

# Communications update for infrastructure, land use changes and related projects

December 5, 2023

## Presenters

Linette Capcara, Director - Planning and Development Services

Ryan Hall – Planning and Development Services

Kevin Cole, Director – Transportation Engineering and Operations

Sherry Feser – Transportation Engineering and Operations

# Previous motion

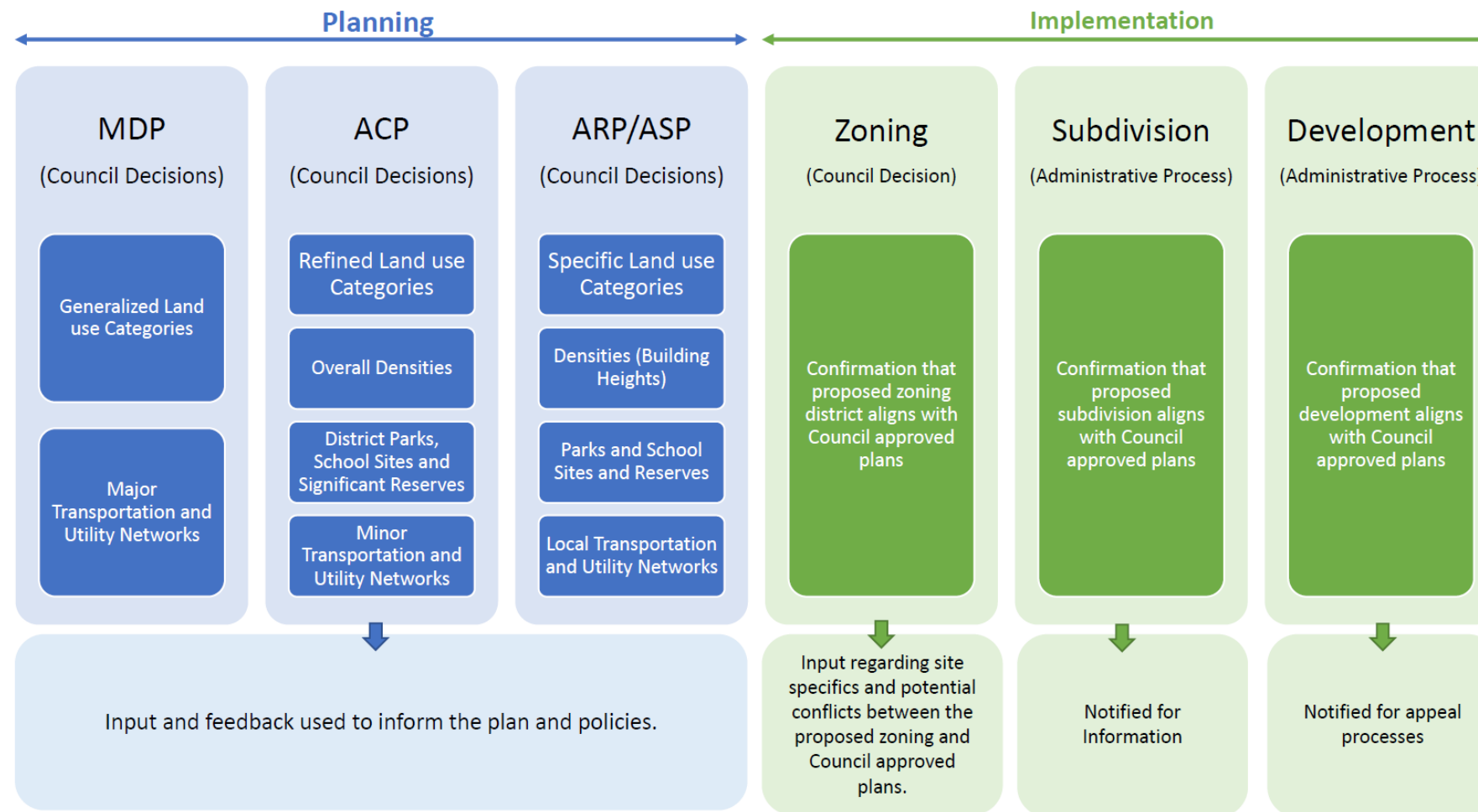
*THAT administration prepare a report for Council's consideration by the end of Q4 2023 on options and costs to increase communication with residents on infrastructure projects, land use changes and related projects that are beyond our existing level of service, examples include but are not limited to improved physical signage, additional and/or improved newspaper advertisements, online advertisements and direct mailouts.*

