The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie

C O U N C I L R E P O R T

March 23, 2026

TO:	Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR:	Maggie McAuley, Manager of Design and Transportation Engineering
DEPARTMENT:	Public Works and Engineering Services
RE:	Traffic Flow – Church Street and Pim Street

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to address an outstanding Council resolution regarding the traffic flow direction on Church Street.

Background

On August 11, 2025, Council passed the following resolution:

> *Whereas the Five-Year Capital Transportation Plan, presented to City Council on July 14, 2025 has within it the reconstruction of Church Street in 2027, and;*
>
> *Whereas traffic flow between the uptown/Great Northern Road area and the downtown/Queen Street area currently contains one-way traffic flow on Pim Street and Church Street, with Church Street heading north, and Pim Street heading south; and*
>
> *Whereas new multi-unit housing on Pim Street, and the development of new residential units in the old Sault Area Hospital Renal Building may increase traffic numbers of Church Street; and*
>
> *Whereas prior to incurring the costs of reconstructing a road, which will maintain the current traffic system for another generation, it is prudent to review the suitability of the traffic flow system to determine if it meets the community's current needs;*
>
> *Now Therefore Be It Resolved that prior to the reconstruction of Church Street being undertaken, staff review the Church Street/Pim Street one-way traffic flow arrangements, as well as the sightlines at the intersections of Church/Wellington and Pim/Wellington, and any other relevant intersections*

in the area, to determine if there is a more efficient way to move traffic between the downtown and the uptown areas of Sault Ste. Marie.

Analysis

Church Street from Queen Street to its terminus north of The Crescent, is a one-way road with traffic flow heading north. Pim Street from Queen Street to Ontario Avenue is a one-way road with traffic flow heading south. The reconstruction of Church Street from Queen Street to Wellington Street has been planned for 2027 in the 2026-2030 Capital Transportation Plan. It is recommended for full reconstruction due to the age of the underground infrastructure.

Road Geometrics

Church Street is an urban arterial road. South of The Crescent, it has a 20m right-of-way with a 10m wide road which widens as it approaches Wellington Street.
Pim Street is also an urban arterial road. South of Euclid Road, it has a 20m right-of-way with a 9.1m wide road. Both roads have two curb-faced sidewalks with no boulevards and no designated cycling facilities.

Both Pim Street and Church Street have a railroad crossing. The roads converge at an angle north of the tracks, where Church Street ends and Pim Street continues north at the base of the Pim Street hill. See Figure 1.

Church Street has parking prohibited on the east side of the road, and on the west side of the road from Queen to Herrick. There is no parking allowed on Pim Street on both sides from Queen Street to McNabb Street.

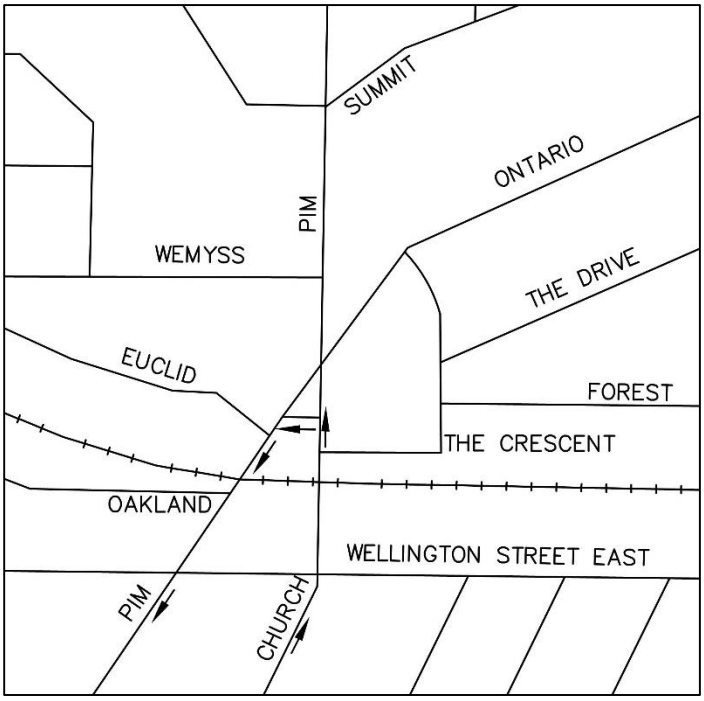

Figure 1 - Existing Road Network

Intersections
A number of local roads connect to these two streets. The major intersections are the crossing of Wellington Street and Queen Street.

