ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INCENTIVE PILOT PROGRAM

Council / Governance Issue

An Active Transportation Incentive Pilot Program is being presented to the Governance and Priorities Committee for discussion and recommendation to Council.

Recommendation

That a recommendation be forwarded to Council that $20,000 for a one year Active Transportation Incentive Pilot Program be inserted into the 2024 operating budget and that an evaluation of the pilot be brought to Council in September 2024.

Recommendation Alternatives for Consideration at the September 25, 2023 Council Meeting

a) That the Active Transportation Incentive Pilot Program be approved as presented; Administration directed to insert $20,000 for a one year Active Transportation Incentive Pilot Program into the 2024 operating budget; and an evaluation of the pilot program be brought to Council in September 2024.

b) That Administration be directed to amend the Active Transportation Incentive Pilot Program as discussed and bring back to the October 10, 2023 Regular Council Meeting.

Background and Considerations

In the Okotoks Active Transportation Strategy (ATS), the four main benefits of active transportation are:

- improved health;
- positive environmental impacts;
- increasing quality of life and wellbeing; and
- reduced costs for individuals, municipalities, and the healthcare system.

Since the implementation of the Active Transportation Strategy in 2015, the Town of Okotoks adopted policy in the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and direction in the Climate Action Plan and Environmental Master Plan that supports active transportation networks and infrastructure in new and redeveloped areas, including the increase of residents' access to sustainable transportation options. The current Okotoks Strategic Plan supports the ATS and Town policy and plans by prioritizing timely access to relevant programs that support health and well-being. The MDP prioritizes the well-being of residents by supporting active transportation infrastructure. By providing over 100km of wide pathways and prioritizing snow clearing on main pathway arteries, the Town is making it easier to choose active modes versus car modes of transportation. At the Area Structure Plan and Neighbourhood Area Structure Plan levels, Administration is actively implementing MDP policy to ensure that new and redeveloping areas support innovative active transportation networks. The Climate Action Plan and Environmental Action Plan speak to increasing access to safe, equitable and sustainable transportation options and fostering the use of non-automotive, active modes of transportation. To

reach these goals the Town plans to continue building infrastructure for active transportation but needs to support and incentivize residents to adopt non-car methods of everyday travel.

Incentive Summary

Through the proposed program, residents will be offered incentives to purchase pedal-assist ebikes, winter gear for biking, and walking accessories to enhance active transportation that could replace car trips. Incentive dollars will make the choice to use active transportation for daily commutes or errand running on bicycles or by foot across all seasons more accessible. The program would also aim to be an alternative to help relieve the oversubscribed transit system. Overall, the program goals are to remove the barriers to getting around Okotoks in every season, specifically targeting the use of active transportation for commuting and running errands as a replacement for trips using a motor vehicle.

Table 1 – Items and Incentive Amounts

Item	Incentive Amount*	Retail Cost Range of Item
eBike	50% up to $500	$800 to $5000
eBike (qualify for Recreational Fee Assistance program)**	50% up to $1000	
Bike carrying bag/rack	50% up to $150	$65 to $200 each
Winter helmet/helmet liner	50% up to $50	$20 to $100
Hand grip weather shields	50% up to $30	$25 to $50
Studded Tires	50% up to $100	$75 to $300
Urban crampons/footwear ice spikes	50% up to $20	$5 to $20
Folding shopping cart (soft sided)	50% up to $100	$50 to $150

*Amounts based on local cost range of items.
**Based on Banff program, lower uptake via Recreation Fee Assistance is expected.

The cost of ebikes from local stores ranges from $800 to upwards of $5000 for an urban commuting/leisure style ebike. The incentive would support commuting and running errands, thus sport bikes such as mountain ebikes, and other sport ebikes would be excluded from the program and a cap of $5000 for the overall cost of the ebike would be in place. The choice to provide an incentive for ebikes instead of traditional bikes is to remove the significant barrier that is biking up hills in Okotoks and the results thereof.

