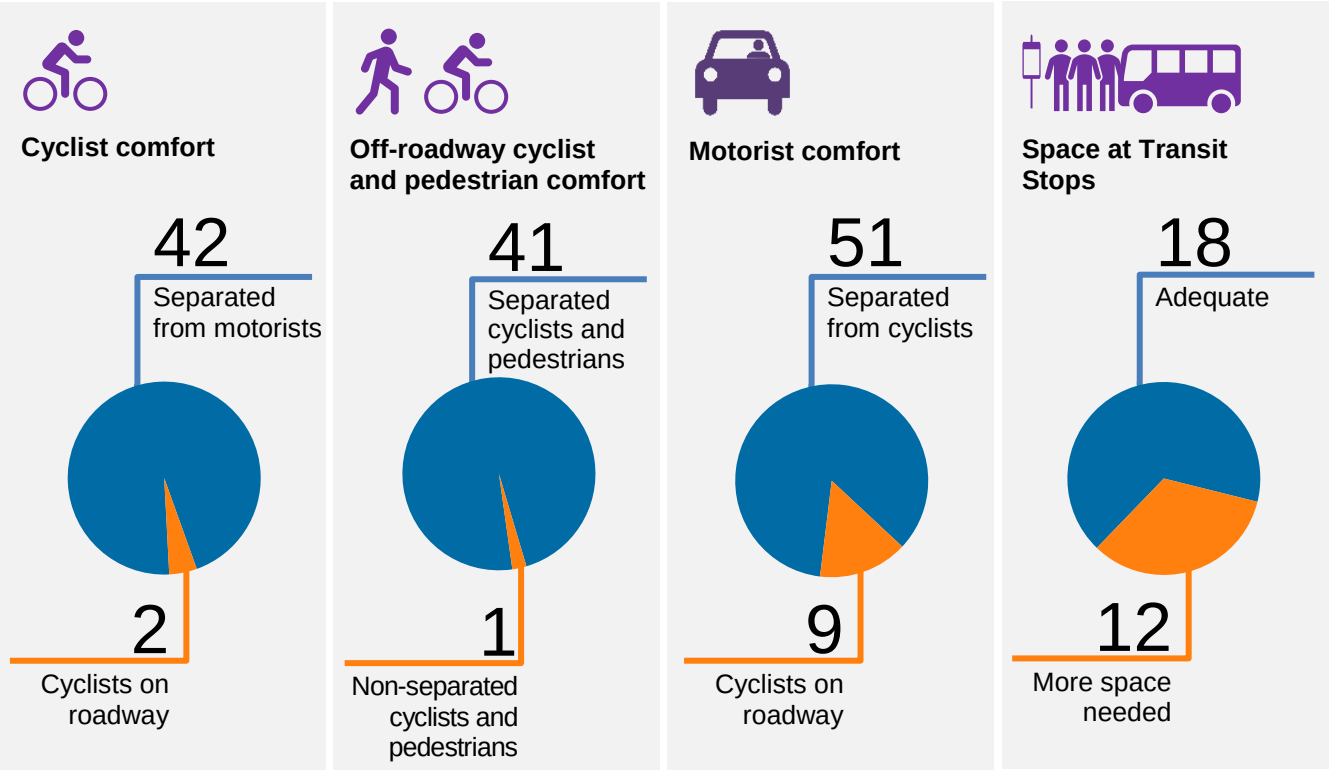
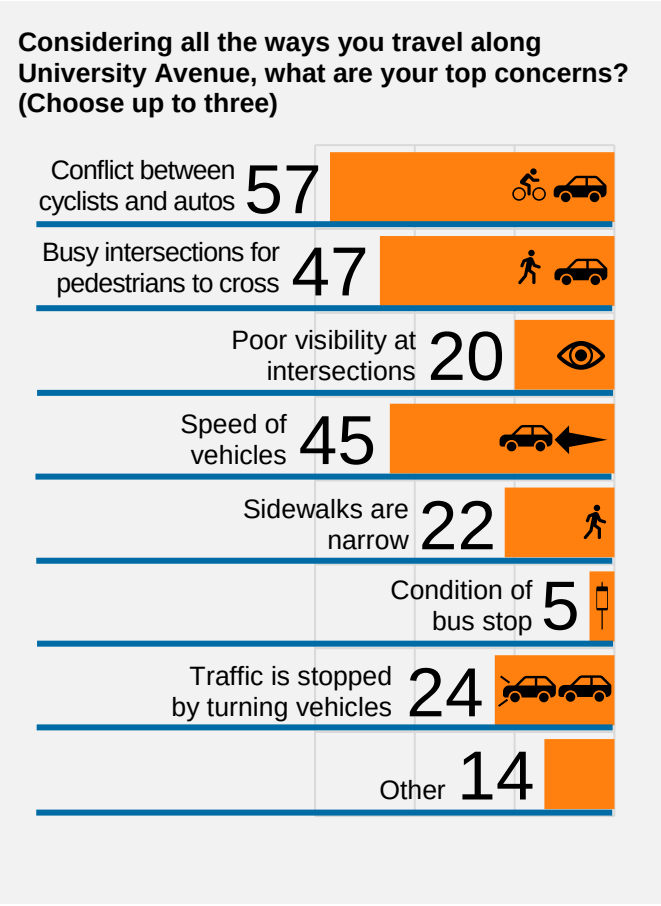


