

INSIDE AURORA: Changing Lanes

By Scott Johnston

?? and that is why, Mr. Mayor, we should have more walking trails in town.?

?Thank you,? said the Mayor, as the speaker sat down. ?If that's everyone, then I will close Open Forum and??

?What about running trails?? asked a man stepping up to the microphone. ?The lack of such dedicated paths in Aurora is forcing runners to use the roads.?

?Why don't they use the trails and sidewalks?? asked a Councillor, once again stepping a bit outside of the usual protocol of Open Forum.

?No self-respecting runner would use a sidewalk,? he sniffed. ?That's why we all run down the middle of the street. But it's dangerous. Vehicle drivers seem surprised to see us out there, and there have been many near misses. Factor in this occurring in the dark and rain, and it would be much safer if we had separated trails.?

?I still don't see why you can't use the existing trail and sidewalk network??

?Actually, we'd need jogging trails, too,? said someone else.

?Isn't jogging the same as running??

?Oh, no, they're much different paces, It wouldn't be safe to do them both on the same trail. We'd need some separation.?

?If runners and joggers are getting their own systems,? came another voice, ?then cyclists should get the same treatment.?

?But cyclists can use the streets, and isn't there a bicycle path along Wellington Street East??

?Between bad drivers and pot holes, it's sometimes impractical to cycle on the streets, and there's no room to use that Wellington path amongst all the roller-bladers and skateboarders. How about proper separated bicycle lanes to keep us away from cars, like they are introducing in Toronto??

?Dedicated bus lanes would speed up my commute,? commented a man at the back.

?While my child was in our driveway, a dog being walked down the street barked at her,? pitched in a lady up front (it was an unusually well-attended council meeting).

?It frightened her terribly. To provide a safe distance from children, I think people walking their pets should have their own network.?

?Hey, if new trail systems are being put in for everyone else, then we should have one, too, said a man off to the side.?

?No one has said anything about actually proceeding with all these new dedicated trails, and in any case, who do you represent??

?The Safe Pogosticking Recreational Outdoor/Indoor Network Group.?

?You mean...?

?Yes, ?SPROING'. We can't use the sidewalks safely, and if everyone else is getting lanes, we should, as well.?

?If traffic is going to increase on the trail network, then all existing trails should be widened,? piped up the original Open Forum speaker.

Things were getting out of control, so the Mayor resorted to council's tried and true deferral mechanism. Looking over to the side, he said; ?Perhaps we could have staff report back on this??

?Mr. Mayor,? said the appropriate staffer, hoping to get out of yet another report. ?I'm not sure there's enough boulevard or parkland space for dedicated trails for all of these interest groups, and if we put them in, residents may not be happy with so much of the town's green space being paved over. Also, if we added all these new lanes to the roads, there wouldn't be any rooms left for cars.?

?That's true,? agreed the Mayor. ?But I think we should have staff look into the bigger issue that's been brought to our attention here tonight.?

?What's that??

?That after spending thousands of dollars expanding and maintaining them every year, who exactly is using the town's sidewalks??

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