According to the 2021 data from Statistics Canada, Okotoks has 11,195 total commuters, 3,765 of which commute less than 15 minutes and approximately 475 of which reported commuting using modes of active transportation (biking and walking specifically).[1] Of the 3,765 commuters who work close to home, 12.6% use active transportation. How can more residents be persuaded to leave their cars at home and get to work via their own energy? The Town is already, and will continue to be, walkable and bike-able. By providing funds to winterize bikes and enable safe winter walking and

[1] https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Dguid=2021A00054806012&topic=13

easy item transport, residents can use sustainable modes of transportation all year long. Walking, biking, and the use of ebikes are feasible options for commuting to work, running errands such as grocery shopping, and engaging in physical activities in all seasons.

The proposed Active Transportation Incentive Program goes beyond ebikes, by improving the experience of walking and the use of any type of bicycle in the winter, the program could influence and expand transportation choices year-round. Incentivizing folding shopping carts could encourage more people to walk to run errands or to collect their groceries. Additionally, panniers and racks for bikes could support commuters going to and from work, as well as facilitate other errands requiring storage. Incentivizing active transportation could have a positive impact on the reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and aligns directly with the objectives outlined in the Environmental Master Plan and the Okotoks Climate Action Plan. By reducing traffic congestion and noise, and encouraging walking and cycling, the program could directly contribute to the Town's efforts to create a convenient and sustainable transportation environment while reducing reliance on motor vehicles. The shift away from private vehicle dependency would enhance everyday mobility and overall quality of life in Okotoks.

According to Statistics Canada commuter data and GHG savings calculations for biking and walking, the projected number of GHGs saved by implementing the program is quantified in Table 2. The total tonnes of CO^2 saved by 2030 would increase significantly if the program continued for subsequent years.

Table 2 – GHG Savings

Mode for Commuting	Average km/trip/person[2]	# of trips added in 2024/working day	Tonnes of CO^2/year Saved[3]	Total Tonnes of CO^2 Saved by 2030
Walking/Biking Accessories	.87	50	2.72	16.32
Biking	8	30	15	90

The program would reserve $15,000 for ebikes, and $5000 for bike accessories and walking aids. The number of trips per day in the above table is based on an approximate average incentive of $100 for 50 people for accessories and an incentive of $500 for 30 ebikes.

Beyond environmental benefits, active transportation contributes to community well-being. By providing the opportunity for walking and biking to be safer in the winter months and more convenient overall, residents would have access to further opportunities to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines and increase physical health and mental well-being. The program initiatives aim to foster active, social, and fulfilling lives ultimately contributing to improved welfare in our community

[2] Based on 2021 Statistics Canada act data for Okotoks. This data is renewed every 5 years.

[3] Based on savings of .25 kg Co2/km: https://changeforclimate.ca/story/bike-edmonton-renewable

but also to lower the amount of GHGs being emitted community wide and to aid in meeting the Town's goal of NetZero by 2050.

Current Policy or Bylaw Analysis

- Municipal Development Plan
- Climate Action Plan
- Environmental Master Plan
- Active Transportation Strategy

Municipal Comparisons

In Alberta, the Town of Banff has offered rebates on ebikes, studded bike tires, and winter walking traction devices for the past 1.5 years. The program initially sold out within two weeks and due to popularity, Banff Council removed the cap on the program to accept all applicants. To date they have supported the purchase of 255 ebikes and over 400 studded tires and winter walking devices. Banff has a strategic priority to become a model environmental community and promoting cycling over driving helps reduce GHG emissions, maintain clean air quality, reduce noise, while also helping reduce traffic congestion.

North Vancouver, West Vancouver, and Kamloops all have ebike rebate programs that vary in individual rebate funds from $300 to $800 per bike purchase.

CAO Comments

This approach attempts to balance the grant return based upon means and offers alternatives to incent active transportation. Committee direction is requested.

Attachment(s)

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September 8, 2023