

More public input needed for speed cushion pilot: Council

By Brock Weir

If you want to have traffic slowed down in your neighbourhood with speed cushions, you better speak up soon.

More public input is needed before a pilot project to see speed cushions installed in five problem neighbourhoods can get off the ground, Council learned last week.

Last year, Council reiterated its support for a motion from Councillor John Abel calling for a pilot in certain areas where residents have complained about speeding but, after public information sessions on the subject, the number of residents who turned out could be counted on one hand.

‘[The warrant] is usually achieved through the efforts of a resident or a group of residents who live on the street seeking traffic calming measures,’ said Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora’s Director of Infrastructure. The resident is required to achieve a minimum of 70 per cent support from the residents on the street to satisfy [the first warrant]. The October 1, 2015 open house attracted two residents, one in favour of the proposed plan and one opposed. This is insufficient feedback for a project of this nature.’

To help bring in this feedback, the Town plans on a mail-out to all residents in the potentially impacted neighbourhoods to see if 70 per cent of residents are actually in favour. Over 1,400 letters will need to be mailed out to zero in on this threshold.

Topping the list of the five most impacted areas are Kennedy Street West from McGee Crescent to Murray Drive, Stone Road from Clift Road to Hawtin Lane, McMaster Avenue from Hollidge to Hollandview, Mavrinac Boulevard from Borealis Avenue to Spring Farm, and Conover Avenue from River Ridge Boulevard to Borealis.

Speed cushions in each area could cost between \$75,000 to \$100,000.

‘The concern I have is the lack of response from residents,’ said Councillor John Abel, speaking to the issue at last week’s General Committee meeting. ‘I think if residents know there is a survey coming forward, they will participate in it, if it is easy. We notice if you go door-to-door with a mailer, you get a much better response.’

For many Councillors, it was a matter of casting a wider net.

As things stand, municipal staff carrying out these studies typically focus on the streets directly impacted by traffic calming measures. Often, streets connecting to the impacted road are left out of the equation and this should be changed, they argued.

‘I would like to see a public planning process where you take a radius of where it is,’ said Councillor Michael Thompson. ‘I know with Stone Road, Conover and Mavrinac, there are a number of adjacent streets and the only way to get to them is to go over those sections of road. In my view, it impacts those who live on the adjacent streets just as much as those who live on it. There is value in expanding this survey.’

Councillor Sandra Humfries said she agreed, adding it is key to getting a full picture on traffic impact.

‘When people want to avoid those streets with speed controlling methods, they are going to try alternate streets and other streets will get the fallout,’ she said.

For Kennedy Street, the feelings of the neighbourhood are clear to Dr. Beverley Bouffard, who made a delegation to Council in support of speed cushions on this particular stretch. A petition for traffic calming measures brought about by neighbours was not taken up by Council in 2011, she said, a move she added residents found ‘disheartening.’

?We chose that street, suck it up. We went home and told our son our concern for he and his friends' safety on the road were not taken seriously,? she said. ?We represent a household with direct frontage on Kennedy West and Corner Ridge. We have lived in this great community for 15 years. The scope of the concerns from the boots-on-the-ground perspective is that Kennedy Street ranked on the traffic report as one of the five selected traffic speed locations sampled that was in the 86th percentile. The number of cars driving over the posted 40km speed limit was 12,300 in that sample, 88 per cent of the motorists were driving over the 40km speed limit in that sample.

?Given the proposed speed cushions will have less interference with EMS vehicle response times than the older ones, we stand as champions for proposing you to consider moving forward with this pilot proposal and let the data speak. Are we not committed to creating a balance and increasing housing development with an efficient walk-friendly neighbourhood, which is the heart and soul of a community, not just a mechanical collector road? Speed cushions are only a nuisance until it is your child's serious injury or, worse yet, a fatality.?