

**To: David Creery, Chief Administrative Officer**

**From: Adam Cave, Manager of Municipal Infrastructure**

**Re: Finkle Street Pedestrian Bridge Update**

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**AIM**

To inform City Council on the status of the Finkle Street Pedestrian Bridge over the Canadian National Railway (CNR) and obtain direction to proceed.

**BACKGROUND**

In 1905, the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada (now CNR) and the City of Woodstock entered into an agreement to remove Finkle Street vehicle crossing over the rail corridor to allow CNR to increase the number of tracks and provide more vertical clearance for the rail corridor. To facilitate this at the time, a pedestrian bridge was installed by CNR. The current condition of the existing pedestrian bridge is very poor and it is currently closed.

**COMMENTS**

The Finkle Street pedestrian bridge is owned by CNR. City staff have historically completed general maintenance such as snow removal or minor board replacement on the bridge.

In 2013, staff had an inspection completed on the bridge for due diligence to the residents who utilize the structure. As a result, serious deficiencies were noted on the bridge. CNR was immediately notified of these deficiencies. A structural analysis was completed that determined that the load on the bridge should be restricted to avoid failure.

In 2021, another bridge inspection was completed that found further structural deterioration of the critical bridge elements had occurred, making the bridge unsafe for use. City staff immediately closed the bridge and notified CNR of the situation.

Since that time, City staff have been in numerous meetings with CNR to discuss how the situation will be addressed.

As of the last update to City Council in March of 2022, CNR was working on plans for the replacement/repair of the pedestrian bridge and committed to sending preliminary plans to City staff for review.

City staff have received several iterations of design drawings as the design has progressed and have provided comments to CNR. City staff are now in receipt of a design set of drawings that is approaching final design for tender in 2026. Based on current design standards to meet the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), a very large ramp is being proposed on the south side of the bridge alongside Finkle Lane. The total length of the ramp is approximately 120 metres and is a switchback style. To clarify, the switchback style requires users to walk 60 metres north/south, turn 180 degrees and walk another 60 metres north/south and turn another 180 degrees to get on or off the pedestrian bridge.

The City owned pathway that currently leads from Henry Street to the existing pedestrian bridge exceeds the maximum allowable grade accepted by AODA standards. In previous comments, City staff requested CNR review the logistics of tailoring the ramp design to lower the grades on the path to meet AODA standards. Through this review, it was determined that the existing private residence at 119 Finkle Lane is encroaching into the right of way too far to allow the grades to be lowered enough to meet AODA standards without very negatively impacting the property owner at 119 Finkle Lane. City staff advised that this is not desirable.

As it currently stands, CNR has designed the ramp to be AODA compliant and meet the existing pathway at the existing grades. Therefore, the pathway will remain non-compliant with AODA standards. It should be noted that the pathway is technically a city sidewalk and not a structure so can be considered exempt from AODA requirements for structures. It is also existing and predates the AODA requirements, effectively grandfathering it in as a compliant sidewalk.

Upon further analysis, City staff identified the proposed distance for a pedestrian to cross from Henry Street to Main Street using the proposed structure and switchback ramp to be approximately 295 metres. Alternatively, the total distance for a pedestrian to travel along the sidewalk on Henry Street to Wellington Street South, across the Wellington Street South CNR overpass to the same point on Main Street to be 700 metres. A difference of 400 metres.

City staff are seeking direction from City Council to guide the decision-making process for the replacement of the pedestrian bridge. Replacing the existing bridge and adding the switchback ramp will leave the existing City-owned pathway non-compliant with current AODA standards and will require the City to continue incurring costs for general maintenance of the bridge, ramp, and pathway. Alternatively, removing the bridge and terminating the replacement will allow the City to close the non-compliant AODA pathway and provide relief for costs incurred for general maintenance on the bridge, ramp and pathway. However, this option does require pedestrians to travel 400 metres further around the block.

The Woodstock Accessibility Advisory Committee (WAAC) was engaged for comments at its April 8, 2026 meeting. Comments received from the WAAC indicated that although they would like to see the existing pathway from Henry Street to the base of the bridge ramp meet AODA requirements, they felt that it would be better to get the bridge done now by CNR rather than try to do a partnership project between the City and CNR. Once the bridge is completed, they would like the City to look into modifying the pathway to make it less steep. It was acknowledged that reducing the slope of the pathway would involve budget approval, possible land acquisition and UTRCA approvals and probably take a couple of years to design and build. The details of winter maintenance still need to be determined. In the past, City forces cleared snow from the bridge. With the additional length of the ramp, this work will become more onerous. Depending on the maintenance involvement by CNR and budget and staff impacts for the City, the bridge may not be able to be kept open during the winter.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Plan and Profile Drawing of the Proposed Pedestrian Bridge and Ramp.pdf

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Woodstock City Council direct City staff to notify CNR to proceed with the replacement of the Finkle Street Pedestrian Bridge as currently proposed.

OR

That Woodstock City Council direct City staff to notify CNR to proceed with the removal of the Finkle Street Pedestrian Bridge and terminate the replacement of the structure.

*Authored by: Adam Cave, C.E.T., Manager of Municipal Infrastructure*

*Approved by: Harold de Haan, P. Eng, City Engineer*

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