The intersections of Wellington/Pim, Wellington/Church and Queen/Pim are signalized intersections. The traffic signals were recently removed from the Queen/Church intersection.

Users
Both roads are part of transit routes with transit stops on each. In the Active Transportation Master Plan, Church Street is designated as a proposed shared route while Pim Street is proposed to have a designated bicycle lane.

Only one sidewalk is maintained on Church Street while both sidewalks on Pim Street are maintained in the winter.

Prior to 2006, both routes were part of the City's truck route network. With the construction of Carmen's Way, the truck route designation was removed from both roads.

Past Studies and Concerns
In 2002, the City undertook a Schedule B Environmental Assessment to address the lack of pedestrian and cycling facilities, the history of collisions and inadequate lane widths on Pim Street between Summit Avenue and Euclid Road. The recommendation was to purchase a property along the east side of the hill in order to build a wider road. With the introduction of Carmen's Way, the bridge traffic was redirected, and the traffic volumes have been reduced in the Pim-Church corridor. Due to the unavailability of the property at the time of the EA, the project was not advanced, and this EA is considered stale.

In 2007, Read, Voorhees & Associates provided traffic opinion related to the Truck Routes throughout the City. Included in the letter was an opinion about converting Church Street between Queen Street and Wellington to two-way operation. The opinion included:

- a conversion to two-way operation would slightly increase the volume of traffic and would have other negative impacts
- Church and Pim Streets are a one-way pair between Queen and Ontario Avenue. Pim Street should not be converted to two-way operation due to the intersection at Ontario Avenue and the effects it would have on the closely spaced intersections of Pim Street and Church Street at Wellington Street – conflicting left turns and difficulties with clearance, which could lead to increased collisions
- Converting Church Street to two-way operation by itself would result in a small volume southbound and no decrease in north bound traffic – thus an overall increase in traffic. The roadway would likely have to be two lanes

northbound and one lane southbound. Thus, on-street parking would be lost.

- In order to not block westbound traffic on Wellington Street, left turn lanes should be provided or left turns should be prohibited.

In general, Read, Vorhees & Associates believed the disadvantages outweighed the small benefits of converting Church Street and recommended against it.

Further, in 2018, the Downtown Traffic Study examined improvements to the downtown traffic operation. This included reviewing the conversion of all one-way streets in the downtown to two-way operation. This study was undertaken as a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment and determined that one-way streets, including Pim and Church, would remain as one-way roads.

Staff are planning to study the Pim Street corridor to see if a reduction from a four-lane to a three-lane road (i.e. road diet) is appropriate to address the insufficient lane widths on the Pim Street hill. This will require engaging a consultant to complete the required traffic modelling.

When the traffic signal at Queen and Church Streets was removed, Council requested that pedestrian safety at this location be reviewed. While undertaking this review, the City's traffic advisory consultant suggested that to improve pedestrian safety at the Queen/Pim intersection, the islands should be removed and the City consider converting Pim Street to two-way traffic. They've also recommended a pedestrian crossover (PXO) at Queen and Church Streets.

Discussion
The roads are of sufficient width to support two-way traffic.

The sightlines at Wellington/Pim, Wellington/Church and Queen/Pim are sufficient for signalized intersections. At the Queen/Church intersection, the sightlines from the standard stopping location are insufficient for southbound traffic at a stopped controlled intersection. Vehicles would have to creep into the intersection in order to meet the sightline requirements. To resolve this issue, traffic signals may need to be reintroduced.

Traffic signals are currently set up for receiving traffic on three legs of the intersection. Introducing two-way traffic would require equipment for the fourth leg. Currently, the traffic signals at Wellington/Church and Wellington/Pim share a controller. Adding the extra signals would likely require the need to separate the signals into their own independent intersections.

