

INSIDE AURORA: Traffic Circles

By Scott Johnston

So, with summer and nicer weather finally here, what's at the top of your priority list; taking time off, puttering around the yard, visiting the Farmers' Market, or maybe taking in a few concerts in the park?

If so, then you're obviously not on Council, because its fixation these days seems to be with everything vehicular.

First, there are the ongoing debates about speed humps on Kennedy Street West, and potentially a few other locations in Town.

These have been discussed frequently over the years, then implementation has been discarded each time due to not meeting required traffic volumes and/or low feedback from residents.

In fact, recently, only two people turned out for a meeting held specifically on this topic.

Then someone suggested that residents were sick of providing feedback every few years on something that never went anywhere, and had just given up, so now the subject's back on the table and picking up momentum.

Another car-related issue that Council has in its cross-hairs is parking on local streets around the GO station.

In a classic case of 'if you build it they will come?', the rise in the number of trains over the past few years has led to significant increases in ridership. It seems most users get to the station by car, and have nowhere to park.

Council's current thought seems to be to forbid them from parking on nearby streets. That's a benefit to long-suffering local residents, but doesn't help commuters who are being encouraged by various levels of government to reduce congestion and pollution and take the train.

This problem has the potential to get even more interesting as all day train service gets to Town.

Speaking of parking, every now and then the idea of increasing parking on Yonge Street to encourage business in that area comes around.

It's back again, and while Council seems united in finding a solution, not enough of them feel that the current proposal to close a lane each way is the right one, or at the right time, or on the right street, or that not enough studies have been commissioned on it, or something.

A perennial vehicular issue in Town is the availability of turn lanes.

Yonge and Wellington is the classic example.

Turn lanes going right or left from all four compass directions have been discussed a million times over the years. Although there hasn't been much talk lately, with significant residential development going in at this intersection, it's inevitable the arguments will be dusted off again.

Whether they'll be dusted off, argued over, fingers pointed at the Region, and set aside for another Council to resolve remains to be seen.

On the subject of subjects that have been dusted off more than once, there's Library Square. The focus of the issue is how to develop this space and draw people there, whether it be via new functions in the existing library and senior's buildings, or by tearing them down and putting up an ideas lab, an arts complex, or similar new structure.

However, at some point in these discussions someone inevitably asks; 'Yeah, but if we bring hundreds of more people into the area, where will everyone park??'

A valid question, since it has never really been answered or resolved for the places we have in this area now, like the Library and Cultural Centre, let alone any new ones that may draw in even more people.

This is not an exhaustive list of vehicular-related issues being discussed these days, which also includes speed limits, road construction and closures, bicycle lanes, transit and other items.

The answers to these subjects are obviously not easy, or they would all have been unanimously made and implemented by the current or previous Councils years ago, while citizens cheered from the Visitors' Gallery.

But with thousands more people making their homes in Aurora over the next few years, and with an equal number of cars of various descriptions filling both their driveways and the Town's roads and parking lots, decisions will need to be made.

And they won't always be popular.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at: machellscorners@gmail.com