# Planning and Development Services (PDS)

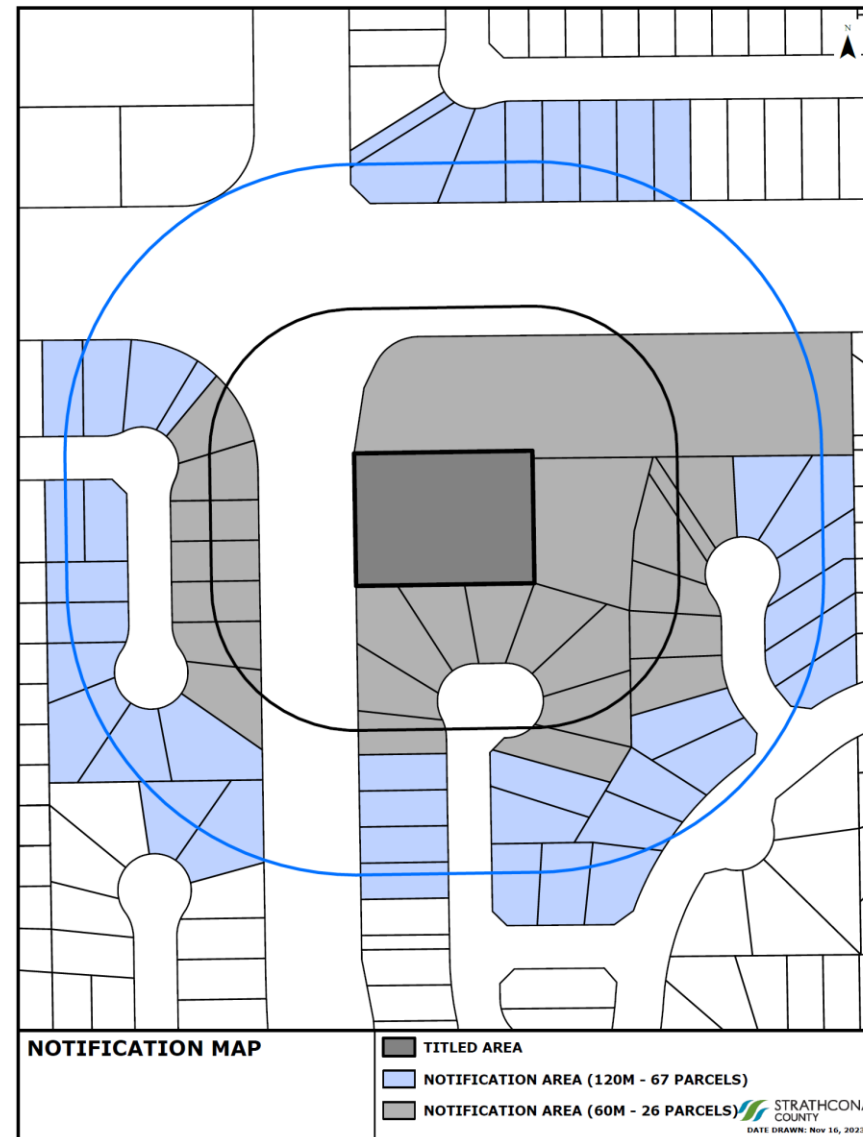




# PDS – planning hierarchy



# PDS – notification area example



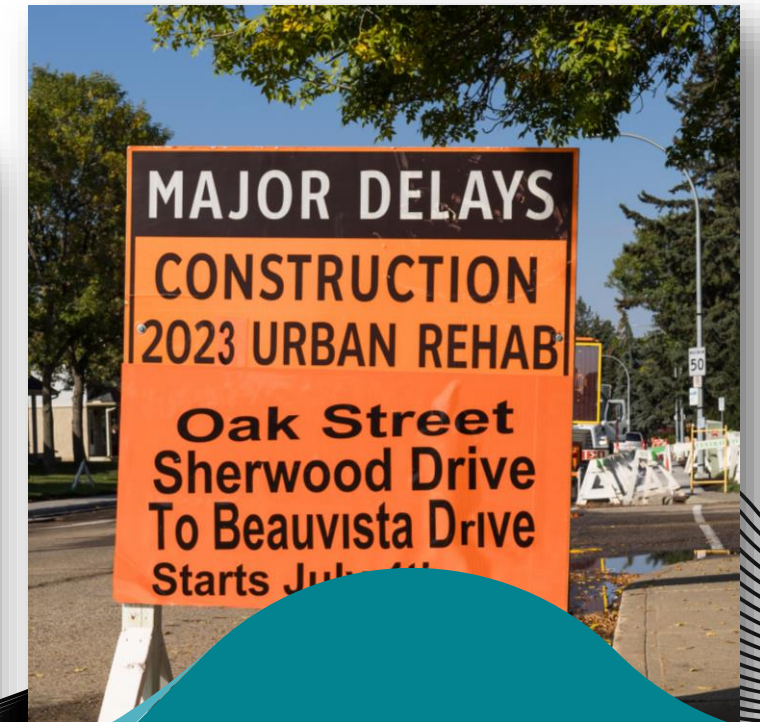
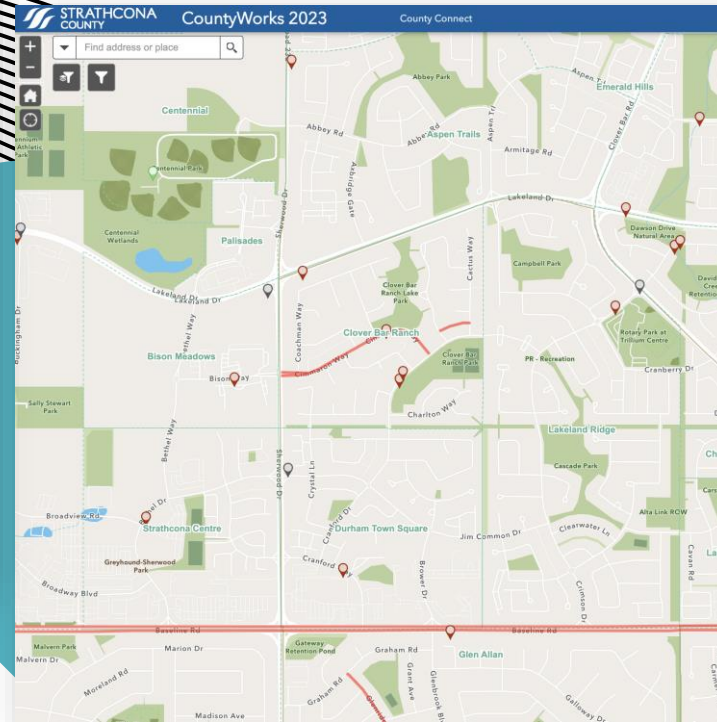
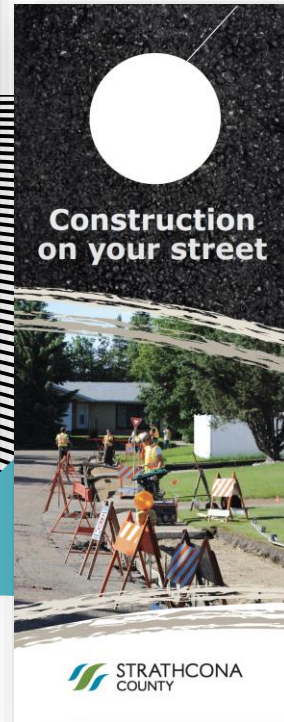
# PDS – notification costs

- Two newspaper ads for public hearing - \$720 (\$360 each)
- Letter(s) mailed - \$0.92 each (total cost will vary depending on urban or rural and specific property location)
- Administrative costs in the preparation of ads and letters

# PDS communication improvements

- Updating the County's advertisements and notification letters to include a plain language explanation for residents, including increasing the font sizes for the text in ads and ensuring neighbourhood labels are included where applicable
- Placement of the first public hearing ad in the newspaper is done earlier
- Additional electronic means of notification – reviewing the potential and requirements for social media, digital signs in County facilities, etc.
- For new statutory plans or major amendments where Strathcona County is the applicant, the Engagement Plan is approved by Council. Administration will ensure this is highlighted for Council's consideration to allow for additional engagement or notification as directed

# Transportation Engineering and Operations (TEO)





# Public engagement

Public engagement *is required* when:

- Setting strategic direction for transportation planning
  - i.e., Integrated Transportation Master Plan, Sustainable Rural Roads Master Plan
- There is a significant change(s) to a neighbourhood which requires a review of the traffic patterns and safety impacts
  - i.e., Foxboro and area traffic review based on new school, Heritage Hills traffic review, etc.
- Persistent community concern confirmed with collected field data related to a traffic safety issue within a Neighbourhood
  - i.e., neighbourhood traffic management and safety studies such as Glen Allan in 2015



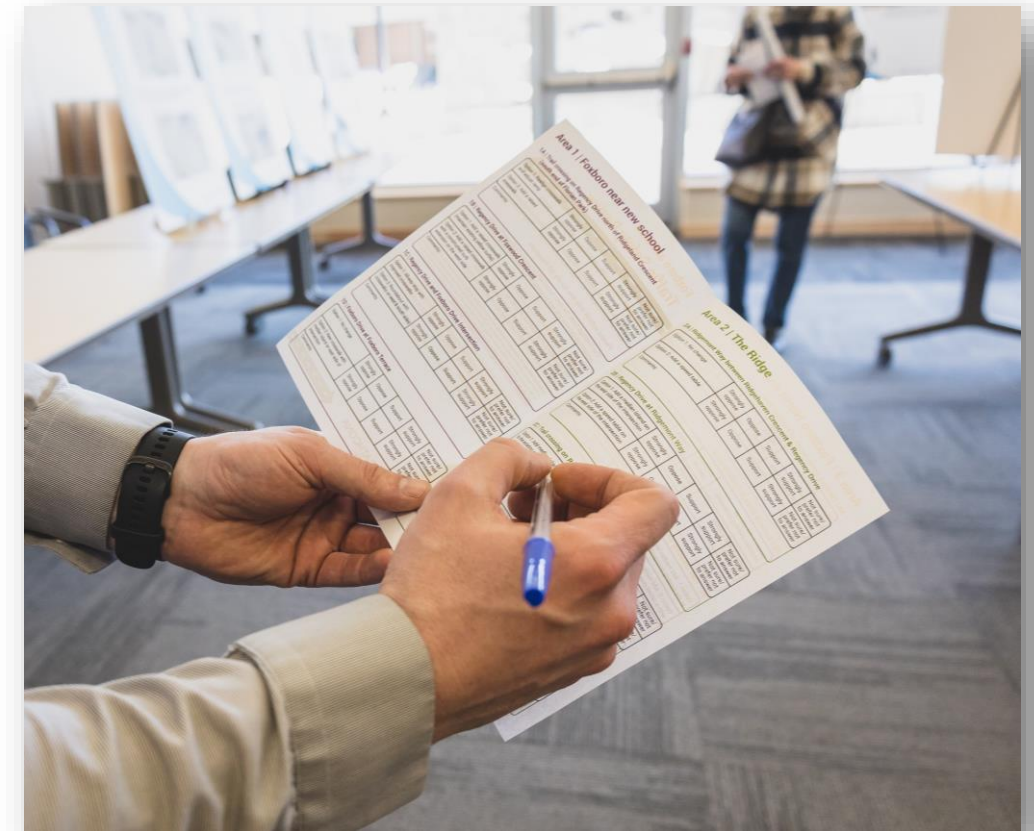
# Public engagement

Public engagement **may be required** when:

- A minor or temporary transportation infrastructure change to improve safety or operation, which may have considerable public impact
  - E.g., Crosswalk improvement, parking clarification, intersection improvement

Public engagement is **not required** when:

- A safety-related improvement is required
- Engineering best practice or assessment
- There is no influence on the outcome
- Previous plans or strategies have already provided direction
  - i.e., Area Redevelopment Plan, Neighbourhood Plans etc.





# Foxboro and area traffic review

Communication approach to support public engagement plan (this approach is not taken for construction projects).

- Included two phases of public engagement
- Each involved an open house and online survey
- Each phase was supported by an extensive communication plan
  - Letters to every household (2,732)
  - Road signs
  - eNewsletter



# Infrastructure project types

## **Annual maintenance and rehabilitation projects**

- Scope of work is consistent each year
- Incorporates traffic safety improvements based on Neighbourhood Traffic Safety Action Plan, including traffic management, calming and education
- Program-specific comms plans developed (i.e., residential rehab, rural rehab, gravel maintenance)

## **Capital improvements and open space projects**

- Scope of work is specific to project, often requiring a multi-year planning, design and construction process.
- Project-specific comms developed (i.e., transit pads, Prairie Walk, Range Road 210 upgrades, south County Hall outdoor revitalization)



# Infrastructure communications

Communication plans are developed to support programs and projects.

