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INTERIM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is an interim executive summary for the traffic study for the future Kelset Elementary School, which is being conducted by Boulevard Transportation Group for the District of North Saanich. This interim summary provides a project outline and progress summary to date, with preliminary findings and rationales for the interim recommendations. Note that these recommendations are subject to change pending the feedback received from the May 14 2007 presentation to Council.

Boulevard Transportation Group conducted an initial traffic study for School District 63, from which several traffic mitigations were recommended. There are, however, still a number of traffic-related concerns associated with the new school that have been expressed to the District by a number of different interested parties.

The tasks for this project are the following. Boulevard personnel conducted meetings and/or phone interviews with parties interested in the traffic aspects of this project, in order to compile a list of issues, concerns, and suggestions from the various perspectives. Concerns were also compiled from letters written to the District of North Saanich. The main topic areas of concern are safety, parking, and traffic operations. These issues have been assessed from a technical perspective, with recommendations. The findings of this review will be presented to North Saanich Council on May 14, 2007. After the presentation is made, Boulevard Transportation Group will produce a final report that will contain the investigation results, conclusions, and recommendations with consideration of feedback from the May 14 meeting.

2.0 TRAFFIC ISSUES RAISED

Traffic issues were raised from various groups with vested interest in the transportation aspects of the new school. These groups were: Dean Park Residents Association, neighbouring residents, PAC Presidents from Saanichton and McTavish Elementary schools, the Way to Go! program coordinator for McTavish School, the Panorama Recreation Centre, and North Saanich Council.

The issues raised can be categorized by the topic areas: safety (speeding, traffic calming, sight lines, access location, parking on Forest Park Dr), parking (on-street, off-street, drop-off areas), traffic operations (congestion / traffic control, vehicle routing), sidewalks, and the need for a “comprehensive” traffic study.

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2.1 Safety Issues

The main safety issues raised are speeding concerns along Forest Park Dr (particularly in the downhill / eastbound direction approaching the school), traffic calming considerations, sight line concerns, access location, and the safety of parking along Forest Park Dr.

It was found that speeding (85th percentile speeds from 60-65 km/h) occurs along Forest Park Dr near the proposed school access, and as such traffic calming measures (curb extensions with flashing beacon crosswalk) and an extended 30 km/h speed zone are recommended. Traffic calming measures need not pose a collision risk if proper care is taken in their design. It was found that the stopping sight distance to the proposed Pender Park crosswalk is adequate so long as a pedestrian activated flashing warning beacon is also installed. (Sight distance is available to the south side for both cars and trucks at 60 km/h, but not to the north side.) Note that the sight distance requirements are based on a wet slippery surface, and considers the grade effects. There is also adequate sight distances at the proposed school access at Haro Park Dr. Also, the recommended posted speed of 30 km/h can serve to improve sight distance requirements. Curb extensions could also be introduced one or two blocks west on Forest Park Dr, so as to establish a constrained / slower speed driving environment in advance of the school.

In terms of placement, it is preferable to form a four-leg intersection between the school access and Forest Park Dr so as to limit the number of intersections. In particular, closely spaced offset T-intersections create safety concerns as there are two decision points in close succession. Also, it is safer to have a school access on the lower volume Forest Park Dr than on the higher volume East Saanich Rd.

The existing curb-to-curb width of Forest Park Dr safely allows for on-street parking from a geometric perspective, and in fact can have a safety benefit of promoting slower speeds by narrowing the available roadway width and inducing more cautious driving behaviour. The proposed curb extensions will also aid in delineating the driving area from the parking area and reduce the pedestrian exposure (i.e. reduce crossing distance) at crosswalks.

2.2 Parking Issues

A number of parking issues were raised, concerning the supply and location of school-related parking activity, both on and off street.

