

INSIDE AURORA: That ?Wheee? Moment

By Scott Johnston

When I was a kid, I remember there was stretch of road our family used to travel on occasionally that intersected a number of cross streets. The cross streets were designed so that there was a raised section down the middle. I assume this was for better drainage. I believe there were stop signs at these side streets, but the road we travelled was the main route, so it was clear 50 km per hour run. The net effect of all this was that when you drove down that road, which was slightly downhill in the direction we usually went, it was almost like riding a small roller coaster. As you hit each of these small humps, it lifted you up in the air a bit. This effect was magnified the faster one travelled, so we always encouraged dad to speed up a bit when we hit this stretch. It was hard not to resist the impulse to exclaim an excited ?whee!? as, even with seatbelts fastened, we were lifted up off of our seats.

For young kids crammed in the back of a car, this was a highlight of what was otherwise a rather boring drive.

Yes, those were simpler times.

Well, you can imagine my surprise when I found that the Town has just redesigned some of our streets to provide the same effect. Anyone who has read The Auroran lately will recall the history on this.

In short, as happens from time to time in Aurora, residents in some areas who were concerned about high rates of speed and the safety of their children, had lobbied council to install traffic calming on their streets.

Despite not meeting the Town's standard for justifying traffic calming, after much debate, and over \$100,000 of unbudgeted funding later, speed humps have now been installed on Kennedy, Mavrinac and McMaster.

I'm not questioning the need to reduce speeding on our streets. After all, we all want our kids, pets and cyclists to be safe.

As for the effectiveness of speed humps, there is much evidence that they can certainly slow you down. There are some off the main roads in parking areas of Town that are so steep they practically necessitate getting your vehicle's suspension rechecked after traversing them, no matter how slowly you drive.

But speed humps on streets are a different matter. They can't be designed as vertically severe as the ones I just referenced, where speed limits are closer to 7 km per hour.

They also need to be low enough that emergency vehicles can get over them, and sloped in such a way that snow plows don't tear them up.

Which brings me to the ones recently installed on Kennedy and McMaster and presumably Mavrinac, although I have seen those in person, yet. Each series consists of three humps side by side (by side), with the raised portion stretching a few metres in length. The low, gently sloping design is likely perfect from an emergency vehicle/snow plow perspective, but from a speed reduction point of view, it seems more fun than functional.

Maybe some associated signs warning of impending traffic calming will help to slow drivers. They certainly can be a successful visual deterrent.

Whether this project is successful, or whether it requires some sort of future rethink and further investment of funding, at the very least it has brought an unexpected nostalgic smile to my face.

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