## Goal

The right people are informed at the right time about construction projects that impact them.

## Objectives

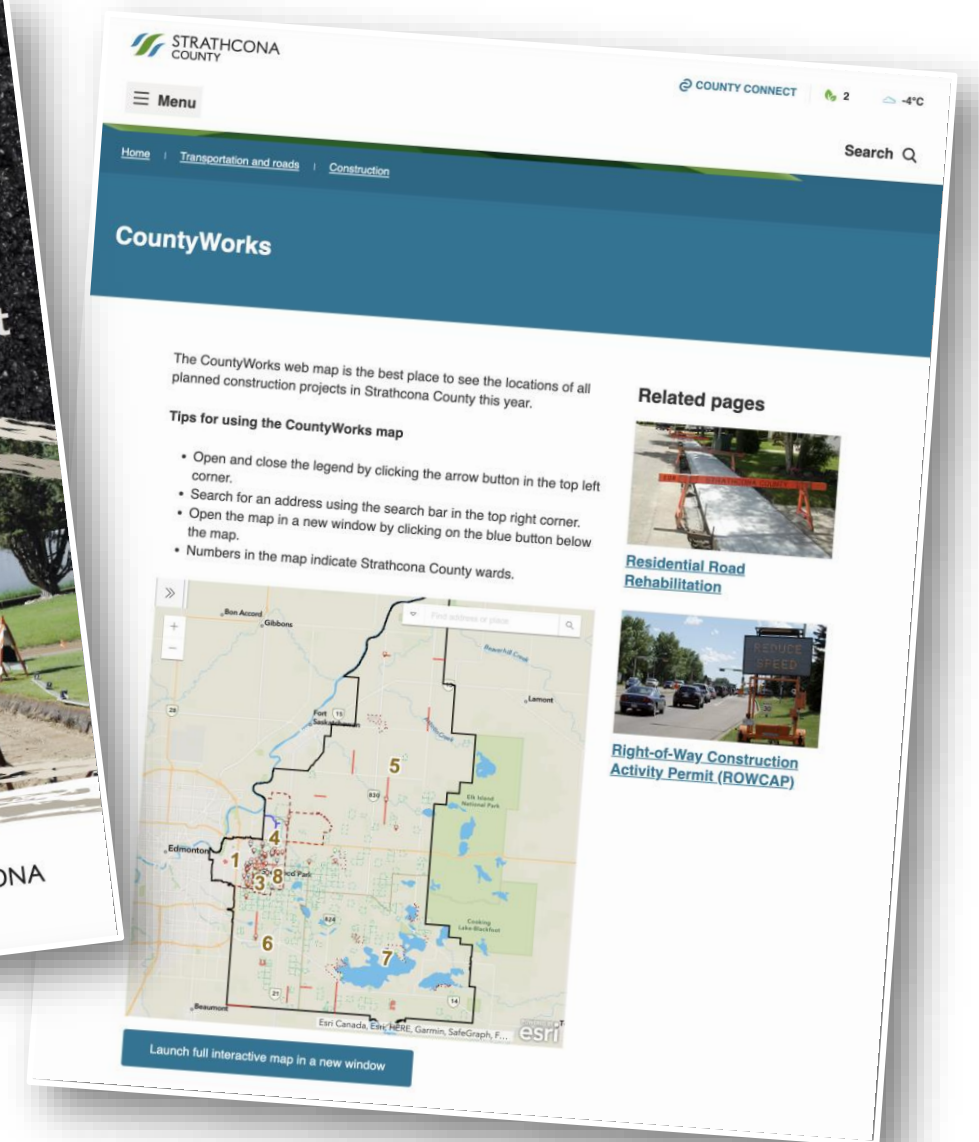
- Residents have access to information about the scope and timelines of work
- Residents understand how they will be impacted by construction in their area
- Residents are satisfied with the information they receive about construction in their area



# Current approach to communications

General awareness campaign focuses on:

- Construction is coming
- CountyWorks map for locations



# Communications assessment

Project and program-specific communications approach is developed based on an assessment of:

- Scope of work
- Road/infrastructure type (i.e., arterial, residential, rural)
- # people impacted
- Type of impact (i.e., noise, access, detour, delay)
- Duration of impact(s)
- Public perception (potential for concerns and inquiries)



