

To: David Creery, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Harold de Haan, City Engineer
Re: CN Rail Pedestrian Bridge

AIM

To request that City Council urge CN Rail to proceed with the immediate replacement of the Finkle Street Pedestrian Bridge crossing the railway tracks.

BACKGROUND

With nearly 41,711 route-kilometers of track, Canada has the third-largest rail network in the world. Railways played a key role in shaping our country and helped Woodstock's economy boom when the first trains arrived in the City in the early 1850s. Trains continue to be important for our economy as a primary mode of freight transportation.

The bridge crossing the railway track at Finkle Street has been in place since the late 1800s. In 1905 an agreement was struck between the City of Woodstock and the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada and the bridge was designated for pedestrian traffic only. The bridge was rehabilitated in 1972 and again in 1995.

Inspections conducted in 2013 and 2015 rated the condition of the bridge as poor, bringing into question the safety of the bridge. In 2016, the City retained AECOM to complete a detailed analysis of the bridge and identify options for addressing the structural issues. The bridge was closed until repairs could be completed. The bridge reopened late in 2017 following implementation of one of AECOMs recommendations before being closed again in 2021 due to further deterioration.

COMMENTS

Since 2021, plans for the replacement have faced multiple delays. Through discussions with CN Rail in the spring of 2023, staff was informed that a replacement bridge would be completed by the end of 2023. Staff followed up with CN in the spring of 2024 for a status update and was informed that the project was put on hold.

If CN Rail is committed to raising awareness of rail safety, saving lives and preventing injuries associated with railway crossings then they should immediately proceed with the replacement of this important pedestrian bridge.

Staff is supportive of Rail Safety Week, held annually from Sept. 23-29, however they feel adopting the proclamation without advocating for completion of the bridge would not be in line with the spirit and goals of the week. The closure of the bridge increases risks

and barriers for pedestrians traveling in the area, forcing them to either take a significant detour or cross illegally.

RECOMMENDATION

That Woodstock City Council authorize the Mayor to submit a letter on behalf of Woodstock City Council urging CN Rail to take immediate action to replace the Finkle Street Pedestrian Bridge crossing.

Authored by: Colleen Collins, Manager of Marketing and Communications

Authored by: Harold de Haan, P.Eng., City Engineer

Approved by: David Creery, P.Eng., MBA, Chief Administrative Officer