

Controls needed to stop Machell and Irwin Aves from becoming Yonge-Wellington bypass: Kim

Control measures are needed to prevent Machell and Irwin Avenues in the northwest quadrant of Aurora's Yonge and Wellington corridor from becoming a traffic bypass for the busy intersection.

This was the view presented to lawmakers recently by Councillor Harold Kim.

In a motion, which was approved unanimously by Council, stop signs should be installed at Machell and Irwin to create a three-way stop, he said.

“The residents of Machell Avenue have been living with speeding cars for many years,” said Councillor Kim in his motion. “Many drivers believe that they can bypass the Wellington Street and Yonge Street intersection by driving north on Machell Avenue from Wellington Street and believe that Machell Avenue is a local straight-through or short-cut route to Aurora Heights.

“These vehicles speed through Machell Avenue going north and compromising the safety of pedestrians and other cars driving through the three-way intersection.”

The intersection has been an “item of concern” for residents over the last two terms of Council, he added at last week's meeting, but the problem persists.

“Because there is only one stop sign going west on Irwin, there's a lot of confusion on who stops and who doesn't,” he concluded. “The safety concern is mainly with the residents who live on that street and those who park there to use the nearby [tennis] courts or fields there. Quite simply, let's get rid of the confusion and just make it an all-way stop sign.”

The Councillor's motion called for a report back to Council this October with recommendations on the asks within the motion. But staff said due to the shifting traffic patterns related to the global pandemic, that might not be sufficient time to get a true idea of traffic in the area to see if volumes are high enough to warrant a three-way stop.

“This is the concern I have with the volumes,” said Town Planner David Waters. “We are in a COVID situation and traffic volumes have returned at this point in time. I am wondering if we can wait and do the traffic counts in September or October and then report back by the end of the year. I think that would be better information for Council at that time.”

While Councillor Kim said he preferred to have something back by October, other Council members, including Councillor John Gallo, said the timing was less important to him than the correct numbers.

Others, such as Councillor Rachel Gilliland, questioned the urgency stating she didn't recall seeing any emails or letters on this issue from any residents who might be impacted.

Staff, however, said there was an email outlining concerns from one resident who claimed they represented a number of neighbourhood property owners.

“As far as a stop, I don't know if that is something that is going to work as a traffic calming measure,” said Councillor Gilliland. “I would hope to see a bunch of different additional recommendations like whether it is additional signage or whatever it is that staff comes back with.”

Above and beyond drivers potentially using Machell and Irwin as a Yonge-Wellington bypass, Mayor Tom Mrakas said there are other factors that need to be considered with regards to traffic on Machell.

?We're seeing lots of issues, even in the last term before the development occurred,? said Mayor Mrakas, referencing the stacked townhouse development on Yonge Street which also backs onto Machell. ?There's parking issues, there's traffic issues, we have a lot of people cutting in and out of there. We recognized those problems when that development was put in front of us to discuss.

?We all know that we never met a traffic analyst who has said there is going to be traffic problems in any development application that comes before us. We are aware of what is in front of us right now in that area. There is also a lot of traffic volume just from people going into the park and they are just parking along there. There is actually a lot of traffic on those two streets. I am looking forward to seeing what staff comes back with.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter