

What We Heard Complete Streets Policy Update

April 2025

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Executive Summary

The City of Edmonton engaged external interested parties in March and April 2025 to gather feedback on its updated Complete Streets Policy C573A. This report summarizes feedback gathered during public engagement through online meetings, surveys and one-on-one sessions.

Overall, feedback strongly supported the policy's alignment with the City Plan and its focus on creating safe, inclusive and accessible streets. Most respondents agreed that the policy's objectives were consistent with the broader strategic vision for Edmonton's transportation network. There was overwhelming support for bundling policy statements under the City Plan's "Big City Moves," which was seen as clarifying how street development aligns with the City's overall planning direction.

However, respondents also raised concerns about the policy's vagueness and wordiness, requesting clearer, more practical implementation steps. Some worried that ambiguity could lead to inconsistent application and potentially inadequate active transportation infrastructure. A few felt the policy lacked concrete outcomes and simply restated existing goals.

Feedback was also received concerning the Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards, which, while out of scope for the policy update, will be considered in the standards update. This feedback included suggestions for clarifying cross-sections, providing more space for utilities in roadways, addressing water and drainage challenges and ensuring consistency in terminology and definitions.

The input gathered from this engagement process will be used to further refine the Complete Streets Policy and Construction and Design Standards.

Report Key Themes:

- **Policy Alignment:** Strong support for alignment with the City Plan and its objectives.
- **Clarity and Specificity:** Need for clearer, more practical implementation steps and less ambiguous language.
- **Cost Implications:** Emphasis on comprehensive cost-benefit analysis and consideration of long-term costs and benefits, including environmental factors and underground infrastructure.
- **Active Transportation:** Prioritization of active transportation infrastructure and encouragement of modal shift.
- **Climate Resilience:** Importance of climate resilience and sustainability in street design and construction.
- **Underground Infrastructure:** Desire for the policy to acknowledge and address the impact of underground infrastructure.

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Acknowledgements

We thank those who provided their input and expertise during our engagement to help set the direction for Edmonton's transportation network.

Project Overview

The Complete Streets Design and Construction Standard (CSDCS) is a critical tool for the planning and delivery of transportation infrastructure that contributes to the healthy growth of our city.

Published in 2018 after two years of collaboration with internal and external interested parties, the CSDCS had minor updates in 2021 and 2023. A comprehensive update, initiated in 2024, is expected to be published in summer 2025. Alongside the standards update, a revision of the [Complete Streets Policy C573A](#) was requested. The original policy, approved in 2015 as Edmonton started implementing complete streets, is now outdated and requires alignment with the City Plan. Council made two motions concerning this policy update in 2023 and 2024.

Public Engagement Approach

The City's Public Engagement Spectrum defines the public's level of influence in engagement processes. Engagement for the Complete Streets Policy C573A Update sits at the REFINE level on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum meaning interested parties were asked to provide feedback to help adapt and adjust the updated draft policy.



Engagement for this project was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 engagement started in 2024, when internal parties were invited to provide input to update the draft policy. The project team gathered feedback from the City of Edmonton’s Urban Planning and Economy, Parks and Roads Services, Integrated Infrastructure Services and the Corporate Policy team. The feedback from Phase 1 engagement was used to help shape the updated policy.

Phase 2 engagement was conducted in March and April 2025. The project team engaged with external interested parties to refine the updated policy and proposed changes. It was important that external parties had the opportunity to provide their feedback to ensure their expertise and experiences were included in the final draft policy. See [Appendix A](#) for a list of who participated.

This report summarizes feedback from Phase 2 engagement with external interested parties.

How We Engaged

A variety of online and in-person engagement activities were available for external parties to ensure they had the opportunity to participate how and when it worked for them.