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In terms of off-street parking, the allowing of on-street parking along Forest Park Dr can alleviate the concerns of parents unduly using adjacent residential streets for school drop-off and pickup. The provision of more off-street parking than the proposed amount under North Saanich's parking bylaw would be unnecessary in this case. The south parking lot at the Panorama Recreation Centre is also a potential parking location that can be used by parents. Safer Schools and Way to Go! programs can promote walking trips to school from the Dean Park neighbourhood, lessening the need for additional parking areas. Parking should not, however, be permitted along East Saanich Rd in the vicinity of the school since the geometry is less conducive than along Forest Park, the primary function of East Saanich Rd is driver mobility, and there are sight distance issues regarding the nearby driveways.

2.3 Traffic Conditions

There have been concerns expressed regarding traffic conditions with the added vehicles of the new school. The additional traffic will require mitigation at the intersection of East Saanich Rd and Forest Park Rd, so as to maintain acceptable operation for the 15 minute school peak traffic period. The addition of turn lanes and conversion to a 3-way stop controlled intersection will allow for this. While a roundabout has also been proposed, it is a greater expense. Therefore the 3-way stop with turn lanes is recommended. Traffic conditions at other nearby intersections (such as Forest Park Rd & Panorama Access, Forest Park Rd & Haro Park Ter) will have good operations.

Concerns were raised regarding propane trucks and black ice conditions, on Forest Park Dr at the base of the hill. While this isolated risk can have severe potential consequences, they are offset by the following: a) the occurrence of black ice is infrequent; b) Forest Park Dr is among the highest priority snow-clearing and maintenance roads in the District, due to the grade-associated safety risk (e.g. slippery conditions at night will be addressed before school starts in the morning); and c) treacherous conditions tend to yield extra caution by both drivers and pedestrians.

Traffic routing was expressed as a concern, particularly cut-through traffic using Haro Park Ter. While the potential exists for some school-based traffic here, it is expected that most school driving trips will use Forest Park Dr and make use of the parking lot loop design at the school in order to turn around. Therefore, mitigations such as blocking off Haro Park Ter or establishing residential only parking should only be considered if this arises as a problem in the future.

2.4 Pedestrians

For the new school, a sidewalk pathway along the south frontage of the school (along Forest Park Dr) is proposed. There have been some concerns, however, regarding the potential for extending

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sidewalks through the neighbourhood. While this is a desirable item, the cost of extending sidewalks throughout the Dean Park neighbourhood is prohibitive. A white pavement marking could be painted along Forest Park Dr and/or Pender Park Dr; however, this would provide only positioning guidance, and would not physically guard against collision potential. It is therefore recommended that a Safer Schools program be established to establish walking routes to school. Also, should the south Panorama parking lot be considered as a drop-off location, the addition of a path along the east edge of the building should be considered to facilitate safe pedestrian connectivity.

2.5 “Comprehensive” Traffic Study

The concern was raised that a traffic study is needed that would assess traffic operations and safety based on different possible school locations and access configurations on the site. This was not pursued, since the school location has been established.

3.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following issues were raised as reviewed for this traffic study. Safety issues were addressed, in consideration of speeds on Forest Park Dr, traffic calming, sight lines, school access location, and parking along Forest Park Dr. Parking and drop-off areas were considered as pertaining to on-and off street provision. Traffic operations were considered in terms of delay and traffic flow mitigation requirements. Pedestrian issues were also considered. From the assessment of these issues, the following recommendations are made regarding traffic mitigations associated with Kelset Elementary School.

Recommendations:

- Traffic calming / crosswalks as per the original May 2006 proposed design.
- Extend the 30 km/h zone to the west of the school for two blocks (in lieu of time-of-day school zone speed limits)
- Install an additional curb extension to the west of the school, in the vicinity of Cresswell Dr.
- Retain the originally proposed school access location, at the intersection with Haro Park Ter.
- Allow parking along Forest Park Dr, north side, to the east of the school
- Construct school parking lot to North Saanich Bylaw requirements
- Consideration of using the Panorama south parking lot for school drop-off/pickup, and if so, consideration of adding a path along the east side of Panorama atop the berm
- Prohibit parking along East Saanich Rd near the school
- Install 3-way stop with turn lanes at Forest Park Dr & East Saanich Rd
- Implement a Safer Schools program