

Aurora asks for further traffic light on Wellington Street East

Aurora is set to request further traffic control signals on Wellington Street East following complaints over access from residents in the Kaleia Avenue and Elyse Court areas.

Residents of the area, which is just west of the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex near Leslie Street, have repeatedly requested a traffic light be installed at the intersection to improve access to their community from the busy Wellington corridor, particularly during the morning and evening rush.

“The intersection of traffic control signals at Kaleia Avenue/Elyse Court and Wellington Street East would provide increased ease and comfort for the community to access Wellington Street East, especially during the morning and evening rush hour periods,” said Councillor Harold Kim in a motion to Council.

The problem is this Wellington intersection doesn't meet traffic warrants set by the Region of York.

“York Regional Council has previously authorized the installation of unwarranted traffic control signals subject to the local municipality agreeing to be responsible for all installation costs, plus annual maintenance costs, until such time that the intersection satisfies the Region's policy criteria,” the Councillor continued.

The estimated capital cost for traffic control signals in this area, he noted, is \$250,000 with annual operating costs pegged at \$7,800.

Speaking to his successful motion, which will see these figures considered as part of the Town's 2023 Budget discussion, Councillor Kim said area residents were “completely ostracized or separated from the rest of the community” as, without the traffic control measures, they are unable to access amenities like the SARC and local trails and parks without having to navigate their way through Wellington Street traffic going in the opposite direction.

“I think a traffic light at this intersection is necessary,” said Councillor Kim. “Some may say it is not because it is not serving a certain population threshold, but we can't leave any sections of the community at risk when there are two major Town facilities that are just right across the street. I think it would be negligent on our part not to look at all options.”

Supporting the motion was Councillor Sandra Humfries who said she has seen firsthand residents trying to navigate through the “awkward” intersection and some residents had asked whether Council was waiting for something to happen before taking action.

Councillor Rachel Gilliland agreed, stating that she and a number of her colleagues had visited the intersection and noted the lack of sidewalks and safe crossings. It is, she said, a “very dangerous decision.”

“We witnessed people in the middle of the intersection trying to dodge traffic, people in that neighbourhood may go to the SARC, they may go to the school in the neighbourhood across the street, they may want to access the trail system, but everything seems to be across the street,” she said, adding that the Central York Fire Services a stone's throw away has also voiced support for a traffic light.

“They feel they have been hindered by the lack of a light.”

While the issue had been “established,” Councillor John Gallo said he wanted further information on why the Region of York says a controlled intersection isn't warranted. Residents shouldn't have to lobby Council for safety measures such as these; instead, it's incumbent on the Town to be proactive, he said.

“It's not up to them to lobby us to figure out how to make their community safe,” he continued. “It's not their responsibility; it's ours, it's the Region's, and clearly we failed on both sides. The only alternative is it is not as bad as what is being perceived and I don't

believe that to be true. At some level, we need to figure out when we develop areas like that, and that is on us, how quickly can we put sidewalks in there? Should we have had a developer put in those sidewalks? We know where the SARC is, we know people are going to be living there, we know we want them to walk to the trails and the SARC? there is a gap there that is not the responsibility of the residents, it is our responsibility to figure that out.?

If Council approves the funding in next year's Budget, it could still be some time before the Region is on side, cautioned Mayor Tom Mrakas, who represents Aurora's interests at the Regional table.

?We felt when we had our discussion with residents that this should be a Regional responsibility [and] their response was indeed this is a dangerous area, but from a priority perspective there were several other dangerous areas throughout York Region that had higher priority and there was nothing we could do to convince them otherwise,? he said.

?We will have to take matters into our own hands, unfortunately.?

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