Activity	Description	Dates	Participation
Online Sessions	External party online meetings to understand their needs, concerns and priorities related to the updated policy.	March 17 and 19	24 participants
Online Survey (full survey questions included in Appendix B)	Additional activity to collect input from external parties who may not have had the capacity to attend an online meeting.	March 19-31	24 respondents
One-on-one Meetings (in-person or online)	Meetings with the project manager were offered as an additional opportunity for interested parties to provide input.	March 18 and April 14	Approximately 20 participants

Engagement Results

What We Asked / What We Heard / What We Did

Policy Statement: Provide input into the revised Policy Statement and its alignment with the City Plan.	
What We Asked	Does the updated policy align with City Plan objectives to form a network of streets to serve all users and their travel purposes?
What We Heard	<p>The majority of respondents "Strongly agree" (54%) or "Somewhat agree" (33%), totalling 87% of all respondents. A smaller percentage "Strongly disagree" (12%), with no other category selected.</p> <p>Additional comments provided suggest that the Complete Streets Policy needs to be more ambitious or realistic and that the focus should span beyond private automobiles.</p>
What We Did	<p>The policy is meant to be aspirational and provide strategic direction.</p> <p>The updated Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards continue to evolve from the previous versions to emphasize the importance of design networks for all users. This update provides more direction on the emphasis of enhanced active transportation elements such as curb extensions, raised crossings, and other traffic calming elements to help promote mode shift.</p>
Implementation: Collect feedback on the reinforced requirement to use the Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards for new developments and renewal projects.	
What We Asked	Does the reinforced requirement to follow the Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards in the updated policy provide clarity around the direction for Edmonton's transportation network?
What We Heard	<p>Reinforced Requirements of Standards in Policy</p> <p>Survey Respondents either "Somewhat Agree" (54%) or "Strongly Agree" (21%) when asked about if there should be requirements to follow the Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards in the updated policy around the direction of Edmonton's transportation network. Two respondents (8%) "Strongly disagree", one respondent (4%) "Somewhat disagree", while one respondent (4%) "neither agreed nor disagreed" and two respondents chose (8%) "Don't know".</p> <p>Guiding Principle Prioritization</p> <p>During the online sessions and 1:1 meetings, participants suggested prioritization of the guiding principles to assist in giving direction on which principle(s) should be considered the most important when developing construction plans.</p>

What We Did	<p>After reviewing the individual feedback, the survey, and discussions with stakeholders, there were several comments noted around what is the priority. When City Plan was created, it was decided to not have priorities identified as part of the process as priorities shift and change over time - what might be a priority one year may not be as important next year. For this policy update, the guiding principles will not be prioritized to allow long term flexibility of the policy.</p> <p>The Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards are intended to provide the best guidance around what and where to design including elements that accommodate accessibility, safety, winter city, utilities, and many other factors based on the Complete Streets Policy.</p> <p>No changes are proposed in the order of the policy at this time.</p>
Implementation: Understand if bundling Policy statements under The City Plan Big City Moves provides clarity.	
What We Asked	Does the bundling of policy statements under The City Plan Big City Moves in the updated Complete Streets Policy C573B provide further clarity on how Edmonton's streets are shaped by the City's strategic planning direction?
What We Heard	When asked about the bundling of policy statements in alignment with the Big City Moves, the overwhelming majority of respondents "Strongly agree" (71%) with this decision. A smaller percentage "Somewhat agree" (13%). The responses for "Strongly disagree" and "Neither agree nor disagree" were both 4%, while "Somewhat disagree" was 8%.
What We Did	Based on the feedback received, no proposed changes to the policy are contemplated at this time.
Implementation: Understand if the updated Policy aligns with the City's commitments to have safe, inclusive, and accessible streets.	
What We Asked	Does the updated policy clearly outline the City's commitment to streets that are safe, inclusive, and accessible?
What We Heard	<p>Survey data shows a strong majority of respondents "Strongly agree" (63%). A significant portion also "Somewhat agree" (25%). A small percentage of respondents selected "Strongly disagree," "Somewhat disagree," and "Neither agree nor disagree," each at 4% (one respondent each).</p> <p>In a stakeholder meeting, participants noted that there should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A clear definition of what a 'vulnerable user' is in terms of both the policy and standards → Exploration into research and development of safety and perception of safety through the lens of gender (i.e. does the safety and perception of safety actions in the policy and standards consider and account for differing gender experiences?)