Exhibit 6-2: Summary of PCC #1 Survey Respondent Preferences





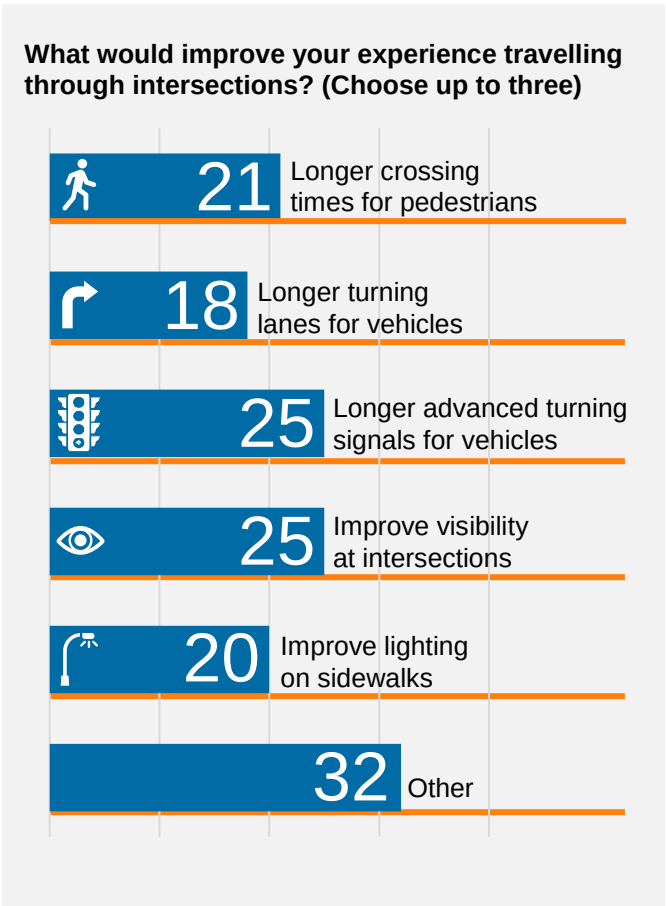


Exhibit 6-3: Summary of PCC #1 Survey Respondent Preferred Alternatives

5 people

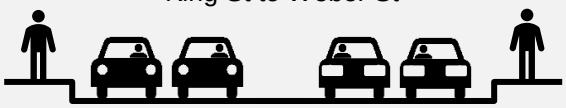


Alternative 1: Do Nothing (Reconstructing the road in its current cross-section)