# Measurement and feedback

- End-of-season program surveys for annual rehabilitation and maintenance programs
  - Evaluate and inform communications approach
  - Conducted every three years since 2015 (next one in 2024)
- Website and social media analytics
- County Connect feedback
- Other:
  - Annual Public Satisfaction Survey
  - Poll data





# Lessons learned

- Digital message boards are key for sharing timelines and delays, particularly collector road rehab
- Residents appreciate notice letters for project-specific updates
  - Hand-delivered letters most timely for construction
- County Connect feedback
  - Improved timing of info to answer “what’s next?” or “when are you coming back?”
  - Gaps in process or info
- More comms is not always “better”

# Ongoing challenges

## Difficult to reach people

- Even when information is shared, some people don't pay attention until construction is underway

## Project challenges can't always be solved by increased communications

- Delays happen
- Time/length of project impact on satisfaction even when regular updates are provided
- Dissatisfaction with overall construction changes or improvements cannot be solved with improved communication



# Cost considerations



## Urban projects

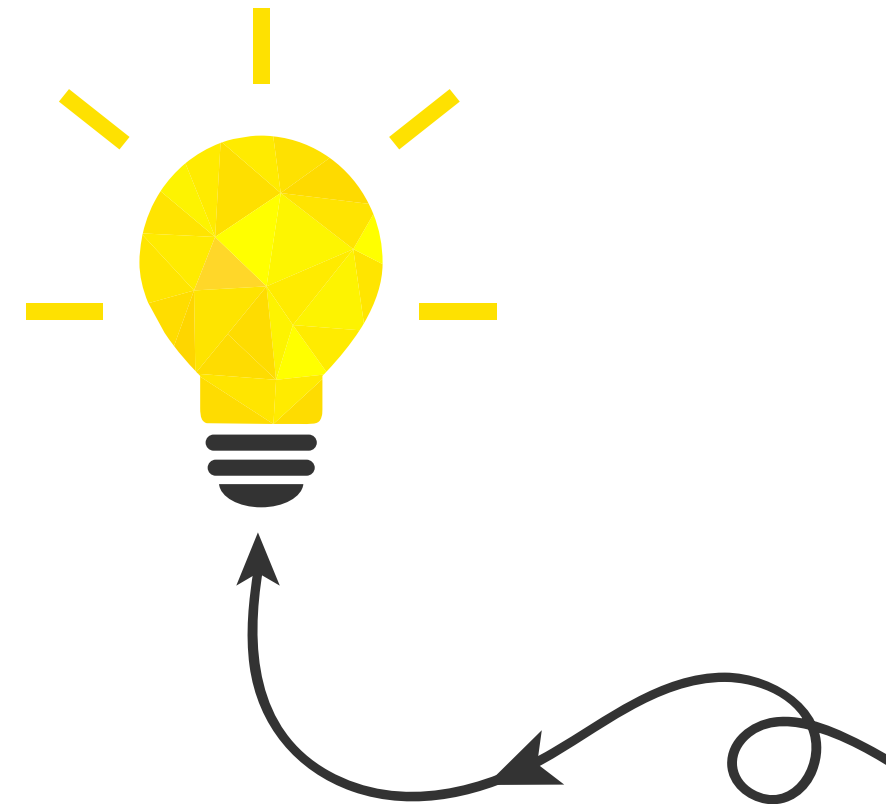
Item	Cost per	# of Neighbourhoods	Total
Direct mail	~\$0.92/ Household	7-10/year	\$12,880-\$18,400 (Est. 2,000 households)
Neighbourhood signage	~\$1,000/ Neighbourhood	7-10/year	\$7,000-10,000
Digital signage	\$50/day	~300 added days	\$15,000
			<b>\$43,400/year</b>

\*Does not include rural grid and subdivisions, and added staff time

Costs are presented as requested in the motion but are not recommended.

# Potential communication improvements 2024

- Identify traffic calming projects earlier to improve communications planning and notification
- Create traffic calming communications protocols
- Continue to refine notice letter content to ensure information is clear and easy to understand.
- Review timing of project updates, especially when a project has encountered delays.
- Three-year capital plan – improve advance planning
- Expand scope of program evaluations to identify further improvements





# Recommendation

THAT the communication improvements identified in the December 5, 2023, Planning and Development Services and Transportation and Engineering Options report be approved, with funding from current operational budgets.

# Questions