	<p>→ Distinction between 'safe' and 'accessible' streets, as these are not necessarily mutually exclusive and have distinct contexts</p>
What We Did	<p>The Safe Mobility Strategy (2021 - 2025) provides clarity around what a vulnerable user is defined to be. From this Strategy, those considered to be most vulnerable on our streets are people cycling and walking (keeping in mind that there are various types of users within those broad categories, including children, gender minorities, and others). The definition of vulnerable user per the Safe Mobility Strategy was also utilized in the Complete Streets Policy and Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards.</p> <p>Based on the policy engagement, the policy wording was expanded to include gender when describing inclusive travel options for users.</p>
<p>Implementation: Confirm if the updated Policy allows for appropriate consideration of cost implications in the preparation and construction of a development / rehabilitation of a neighbourhood.</p>	
What We Asked	<p>Does the updated policy appropriately consider the direct and indirect total lifecycle costs, the value of public right of way and adjacent land use?</p>
What We Heard	<p>In response to whether the updated policy reinforces the need for cost-benefit analysis, the data indicates that a significant portion of respondents "Strongly agree" (46%). A notable percentage also "Somewhat agree" (29%). However, some respondents "Somewhat disagree" (13%). Smaller percentages selected "Strongly disagree," "Neither agree nor disagree," and "Don't know," each at 4%.</p> <p>In open-end survey comments and session discussions, respondents shared the following feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A desire for a more comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, including environmental benefits, long-term costs and savings (especially regarding driver subsidies and transitioning to active transportation) and the perspectives of those managing underground infrastructure. → The need to prioritize active transportation infrastructure, including dedicated bike lanes and raised crosswalks. → The costs and concerns related to underground infrastructure need to be explicitly acknowledged and considered in planning and cost calculations. → Suggestion to clarify the definition of "value of the Right of Way." → Policy requirements will impact project costs and infrastructure maintenance, and this needs to be factored into budget setting. → Standardized implementation of Complete Streets elements (like curb extensions and speed humps) by developers could lead to significant cost savings. → Wording in the policy should avoid implying guarantees that cannot be made. Some priorities may not be followed through depending on the enforcement of both policy and standards. → Achieving modal shift (moving away from car dependency) is seen as crucial for climate goals. To achieve this, changes are needed to make driving less convenient

	<p>(e.g., paid parking, reduced road space for cars) and to make active transportation more appealing.</p> <p>→ Clarity on the enforcement of the policy and standards to ensure the desired outcomes of the update will be made</p>
What We Did	<p>The policy and Design and Construction Standards both directly and indirectly acknowledge that right of way is limited and the demands on the space continue to increase. Specific cost-benefit analysis is more directly tied to the standards and the choices related to how the standards are applied on a case-by-case basis. Cost analysis related to the updated standards will be shared as additional information when the policy update is brought forward for approval.</p> <p>A large focus of the update to the standards has been to stay within the existing rights of way while trying to maximize opportunities for modal shift through walking, wheeling, and transit. The updated standards provide options to achieve the policy goals within existing rights of way.</p> <p>The policy was updated to add some clarification around “value of right-of-way.”</p> <p>A principle was included in the policy to recognize the need to consider and accommodate utilities in Edmonton’s streets.</p>
Implementation: Assess the update policy’s prioritization of the City’s climate resilience, through build up of the ecosystem and increased use of public and active transportation options.	
What We Asked	<p>Does the updated policy contribute to the environmental sustainability and resiliency of the city, foster an environment where people choose active transportation or transit as part of their daily travel and that public trees are a priority for all streets to increase urban greenery and environmental outcomes?</p>
What We Heard	<p>When asked to what extent the updated policy reinforces the importance of climate resilience and adaptation in the planning, design and construction of our streets, the largest portion of respondents “Strongly agree” (46%). However, there is a significant distribution of other responses. “Somewhat disagree,” “Neither agree nor disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” and “Don’t Know” each received 13% of responses. A smaller percentage (4%) “Strongly disagree.”</p>
What We Did	<p>The updated policy recognizes the contribution of Edmonton’s streets to climate resilience including through mode shift and urban greenery. After reviewing the individual feedback, the survey, and discussions with stakeholders, no changes to the policy are proposed.</p>

Additional Feedback

Additional feedback from both the survey and online meetings included:

- The policy is seen as vague and overly wordy, lacking clear practical steps for implementation.
- The vagueness of the policy could lead to the acceptance of substandard active transportation infrastructure while potentially overriding other important considerations.
 - ◆ Language is aspirational but ambiguous, leaving room for interpretation and potentially weak implementation.
- The policy does not acknowledge underground infrastructure and its impact.
- Concern about potential conflicts or overlaps with other city plans, such as the "Big City Move cycle."
- The policy repeats existing objectives without committing to tangible outcomes.
- Some respondents consider the policy difficult to support in its current form because it does not seem to offer a net gain over existing policies.
- The policy does not address the tensions that exist with the 'policy buildup' that leads to confusion and frustration of interested parties.

Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards Feedback

Additional feedback was received that was out of scope for the policy update but related to the comprehensive Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards update through all modes of engagement. A summary of the feedback is captured below for consideration as part of the update to the standards.

Topic	Feedback
Cross-Sections	Clarify the purpose of the cross-sections, specifically regarding one-directional streets and how they accommodate utilities, trees and other demands. Demonstrate how all these elements fit.
Utilities	<p>More space for utilities in roadways, particularly for multiple pipelines (storm, sanitary, force main) was requested.</p> <p>Existing areas face difficulties accommodating utilities due to limited space and older, large trees.</p> <p>When narrowing roads in mature neighbourhoods, there is concern about the potential need to relocate utilities under sidewalks. Minimizing the costs for utility migration is a priority. The preference is to avoid utility movement whenever possible, with a focus on water concerns over drainage.</p> <p>As utility demands increase, (e.g. electrical grids) it is challenging to find space within street cross-sections to add the needed infrastructure.</p>

Water and Drainage	Challenges exist with water and drainage, including obtaining clearance from Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP). Feedback suggested meeting all standards is problematic, and joint discussions between the City, EPCOR, and AEP would help to address these issues. policy changes may reduce space for utilities and road drainage. Modifications to the old AEP are suggested, considering road drainage; the old AEP policy around clearances identified that catchbasins and leads were identified as one type of infrastructure and in a recent policy change has been classified as a different type resulting in an increase of clearance requirements for infrastructure that has been historically installed at smaller offsets.
Expectations on Local Roads	There is confusion regarding expectations for local roads and the use of shared pathways, which are intended for special contexts only. The city standard is 1.8m sidewalks. Respondents felt that collector road standards have been adjusted regarding sidewalks and shared paths.
One-Way Road Standards	The development of two options for one-way road standards is noted, with a focus on reviewing potential space savings. Respondents felt that waste management and other considerations need to be highlighted to ensure utility needs are being met.
Terminology and Definitions	Concerns about inconsistent wording and terminology in the policy and standards, highlighting the need for alignment and clearer definitions.
Adaptability and Customization	The breakdown of requirements based on the purpose of a road is helpful to allow flexibility in response to the needs of a type of construction, rather than a blanketed policy that is not adaptable across multiple modes of use.

Next Steps

The input shared by internal and external parties has influenced the development and refinement of the policy. The input shared by external interested parties and what was done with it to influence the updated policy is captured in the “What We Did” sections of this report. The updated policy is scheduled to be presented to the Urban Planning Committee in June 2025 for approval, accompanied by the updated standards for information.

Appendix A: Participant Lists

Virtual Session OrganizationParticipants

1. ATCO
2. Edmonton Bike Coalition
3. Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
4. Edmonton Public Schools
5. Edmonton Transit Service
6. EPCOR
 - a. Distribution
 - b. Water Services
 - c. Power
7. Paths for People
8. Rogers Communication