Albert St to King St



King St to Weber St

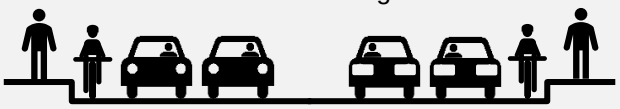


4 people



Alternative 2: Separated bike lane with a painted buffer (on roadway) and enhanced sidewalk (2.1m wide where possible)

Albert St to King St



King St to Weber St

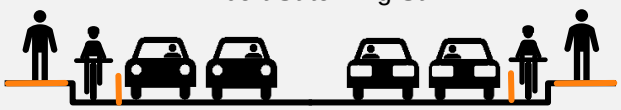


18 people

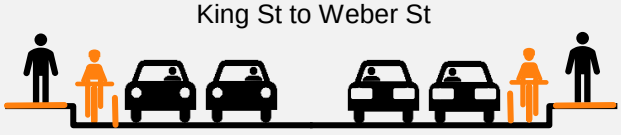


Alternative 3: Separated bike lane (on roadway) with flexible bollards and enhanced sidewalk (2.1m wide where possible)

Albert St to King St



King St to Weber St

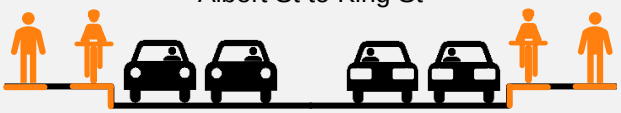


56 people



Alternative 3a: Separated bike lane (off roadway) with concrete curb and enhanced sidewalk (2.1m wide where possible)

Albert St to King St



King St to Weber St

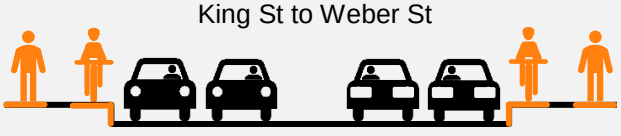


Exhibit 6-4: Summary of PCC #1 Comments

Comment (Grouped by Submission)	Response
1. The problem with segregated cycle lanes as currently envisioned is that they are: narrow, forcing cyclists to ride in single file; they block access to both sides of the street; they require specialized equipment to clear; and frankly bollards or other types of lane separators on both sides of the road are unsightly. Combining both cycle lanes into one wider, segregated lane provides a much more comfortable environment. Especially for young families. One needs only to examine the traffic on the many trails around Waterloo Region to see how much more popular this cycling environment is compared to the separated single lanes currently common in our region. In addition, this option is more economical since only one lane of separators are required, it eliminates the need for specialized equipment to clear in the winter and only blocks access to one side of the street. I feel this option should be provided in Appendix A as a viable choice.	1. People walking and people cycling tend to travel at different speeds. Urban walking speeds range from about 3-6 km/hr and cycling speeds range from about 10-30 km/hr. Vertical grades can further increase this speed differential. Due to this, separation can enhance user comfort and presents a lower collision risk than shared walking and cycling paths. Number of accesses in the corridor would not be ideal for a mixed use facility – going with single direction cycling facility has better comfort but has a drastically reduced level of access to destinations on University Avenue since this corridor has destinations on both sides of the roadway. Overwhelming majority of the public want vehicles separated from cyclists and cyclists separated from pedestrians. Having the sidewalk adjacent to the cycle track allows for the sidewalk plow to clear both the sidewalk and cycle track and store the snow at the edge between the cycle track and road, thus providing a barrier between cars and soft users (and reduce splashing), until the accumulated snow is removed.
1. Alternative 3's approach to separating cycling infrastructure is proposed to be similar to Columbia St	1. Yes, the majority voted in favour for this treatment by a large margin.

