

Crash report recommends changes to East End road

BY COLIN SLARK

The 2022 crash that caused a cyclist to lose a finger was made possible by road design that prioritizes motorists, according to a panel that reviewed the incident.

On June 27, 2022, Grant Hamilton was cycling along Lorne Avenue East when he was struck by a car at the intersection with Park Street.

This July, U.S.-based non-profit Strong Towns chose Hamilton's crash as the first Canadian entry in its crash analysis studio series, which gathers a panel of experts to examine a traffic crash and then suggest solutions on how to make the affected area safer in the future.

Last week, the panel released a report based on its analysis.

The five primary factors in the crash were determined to be caused by motorist-centric traffic design.

While on-street parking is allowed on Lorne Avenue East, it is inconsistently utilized and limited to only one side of the road, which the report says can give motorists a false sense of security.

The City of Brandon has since reduced the speed limit in the affected area — and all streets on the perimeter of Rideau Park — to 30 kilometres an hour as part of its Vision Zero efforts. The report said the previous 50 km/h prioritizes the speed of automobiles rather than cyclist of pedestrian safety.

Vision Zero is a philosophy that states that streets and roads should be designed to prevent all traffic-related deaths.

Tristan Cleveland, one of the panellists and an urban planner for a consulting firm called Happy Cities, said by phone from Halifax that a 30 km/h speed limit is much safer when it comes to collisions.

He said that at 50 km/h, a person struck by a vehicle has a 50 per cent chance of surviving. At 30 km/h, that survival rate climbs to 80 per cent. The change to the limit is a step in the right direction, he said, but it needs to be followed up with the street being redesigned.

"In the conversation, someone else pointed out that there's like 20 intersections in a row with no stop sign," Cleveland said. "That really encourages people to just put the pedal to the floor. They never have to pause at intersections to decide whether they can keep going."

Signs on the road and at the intersection were judged by the panel to be insufficient, stating there are nearby yield signs instead of stop signs, that the crosswalks are unmarked and that there are no signal lights despite a proximity to the park and the East End Community Centre.

Maintenance on the road was said to be "neither thorough nor frequent enough to ensure cyclists can safely utilize the road way in its entirety."

Potholes on the street limit the space cyclists can travel on, and navigating around parked cars and potholes can make cyclist behaviour



Brandon resident and cycling enthusiast Grant Hamilton accepts a hug from the driver of the vehicle that collided with him last year. U.S.-based non-profit Strong Towns performed an analysis of the crash that took Hamilton's pinky earlier this year and issued a report last week on how to make the crash location safer for pedestrians and cyclists. (File)

harder for motorists to predict.

Though there are "share the road" signs and markings on the road that signal that cyclists and motorists need to share the roadway, the report states that such markings are no longer considered best practice and have been shown not to improve safety.

The final, secondary factor in the collision as determined by the panellists is that the shortcomings in the road design combined with darkness or insufficient street lighting reduces the visibility for everyone using the road.

In the short-term, the report recommends that all yield signs be converted to stop signs, that another speed study be performed to see if the reduced limit is having results, turning the affected intersection into a four-way stop, creating a protected bike lane on Lorne Avenue and using optical narrowing like paint and poles to make the street seem less wide to users.

Cleveland said this can be accomplished in several ways, like placing planters or concrete barriers along the curb.

"A lot of these interventions can be new for our communities," he said.

"And we should make it much easier for communities to experiment in this way. It would be very dangerous to put a flower box on a highway. It is the opposite of dangerous to put it on a local residential street."

In the long-term, the report advises the city to study the impacts of any changes made, repeat any measures shown to be successful at other intersections, fix the damaged pavement on Lorne Avenue, review and change street signage as needed and create a multidisciplinary committee of city staff empowered to review and respond to crashes.

In a phone interview, Hamilton said he believes the design of the street needs to be changed to reflect the lower speed limit.

"It's the design of the street that makes you feel like what you should be driving," Hamilton said. "When I drive (there) it is very difficult for me to slow down, and I'm probably the most committed to slowing down around that part."

The designs suggested by the panel, he said, are creative and seem like they might not cost the city too much to implement.

Over the winter, he said, he hopes the city will take a serious look at

the suggestions and see what could be implemented in time for next spring. He added that he thought the suggestion of the city creating a crash response committee was a good idea.

"There was another crash recently and it was much sadder than the one I was involved in," Hamilton said. "It just does go to show that it's not something that is limited to one area of the city, it's something that can happen to anyone at any time and the consequences can be devastating."

Earlier this month, 15-year-old Antoine Sutherland was killed after being hit by a car while cycling through the intersection of Victoria Avenue and McDiarmid Drive.

