

## Parking overhaul proposed for Yonge St. core

If you ask people where Aurora's biggest traffic problems lie, residents are most likely to look in the general direction of the Yonge and Wellington intersection.

This month, however, may lay the foundation for significant changes down the road which could help alleviate regular traffic snarls in Aurora's busiest corridor.

Next week, Council is set to consider two notices of motion on Aurora's Downtown Core. The first is a plan touted by Mayor Geoff Dawe throughout the 2014 Election Campaign to overhaul on-street parking in Yonge Street's historic core. The second is a proposal from Councillor Tom Mrakas to implement left turn restrictions at the intersection.

In his pitch to Council, Mayor Dawe proposes a plan that would reduce Yonge Street to single lanes of traffic with the second lane on the east and west sides of the street reserved for parking and other streetscape improvements.

“The Town of Aurora recognizes the importance of Yonge Street as a corridor of business in our historic downtown and is fully committed to ensuring its long-term commercial sustainability,” says Mayor Dawe in his notice of motion, citing studies focusing on downtown revitalization going back to 2009, as well as the Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan of 2010.

“The Town of Aurora Economic Development Action Plan and Business Retention and Expansion Strategy emphasize the importance of supporting local business and revitalizing the Downtown [and Aurora] approved the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to support downtown revitalization in 2014.”

This concept, he says, will work hand-in-hand with these plans and, if passed, the notice of motion will direct staff to investigate the feasibility of implementing the plan.

Starting in the south, the one lane of parking and one lane of traffic concept begins at Kennedy Street, running north to Wellington Street where two lanes of traffic would then resume. But, speaking to *The Auroran*, he emphasises this is strictly a conceptual plan and it is likely to significantly change down the line.

That being said, Mayor Dawe said the reception to the idea since the election campaign has all been on the “positive side of the ledger” to various degrees of enthusiasm.

“A number of places have done this, so it certainly isn't new,” he said, noting the concept was really brought home to him during the Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference in Niagara Falls last year, with a tour of the city's downtown.

Should the plan be approved in whatever form it ultimately takes, it will bring benefits not only to traffic flow, but also local businesses, concludes Mayor Dawe, noting business owners have also expressed enthusiasm.

“If you cruise around the Library parking lot a couple of times and don't see anything, you either park on Church Street or on Yonge Street. I don't have a great feeling of parking on Yonge Street in front of the Library, although it is a perfectly valid thing to do. I think by creating a very specific parking area that will change that tenor. People will be more comfortable to park there and perhaps it can drive business.”

If Councillor Mrakas' Notice of Motion gains traction, it will institute a pilot project at Yonge and Wellington to restrict left turns at the intersection. It calls upon the Region of York to investigate “the feasibility of implementing a pilot project for left turn restrictions to north and southbound Yonge Street at Wellington Street turning [morning and afternoon] peak traffic periods for the purposes of addressing traffic congestion.”

It goes a step further calling on the Region to provide Council with a presentation on whether such a move is feasible and impacts it would have.

?Traffic congestion at the intersection of Yonge Street and Wellington Street is an ongoing concern for Aurora residents and businesses,? says Councillor Mrakas in his Notice of Motion. ?The flow of northbound and southbound traffic is significantly impeded during peak traffic periods due to left turning vehicles. Many municipalities restrict left-hand turns at high volume intersections during peak traffic periods as a means to address similar concerns with traffic congestion.?

Bolstering his motion, he harkens back to a pilot project undertaken by the Region in 1998 which prohibited left turns at the intersection during peak periods having ?a significant improvement in traffic operations.?

HAVE YOUR SAY ? Do you think these changes will make a difference in traffic flow at Yonge and Wellington? Do you have any other ideas? Send your thoughts and suggestions to [letters@auroran.com](mailto:letters@auroran.com).