Comment (Grouped by Submission)	Response
(King to Hagey) in the region's pilot project. Has the data collected to date (counts and surveys of users) suggested this form of separation is preferred over the other three approaches in the pilot? 2. Alternative 3a's approach to separating cycling infrastructure is proposed to be similar to Columbia St (Fischer-Hallman to Erbsville), which uses a roll-curb/gutter. The voice-over in the presentation describes this as a curb as a physical barrier. If this is a raised curb that is higher than the level of both the roadway and the cycle track, it would act as a physical barrier. If it isn't, that would be similar to Columbia (FH-E) and University (Keats Way to Erb). Which description is most accurate about the intent? 3. This is a stretch of road where vehicle drivers are likely to want to stop (drop-off, delivery, parking) and would see a raised but not physically blocked area as a good place to do so. This behavior resulted in a retrofit on King St. in Uptown with flexible bollards being installed to clarify the intent of the space. While not a problem on University (Keats Way to Erb) and Columbia (F-H to Erbsville) due to the backlotted, suburban context, it would be a problem in this corridor. 4. How would you describe the turning radii in the proposed design(s) relative to the existing turning radii? Are they tighter (and by how much) or the same size? Are they measured to the travel lane or to the curb/outside edge of the cycling lane? 5. How does the design facilitate cyclists making left turns safely? I do not see bike boxes or spaces for two-stage left turns in the design (both of which are features of the Region's current pilot project, and, as	2. The physical barrier would consist of a full height barrier curb. The Project Team is currently evaluating specific curb alternatives. 3. Comment noted. The Project Team is currently evaluating all alternatives. The preferred alternative will be presented at PCC #2. 4. The turning radii will be determined during detail design. 5. The intersections and crossing with be further evaluated during detail design. 6. University Avenue Improvement project is generally limited to just past the curb returns. There is also currently planned works underway in the design stages for King Street. These designs will be coordinated and integrated with this project for connectivity and transitions. 7. Comment noted. 8. Scrambles have a massive impact on operations and do not necessarily result in safety improvements. They usually need to be supplemented with full-out left and right turn prohibitions to enhance safety. A few years ago, this intersection underwent pedestrian safety improvements which included offset crosswalks, enhanced lighting and pedestrian countdown signals which have actually enhanced safety quite significantly compared to past operations. Other further safety enhancements that we are assessing, given the constraints at this intersection, could include items such as left-turn phasing and leading pedestrian intervals to enhance pedestrian comfort and safety. Turn

Comment (Grouped by Submission)	Response
you do not always reach an intersection at a red signal, both are useful at each signalized intersection). Albert, King, and Regina either have cycling infrastructure or are designated cycling routes and so should actively facilitate safe left turns. Non-signalized intersections would also benefit from a clear way to turn left from the cycling lanes (by waiting in a designated space at the cross-street, for example) and users would benefit from safe ways to get across the street (I am speculating difficulty in crossing to get to the safe infrastructure in their direction of travel is one reason we see cyclists going the wrong way in protected cycling lanes – their origin and/or destination is on the "wrong side" of the road). 6. The detailed drawings for Alternative 3 provided show a King St cross-section both north and south of University Ave. On the north side of the intersection, bike lanes are shown where there currently is sidewalk, and there does not appear to be remaining space in the right-of-way on the west side for any sidewalk (and on the east side, the sidewalk would run over privately owned surface parking at 256 King St N. How far north of the King-University intersection is within the scope of this project? 7. I note positively that the slip lane for right turn movements from EB University to SB King is no longer in the design. 8. The rationale for not installing a pedestrian scramble at King-University appears to rest on AODA concerns, including concerns that persons with visual disabilities would be delayed due to making a two-stage crossing. This is the case today, so the concern over a delay is confusing. I expect those interested in this	prohibitions are what actually enhances pedestrian safety. Thus, scrambles will not necessarily achieve enhanced safety and operational benefit.

Comment (Grouped by Submission)	Response
issue will not be persuaded these are sufficient concerns given Toronto's implementation. I would suggest further review is helpful. No right turn on red, which was supposed to be part of the Region's separated cycling pilot but was not actually implemented, would be a positive addition to this intersection regardless to promote safety of all road users, including protecting cyclists undertaking two-stage left turns.	
1. Was there a reason that the busiest night of the year (Hallowe'en) was chosen to count cars/pedestrians on Longfellow, etc. We have 14 houses on Tennyson and someone said our count of cars was 400. I think that person must have been wrong as 10 trips per house by car would only be 140 trips a day. Where would I find this count information?	1. This is not part of the scope of the study.
1. Are there any plans for pedestrian scale lighting? The diagrams appear to show standard high overhead lights, which effectively illuminate the roadway. However, there are significant pedestrian volumes in this area, and pedestrian-scale lighting which illuminates the sidewalk significantly the increase the comfort of walking at night. This is particularly important along the campus/park areas, where there is greenspace next to the sidewalk and therefore no illumination provided by buildings. 2. Has there been consideration of reclassification of University Ave as Neighbourhood Connector - Main St (NMS)? While historically University Ave has clearly functioned as an avenue, the densification of the Northdale area has substantially changed the land use of the area, and it may be time to revisit its	1. Comment noted. Lighting methods will be evaluated during detail design. 2. The classification is based on the function of the street within the network and also on land use. The effective functioning of a transportation network requires a hierarchy of streets and a certain density of various street classes. From the network perspective, removing University Avenue from the Neighbourhood Connector network would create a big gap between Northfield and Bridgeport, the other parallel Neighbourhood Connectors (about 4 km), and this would have negative long term impacts on the overall operation of the entire network. From the land use perspective, this street does not have the characteristics of main streets,

Comment (Grouped by Submission)	Response
classification. The regional corridor design guidelines describe avenue land use as "medium and large format commercial, shopping malls, community facilities and low rise neighbourhoods with back-lotted residential." which no longer describes University Ave. The corridor design guidelines however state the land use along Main St as "typically address the street with small or no setbacks. Access typical from side streets. Prevalent land uses include commercial and mixed use area, community uses and residential." which increasingly describes the character of University Ave as residential buildings with ground-floor commercial have proliferated in the neighbourhood. This more pedestrian-first main street designation would recognize that University Ave is effectively now the "main street" of the growing urban residential community of Northdale.	which typically have smaller lot sizes and less setback from the street.

6.2 Location-Based Comments

Participants were also provided an opportunity to provide location-based comments by dropping pins on an online map of the Study Area. A total of 13 comments were placed. Concern with speeding motorists and conflicts with pedestrians were the most common comments. A screenshot of the map is in **Exhibit 6-5** and **Exhibit 6-6** presents a summary of the comments received. The comments received are included in **Appendix F**.