A statement sent by email to the Sun about the report on behalf of Mark Allard, the city's director of development services, said that while the city does not agree with all the identified contributing factors, the effort to identify safety improvement was "highly valued."

"The City has recently developed a Vision Zero Task Force to address high risk issues regarding the on-street interactions of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians," Allard wrote.

"Vulnerable users on the transportation networks should feel safe and protected when actively using the streets.

"This piece of road infrastructure was designed and built decades back when transportation design primarily focused on the efficient movement of vehicular traffic. Today there is an expectation to level the playing field, reducing the risk of serious injury to the vulnerable user. As there are many locations that don't meet today's expectations, the city must proceed to address these in a prioritized manner."

According to Cleveland, where a lot of places in North America fall down on Vision Zero efforts is that people get too focused on education campaigns and not focused enough on design.

His recommendation is that Brandon pick some residential neighbourhoods to experiment with design in and limit institutional barriers to making changes. By widely implementing successful measures, he said, it could make a fundamental difference in the amount of traffic-related injuries and deaths.

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Operations relocated as repairs start at Civic Services Complex

BY COLIN SLARK

Some of the operations disrupted by an explosion at the City of Brandon's Civic Services Complex have been temporarily relocated to another building, according to a media release issued Monday.

While the investigation into the cause of the damage is still underway, the release states some repair work has commenced and the

building cannot be used while that work is ongoing.

In a statement sent by email, director of public works Pam Richardson said a contractor is currently working on stabilizing the roof and walls of the complex and carrying out weatherproofing ahead of inclement weather forecast for later this week.

During repairs, some departments have relocated to 382 Park

Ave. East. Residents with business at the location can visit from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Those services include the city's root claim program, which reimburses labour and equipment costs related to fixing sewers blocked by tree roots, the public works team and more.

Public works can still be reached by calling 204-729-2285 or by visit-

ing brandon.ca/report-an-issue.

Some departments working out of other municipal facilities include Brandon Transit and Fleet Services.

Fleet services is currently closed to drop-in visits from salespeople, but appointment-only visits are available in the next six to eight weeks by calling 204-571-2578.

"While there has been disruption to the Civic Services Complex building, the city has maintained

full operation of all its core operation services," general manager of operations Patrick Pulak said in the release.

"I want to thank our team of departments, city staff, and residents who have reached out over the last few weeks," Pulak said. "Together we have worked to ensure city operations continued in a seamless manner through this transition."

» The Brandon Sun



Aaron McKay, owner of Giive Media, is hosting an Indigenous artisan market this Saturday at the Riverbank Discovery Centre from 12 to 4 p.m. (File)

Indigenous makers market launches Saturday at Riverbank Discovery Centre

BY MIRANDA LEYBOURNE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

Indigenous artists from across Westman are gathering at the Riverbank Discovery Centre this Saturday to take part in the inaugural Gathering of Creations Indigenous makers market, hosted by Giive Media.

The market is free to attend and starts at noon and runs until 4 p.m. inside the centre, where attendees will have the chance to support Indigenous artisans and learn from Indigenous storytellers, while shopping local.

Aaron McKay, a Rolling River First Nation man who is the owner of Giive Media, an Indigenous-owned multimedia business dedicated to elevating the voices and history of Indigenous people throughout Canada, first got the idea for the event in the summer. Since then, he's gotten in touch with various artists to make the event a reality, with 12 currently on the roster for attending.

"It's of everything. There'll be clothing, ribbon skirts, things like that. There will likely be some food that people can pick up," McKay said.

Beyond Saturday's event, McKay is looking to host another one in December, called the Gathering of Creations Christmas in the Park, in Riding Mountain National Park.

"It'll be the same structure, where people will be able to come in, pick up a few Christ-

mas gifts, buy Indigenous creations from people of different Indigenous cultural backgrounds," he said.

A big part of both events is storytelling, something that is integral to Indigenous culture, McKay says. At Saturday's event, there will be three storytellers sharing their experiences and insight, including McKay himself.

"I'll be talking about my artwork, my business, and my lived experiences," he said. McKay's sister Katherine, a sewing and beading artist, will also be speaking at the event. "We'll have three half-hour slots where people who are shopping can come by and sit down in the multi-purpose room to just listen and hear some good stories."

For the December market, which will take place at the Riding Mountain National Park's Visitor Centre, McKay is hoping to incorporate live music.

An important takeaway from both markets is economically supporting Indigenous artists and entrepreneurs. It's something that McKay hopes people learn more about going forward with truth and reconciliation.

"People can come for the market and check out the stories. But for me, the main goal is that there's learning that happens, and hopefully, the people who do come will leave with a sense of having gained something."

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