The Queen/Pim intersection has two islands and traffic control for two legs of the intersection. Reconstruction of the intersection with the additional equipment to control traffic at all four legs of the intersection may be required. This is within the

limits of the Queen Street improvements plan and could be considered as part of the future phase of Queen Street construction.

The lane capacity is greater on a one-way road (1,000 veh/hr) than a two-way road (800 veh/hr). Once capacity is reached, cars can expect delays and excessive queuing. Neither Pim Street nor Church Street have traffic volumes nearing the capacity limits of a one- or two-way road.

If Pim Street and Church Street were converted to two-way traffic, where they converge at the bottom of the hill would have to be carefully reviewed. Removal of the southbound left turn to Ontario Avenue was suggested during the previous EA. A further traffic safety assessment must be conducted to determine the best way to merge traffic if both Pim Street and Church Street are converted.

Other scenarios should also be considered, such as closing and removing either Church Street or Pim Street north of Wellington Street should the other street be converted to a two-way road.

Next Steps

The decision to convert from a one-way road to a two-way road is a complex undertaking, particularly in the vicinity of the Pim Street hill. Pursuing the conversion would likely require significant reconfiguration and reconstruction of the road network at the base of the Pim Street hill including portions of Pim Street, Church Street, Euclid Road, The Crescent and Ontario Avenue. A two-way conversion would be expected to shift traffic patterns such that Pim Street would function more prominently as an access route into and out of the downtown, increasing traffic volumes on Pim Street and reducing volumes on Church Street, possibly allowing parts of Church to be removed. Alternatively, portions of Pim Street could be closed and the access route shifted to Church Street. Property owners may have strong opinions about these changes. Accommodating the additional traffic would likely require a reconstruction of Pim Street as well as the reconstruction of its intersection with Queen Street.

While the individual components of a complex project of this nature do not require a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA), (e.g. conversion from one-way to two-way operation, localized improvement to intersection, closure of a roadway) staff recommend that a comprehensive review of the alternatives be undertaken and that the MCEA Schedule be confirmed. Regardless of whether an MCEA is ultimately required, staff recommend undertaking meaningful public consultation to assess the opinion of the adjacent landowners as well as the broader community. Typical costs for EA or EA-like studies generally being in the range of $75,000 and may increase depending on the project complexity and level of public interest and response.

If reconfiguration or reconstruction of any of these roads is pursued, The City should anticipate replacing the underground infrastructure. The sanitary sewers

were installed in the 1910s while the storm infrastructure was installed in the 1950s-1960s. Pim Street from Queen Street to Wellington and then north of Wellington Street to Ontario Avenue are not currently included in the 2026-2030 Capital Transportation Plan.

Given that the reconstruction of Pim Street is not identified in the 2026-2030 Capital Transportation Plan, staff do not recommend initiating a study of the two-way conversion at this time. Undertaking a study without a corresponding funded capital timeline introduces the risk that the work will become outdated, require re-validation, or expire before implementation. Staff therefore propose that the review of road configuration north of Wellington Street be undertaken when the Pim Street project is brought forward within a future five-year capital program. Accordingly, staff recommend deferring a decision on two-way conversion until that review can be completed.

With respect to the planned 2027 reconstruction of Church Street, changes to the lane configuration at Wellington Street may be required if the road is converted to two-way traffic; however, staff feel this can be taken into consideration during the detailed design of Church Street, and it could be designed such that two-way traffic can be accommodated or only minor changes would be required if it were converted.

Staff will continue to pursue the study of the lane reduction of Pim Street to address the outstanding issues that were originally identified in 2002 MCEA. If a road diet is recommended, implementation would likely be limited to pavement markings and signage changes.

Financial Implications
The topic of this report results in no financial implications.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact
The recommendations of this request are linked to the infrastructure focus area of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

Recommendation
It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Manager of Design and Transportation Engineering dated March 23, 2026 concerning the traffic flow on Church Street and Pim Street be received as information.

Respectfully submitted,

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