Survey Participant Organizations

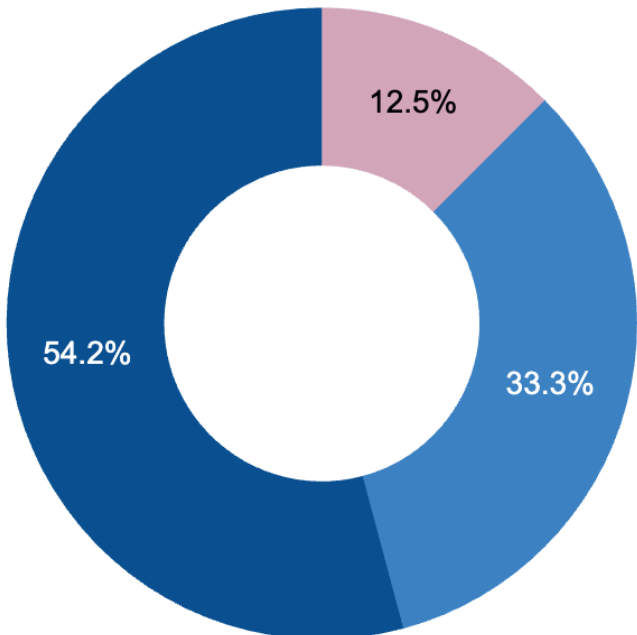
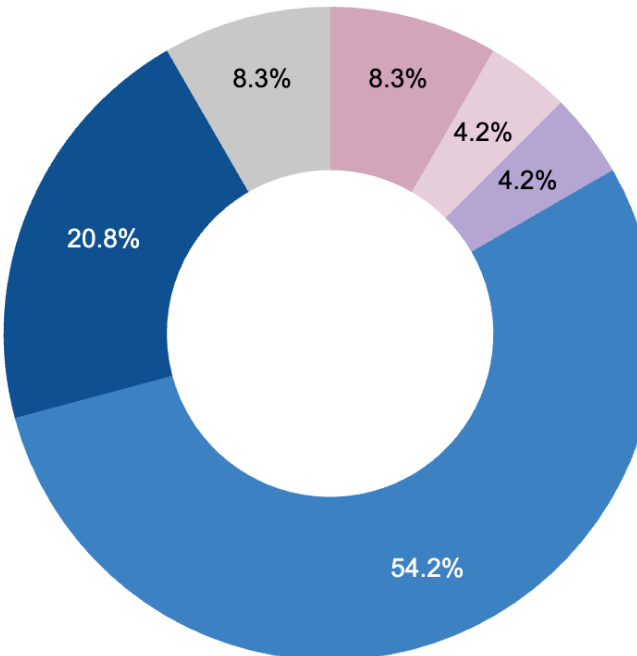
1. ATCO
2. Beljan Development
3. City of Edmonton, Community Services, Social Development Branch
4. Edmonton Public Schools
5. EPCOR
 - a. Power
 - b. Water Services - Engineering & Technical Services
6. ReYu Paralysis Recovery Centre
7. YEG Bike Coalition

Targeted Interested Party Sessions (1:1)

1. Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) Edmonton Metro
2. Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

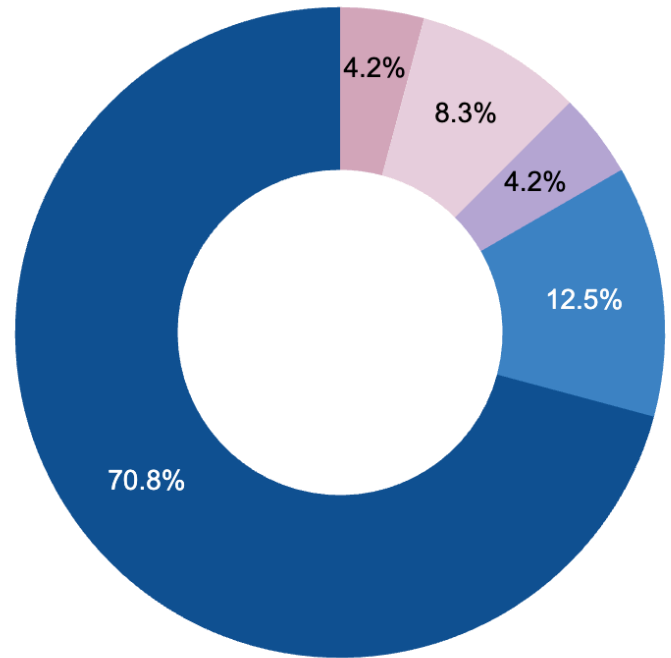
Appendix B: Raw Survey Data

The following table provides a breakdown of survey results in graphic form.

