

Future of one-way traffic on Centre Street questioned again by Council

With so many of us working from home in the new normal, changes in traffic patterns have been noted. But these shifts may delay any firm decisions on future traffic calming measures on Centre Street.

Centre Street, which lies just north of the busy Yonge and Wellington intersection, was, until the installation of one-way measures on the western section of the thoroughfare, often used as a traffic bypass.

The fact that some drivers flout the rules and ignore the measures have resulted in calls to either crack down further on violators or open the thoroughfare once again to two-way traffic.

Both perspectives were represented around the Council table last week when lawmakers considered staff recommendations to do a further study of traffic calming measures once normalized traffic patterns return.

It will never suit regular warrant policies for traffic calming, said Councillor Sandra Humfryes, who has been a long-time advocate for further measures on Centre.

Councillor Humfryes said drivers still want to use Centre as a quick bypass and has seen evidence of this first hand. I was taken aback and residents were saying, I'm glad you witnessed it yourself.

The Councillor pushed not only for additional signage in the area, but also speed humps to discourage drivers from ignoring the law.

That will bypass us waiting to come back and look at normal traffic patterns, she said. The same thing is going to happen, to go back to the way it was will cause problems. We don't want people to make left turns to avoid Yonge and Wellington and it was causing a lot of problems. We did a lot of work to go this route. For us to do that I think would be going backwards and causing more problems instead of addressing this very tiny, very unique situation.

While she said speed humps west of Spruce Street would be an economical solution that would deter individuals in a rush, not all of Council agreed.

Councillor Rachel Gilliland, for instance, said she was aware of the issue before being elected to Council in 2018 but said the problems being experienced now might be chalked up to past decisions made by Council.

I am hearing this problem is because we created this little one-way street, she said. We created this problem that keeps coming back to Council and coming back to Council. I am looking at the other side; maybe this wasn't the best decision. Maybe there shouldn't be a one-way street there. Maybe this whole street should be one way or maybe it should be two-way. Maybe that speed hump isn't the solution and it is this Band-Aid approach.

I am sensing that this whole one-way street part might just be the problem here. Maybe we need to back up and figure out what is the problem.

If the solution, she said, is a three-cushion speed hump, the Councillor said people will likely just drive down the middle as she says they do on Kennedy Street West.

Essentially what we're asking to do is slow down the speed for the people who are breaking the law, she concluded. If they're going to break the law, let's anticipate some more safety measures so at least they're not speeding while they're breaking the law. I just don't think we're really solving the problem. People are still going to drive down the street. I think the psychological part of why people drive fast there is because they know they're breaking the law. So, they think, Okay, I am going to speed down this real fast

and hope nobody notices me because I know I shouldn't be driving down that street.' Now there is going to be a speed hump [and] I think it will slow down some people from speeding down there, but it may not slow other people.?

Council will revisit the matter on April 27.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter