

Industrial Parkway widening proposal is dead on arrival

By Brock Weir

A plan floated at Council to widen the entire length of Industrial Parkway to four lanes fizzled last week after staff reports pegged the project at more than \$30 million.

Had the project been approved by Council, it would have racked up, among other costs, \$7.5 million for the relocation of sidewalks, hydro poles and catch basins, \$9 million for the road base itself along with retaining walls, and a further \$5.2 million to acquire the land to make it possible.

The idea to widen Industrial Parkway was initially floated by Councillor Tom Mrakas, who said it would be a viable solution to alleviate traffic pressure elsewhere in Aurora, particularly at the Yonge and Wellington intersection. With growth, as well as a further proposal at Town Hall to modify traffic flow at that crossroads, that pressure is only going to get worse and this would bring Industrial Parkway back to its original intended use as a Yonge Street bypass, he argued.

But, according to a report before Council from Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure, Industrial Parkway itself is under-used as it is.

“The average daily traffic on Industrial Parkway is well below the maximum range expected for an industrial/commercial collector road, which typically has 12,000 vehicles per day, as per the Transportation Association of Canada guidelines,” said Mr. Simanovskis, noting the north end of the street clocks in at an average of 10,433 vehicles per day, while the south leg comes in at 6,551.

“Under ideal traffic flow conditions, a roadway can carry up to 1,900 vehicle per hour per lane (vphpl) during peak times. Industrial Parkway peak hour traffic volume varied between 337 vphpl at the same locations indicated above, therefore the road has ample capacity to carry additional traffic. This suggests that the current road capacity is only 25 per cent utilized.”

When the idea was first brought to Council's attention, Councillor Paul Pirri ventured a more practical solution in his view would be reconfiguring the existing space to accommodate three lanes with time of day restrictions on a centre lane. Long-term traffic volumes don't meet the criteria for this either, noted Mr. Simanovskis.

“Traffic flow is also well accommodated when vehicles are making left hand turns into properties as the road width will accommodate for passing vehicles if the turning vehicle is properly situated,” he said.

With this idea out of the way, it was time for Council to turn back to an earlier project already approved by Council that will see a reconfiguration of Industrial Parkway South in the vicinity of Wellington Street to Mary Street to accommodate further space to alleviate pressure on that stretch stemming from GO Transit.

“It is imperative we get this done,” said Councillor Mrakas. “We all had issues saying we'd like to get this done as soon as possible and we need a dedicated right turn lane. You have a third lane that runs in and alleviates that right hand turn, it helps out with the turns on Mary Street, so let's just get this done now. I am glad the report basically stated the road can fit three lanes if we just change the markings.”

This isn't the end of possible changes to Industrial Parkway in the near future. Both Councillors Mrakas and Harold Kim have proposals coming up at the next two Council meetings to provide change. First is Councillor Kim's motion, which would investigate a left hand turn lane from Industrial Parkway South leading into the GO Station. Councillor Mrakas, on the other hand, proposes the feasibility of a number of actions that would ease traffic congestion on Industrial Parkway North from Scanlon Road to Wellington Street.