

Public input to be sought on left turn bans at Yonge and Wellington

By Brock Weir

If you have strong opinions one way or the other on whether left hand turns should be banned at Yonge and Wellington during peak times, you may have your chance to weigh in this summer.

Council approved a public information session on the potential pilot project that is expected to be implemented this October, pending Regional Council approval.

Councillors, however, got an early flavour of some of the feedback to come last week from resident Angela Daoust, who approached Council with her opposition to the two-month pilot.

She told Councillors she was concerned about the impact a turn ban would have on surrounding neighbourhoods as drivers looking to avoid the intersection altogether look for alternate routes.

‘There are a lot of children who use these side streets to get to the French school on George Street and the public school and high school on Wellington Street,’ she said. ‘They use these side streets as there are less vehicles than on Wellington Street. If this proposed left turn ban is implemented, much more traffic will be diverted onto the side streets, making it dangerous for the children walking to school.’

‘The added traffic to our area that this will produce does not even take into consideration the proposed 68 townhouse development at Tyler and Mill Street, or the redevelopment of the church property at Yonge and Tyler to include a rebuilt church as well as a retirement residence.’

The ‘simplest and most logical’ solution to the traffic problem, she added, would be to have advance greens in all directions at the intersection.

This is just the kind of feedback Councillors said they were looking for when debating a subsequent recommendation from Town Staff which resulted in a motion for a public engagement session as part of the project rollout.

‘I would hope that all of our dialogue is not one way and we don’t only speak to our residents and don’t actually listen to them, and take what they say into consideration,’ said Councillor Paul Pirri.

Some Councillors questioned what was described by Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora’s Director of Infrastructure, as a ‘leeriness’ to go forward with public consultation before the final approvals are met at the Region. Those, such as Councillor Michael Thompson, pointed out several examples of pending projects over which a public consultation was held before it received the Council green light.

The difference, said Mr. Simanovskis, was those were Town-driven initiatives that needed Town approval. In this case, everything hinges on the Region.

For some, this answer missed the mark.

‘There have been a number of times where we have engaged the public on initiatives that have not yet been approved,’ said Councillor Thompson. ‘Clear bags would be one of them. We spent considerable dollars advertising, hiring a consultant and engaging the public on a program that was not approved. I see no issue with going out to the residents and getting that feedback so it can be provided to all of Council as well as the Mayor and members of Regional Council prior to any decision.’

This was a sentiment shared around the table. Councillor Wendy Gaertner said the comments offered by the delegate reflected those of people who had approached her.

?I think we should at least take their comments and make them feel valued and say this is what we are going to do,? she said.

Added Councillor Tom Mrakas: ?I see no issues with us doing something within the summer and having maybe two sessions. Why not have as many as we can, to get as many as we can, to get all the information we need and have it there and hear what the residents are going to say?

?I think there are many ways we can look at it. One of the comments I made?as far as the infiltration into some of the side streets, is right now a lot of us ? and I am guilty of this ? turn to the streets to avoid the intersection and you would have a lot of people right now who are turning into the streets that would actually continue to go straight now instead if there is a left turn [restriction]. That is why I would like to collect that data.?