
Subject: Niagara Falls 2018 Waterfront Investment Program Grant Extension

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Recommendations

1. That an extension of the 2018 Waterfront Investment Program grant for the City of Niagara Falls' Millennium Trail Section 5 through December 31, 2024 **BE APPROVED**; and
2. That Report PDS 7-2023 **BE CIRCULATED** to the City of Niagara Falls

Key Facts

- In 2018, Niagara Falls received a Waterfront Investment Program (WIP) grant for Section 5 of the Millennium Trail, designed to allow safe flow of pedestrians and cyclists through the City and connection to recreational features.
- The project, originally set to be completed July 2020, was provided an extension to June 2022 and is now seeking a second extension. Regional staff are recommending an extension to December 31, 2024, which requires Council approval.
- This WIP grant provided funding for two project components: the first component (design) is approximately two-thirds complete, and the second component (implementation) has not yet commenced. Recent information indicates the project is not expected to be completed until 2024.
- Regional funding for the City of Niagara Falls' 2018 WIP grant is \$400,000, to be paid upon project completion and Regional approval of a final program report.
- The WIP has not been funded since 2018, and was discontinued by Council in 2021.

Financial Considerations

The Region has allocated funding of \$400,000 for the Niagara Falls 2018 WIP project. The grant has been encumbered each year since its allocation as the project has not been completed.

Analysis

In 2018, Niagara Falls was awarded a Waterfront Investment Program (WIP) grant. Through this grant, up to \$400,000 in Regional funding was allocated to the City to support completion of Section 5 of the Millennium Trail. Section 5 is the last segment of the Trail stretching from Whirlpool Road to McLeod Road. Its aim is to allow pedestrians and cyclists to flow safely through the City separated from vehicular traffic, and to connect three major Regional Roads (Thorold Stone Road, Lundy's Lane, and McLeod Road) and community parks, exercise equipment, sporting fields and adjacent trails.

An agreement for this WIP grant was signed in December 2018, with final reporting due July 2020. In November 2020, an extension was provided to the City through delegated staff authority to June 2022 to accommodate delays due primarily to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interim reporting in 2021 indicated the project was on track for this completion date. However, in addition to pandemic-related delays, staffing challenges and difficulty with external agencies continue to affect the project. To date, approximately two-thirds of the design component have been completed. The tendering and implementation component are pending the completion of the design and have not been initiated. The WIP grant will not be paid out until the project is complete.

Currently, the City is working with its engineering consultant to finalize design for a key part of Section 5, the cycle track trail system over the Dorchester Road bridge. The design will then be resubmitted to the provincial Ministry of Transportation (MTO). The last submission to MTO in February 2022 did not receive comments back from the Ministry until late November 2022. Niagara Falls staff estimate that the work will go to tender in Q3 2023. The project is not likely to be complete until 2024.

In the letter from the Region to the City approving the first extension for grant, it was noted that any subsequent funding extensions would require Regional Council approval. Precedent for this exists in PDS 39-2020, in which Council approved a second extension for the other 2018 WIP grant recipient, the Town of Lincoln, which also experienced some delays due to the pandemic. Lincoln's WIP grant was completed by June 2021.

WIP has not been funded since 2018 and was discontinued by Council in October 2021.

Alternatives Reviewed

Three alternatives may be considered regarding the grant subject to this report:

1. Council could approve an extension of Niagara Falls' 2018 WIP grant through December 2024, after which time the Regional funding allocated for the grant would be repurposed. **Recommended.** This would provide clear deadlines for the grant recipient and other parties involved in the project; would provide financial clarity that would assist in Regional financial and budget planning, including repurposing funding to address other budget pressures; and would enable closure of a program Council has not funded since 2018 and discontinued in 2021.
2. Council could approve an extension of this grant until an alternate date. **Not Recommended.** Depending on the date, this could be challenging to the project, to the Region, or both, and result in additional reports to Council.
3. Council could decline to provide further extensions for this 2018 WIP grant. **Not Recommended.** This could cause challenges resulting in the extension or revision of the original project supported by the Region and the City.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The information in this report relates to the following Council Strategic Priorities:

Priority 2: Healthy and Vibrant Communities

- **Objective 2.1:** Enhance Community Wellbeing

Priority 3: Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning

- **Objective 3.4:** Facilitating the Movement of People and Goods

Other Pertinent Reports

PDS 16-2018	Waterfront Investment Program 2018 Funding Recommendations
PDS 39-2020	Town of Lincoln Waterfront Investment Program Extension Request
PDS 31-2021	Niagara Region Incentives Review

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Appendices

None