

Mayor suggests politics might be at play with prioritization of Jamestown

By **Dan Gray** - January 11, 2022 @ 12:44 pm



The yellow is the proposed new hub trail based on conversations with sources inside the city. The green is currently existing.

Voters will go to the polls this October to vote for a Mayor and Councillors around the table to represent our community.

Although ten months away, a suggestion by the current Mayor, who has indicated that he will not be running again, put the shortened timeline to ballot casting sharply into focus.



It all came down to the Active Transportation Master Plan, which is currently under development. It seems that prioritizing an area like Jamestown, or any area, would pre-

empty the completion of the plan.

"I think we're gaming the system a little bit here. We have asked for this study to be done, the study will be done. We'll get that assessment and that assessment will come back to us, then we can prioritize that any way we see fit," said Mayor Provenzano when explaining why he didn't want to support the motion. "I don't see it being responsible to prioritize it in advance. I think you're essentially influencing this study prior to the study being done. I think we should get the fullness of the information returned to us."

He then dropped a suggestion potentially providing clarity as to why he believes some Councillors may want this prioritized.

"[It] doesn't mean we can't do it first, for political reasons, or for policy reasons that we think are more important."

As is protocol, Provenzano addressed Council last on the issue, giving his thoughts on the impending vote after all the other Councillors had spoken.

Two other Councillors, Gardi and Hilsinger also were concerned with the timing.

"I certainly think that this is a very good idea. I'm really struggling with the nature of calling something the highest priority before a comprehensive transportation [plan]. It is a priority in my mind, but to make it the highest priority, when we're about to undergo a plan that's going to be comprehensive and all encompassing in terms of how we can improve active transportation across our community..." said Hilsinger.

Councillor Shoemaker, who has been a long-standing proponent of this idea, made reference to why he believed it needed to be done.

"This is one that has been bandied around for some time, a connection to the James Street area, either through the Machine Shop or down Queen Street and across, northbound on Queen. But it seemed, you know, we waited for it," stated Shoemaker. "Then a couple of different trail proposals came forward. And this one kind of got bumped down the list, including the recent realignment of the hub trail along Huron Street," stated Shoemaker.

He stressed it needs to be done because the City cut off Jamestown 20 years ago.

"Essentially, all this does is ensure that in our active transportation master plan, this project is considered the highest priority of Council, so that the next available funding envelope that is opened, we can have our ducks in a row to make that connection to re-attach part of our community that really has been isolated by the the construction of Carmen's Way, which has been 20 some years ago."

Many Councillors agreed with Shoemaker's statement and the vote passed 8-3.

There is a pool of money which City Staff is currently working to allocate according to which projects are deemed to be most important. That list will come to Council shortly. When it does, with re-election on the line for some, the conversation and final decisions will be made by Council members in terms of assigning priority.

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A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.