Exhibit 6-5. Map of Location Based Comments

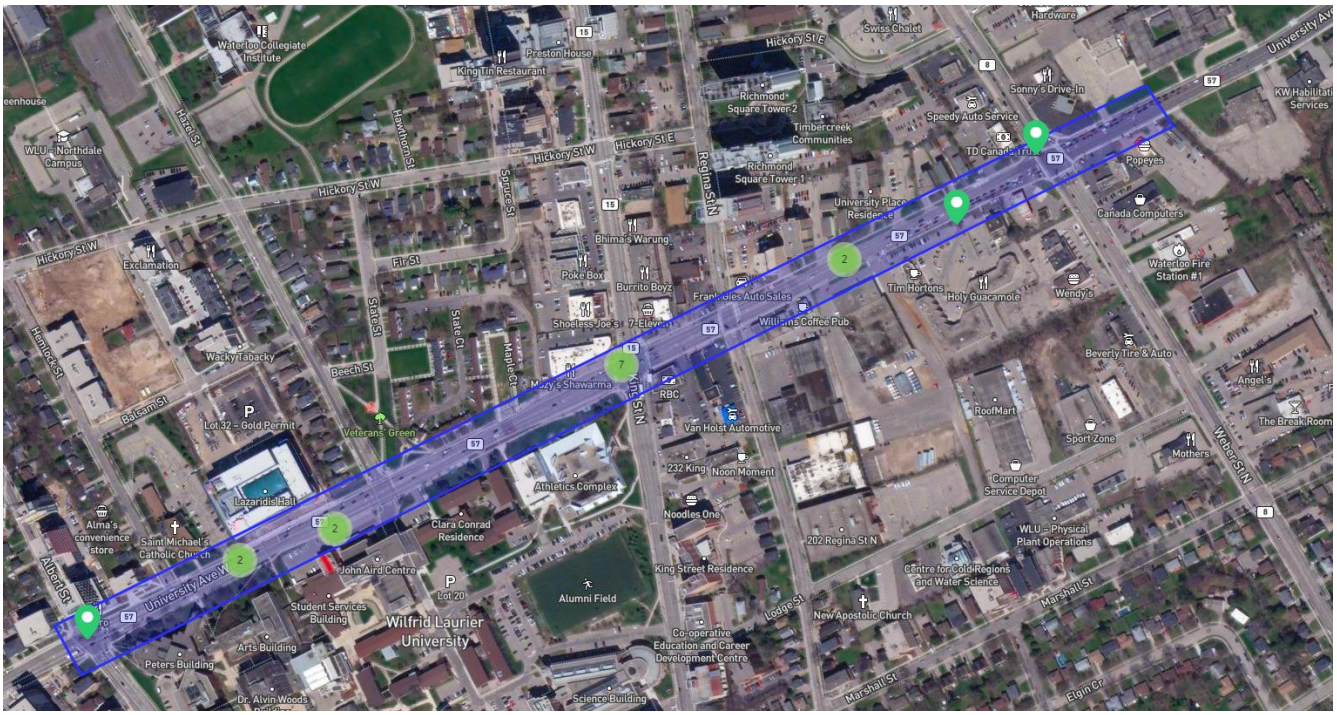


Exhibit 6-6: Summary of Location-Based Comments

ID #	Location	Comment
1	University Avenue @ Albert Street	Pedestrian has experienced conflicts with turning motorists
2	University Avenue @ crosswalk from Wilfrid Laurier University Student Services Building to Lazaridis Hall	Speeding motorists pose potential conflict with pedestrians using crosswalk
3	University Avenue, west of Hazel Street	Dislike bollards – find concrete barricades dangerous, annoying, and expensive to maintain Cyclists feels confined/discomfort, and avoids these lanes

		Opposition to Alternatives 3 and 3a, and preference for on-road bike lanes separated by paint (e.g. Regina Street, which has wide lanes and no explicit bicycle lanes).
4	University Avenue, west of Hazel Street	Preference for separated bike lanes off roadway, followed by bike lanes separated by bollards on road.
5	University Avenue @ King Street North	Preference for separated bike lanes off roadway, followed by bike lanes separated by bollards on road.
6	University Avenue @ King Street North	Support for minimizing turning radius
7	University Avenue @ King Street North	Motorists have difficulty turning right because of restricted right turn on red phase, and high pedestrian volumes during green phase. Suggests use of pedestrian scramble corners
8	University Avenue @ King Street North	Support for pedestrian scramble
9	University Avenue @ King Street North	Support for pedestrian scramble
10	University Avenue @ King Street North	Turning radii at this intersection makes the pedestrian crossing long, and also increases the risk for pedestrians because vehicles can maintain their speed
11	University Avenue, east of Regina Street North	Would like to see traffic calming measures to support more pedestrian-friendly environment
12	65 University Avenue East (University Square Plaza driveway)	Difficulty accessing and exiting from driveway due to speed of oncoming traffic and proximity to Weber Street intersection
13	University Avenue @ Weber Street North	Opposition to slip lanes due to challenges for pedestrians, and speeding motorists

7 Key Findings

People who participated in PCC #1 by submitting surveys and/or comments were predominately from Kitchener and Waterloo, and a mix of residents, commuters and students. Participants travel along the corridor using a variety of travel modes, at varying frequencies. Based on the submitted surveys and comments, the community's priorities and preferred alternative are in **Exhibit 7-1**.

Exhibit 7-1. Community's Priorities and Preferred Alternative

Priorities



Longer crossing times for pedestrians



Longer turning lanes for vehicles



Longer advanced turning signals for vehicles



Improvements to visibility at intersections



Improvements to lighting on sidewalks



Traffic Calming Measures

Most Preferred Alternative

Alternative 3a: Separated bike lane (off roadway) with concrete curb and enhanced sidewalk (2.1m wide where possible)