Question & Respondent Results		Pie Chart Representation
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The updated policy aligns with City Plan objectives of forming a network of streets to serve all users and their travel purpose.		
Selection	Number of Respondents	
Strongly Disagree	3	
Somewhat Disagree	0	
Neither	0	
Somewhat Agree	8	
Strongly Agree	13	
Don't Know	0	
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The reinforced requirement to follow the Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards in the updated policy provides clarity around the direction for Edmonton’s transportation network.		
Selection	Number of Respondents	
Strongly Disagree	2	
Somewhat Disagree	1	
Neither	1	
Somewhat Agree	13	
Strongly Agree	5	
Don't Know	2	

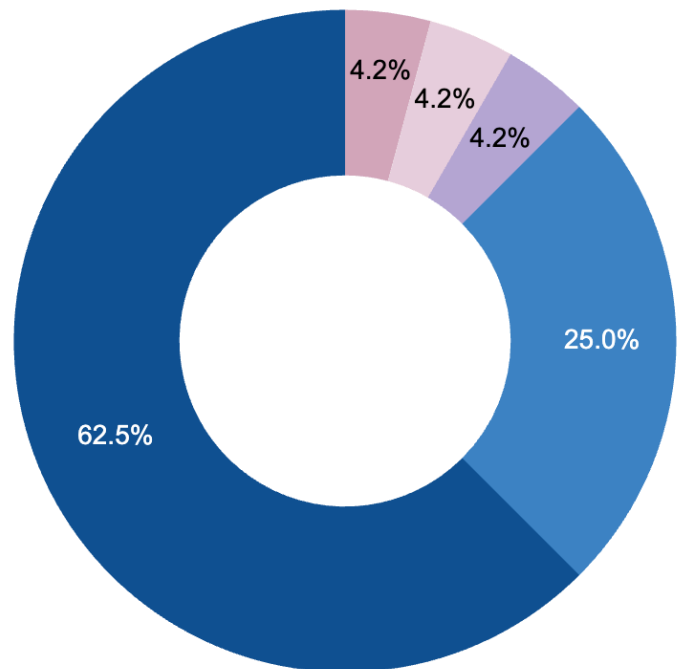
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The bundling of policy statements under The City Plan Big City Moves in the updated Complete Streets Policy C573B provides further clarity on how Edmonton's streets are shaped by the City's strategic planning direction.

Selection	Number of Respondents
Strongly Disagree	1
Somewhat Disagree	2
Neither	1
Somewhat Agree	3
Strongly Agree	17
Don't Know	0



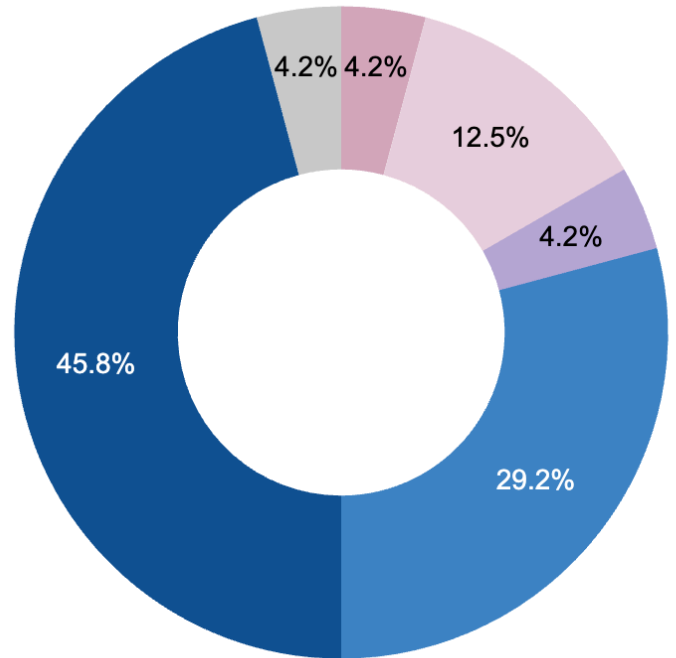
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The policy update clearly outlines the City's commitment to streets that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

Selection	Number of Respondents
Strongly Disagree	1
Somewhat Disagree	1
Neither	1
Somewhat Agree	6
Strongly Agree	15
Don't Know	0



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The updated policy reinforces the need to consider short and long term costs and benefits of street designs.

Selection	Number of Respondents
Strongly Disagree	1
Somewhat Disagree	3
Neither	1
Somewhat Agree	7
Strongly Agree	11
Don't Know	1



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The updated policy reinforces the importance of climate resilience and adaptation in the planning, design and construction of our streets.

Selection	Number of Respondents
Strongly Disagree	1
Somewhat Disagree	3
Neither	3
Somewhat Agree	3
Strongly Agree	11
Don't Know	3

