

Speed cushion pilot program could cost up to \$100,000

By Brock Weir

A pilot program to install speed cushions on three Aurora streets so far in an attempt to curb speeders could come with a price tag of up to \$100,000.

Council approved a \$100,000 budget for speed cushions on Kennedy Street West from Murray Drive to McGee Crescent, on McMaster Avenue from Hollidge Boulevard to Hollandview Trail, and on Mavrinac Boulevard from Borealis Avenue to Spring Farm Road at this month's meeting.

The project, which will be funded from the Town's Development Charge reserves earmarked for roads, was first floated around the table by Councillor John Abel last year. This past May, Council tasked staff to implement the speed cushions and this month's vote sends it out for tender.

Imar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure, estimates that each speed cushion and there will be 50 speed cushions in all, set out in rows of three will cost \$2,000, meaning cushions for the designated length of Kennedy Street could clock in at \$42,000, McMaster Avenue at \$18,000, and Mavrinac Boulevard at \$40,000. However, he stressed that these are simply estimates and the project could come in lower.

According to Councillors, on the other hand, there are some mixed messages being sent out regarding the program. While Councillor Wendy Gaertner said she had received emails from residents excited about the project, she wanted to make clear that the project is simply a pilot and there is still the chance the speed cushions could be removed.

"I think we need to make it very, very clear that this is a pilot project," she said, asking Mr. Simanovskis how staff, and subsequently Council, will make the ultimate decision on whether the cushions should stay or go.

He said they will be monitoring traffic volumes as a result of the pilot and that information will be brought back to Council.

"The intent is obviously to achieve a reduced speed in those areas and that is very easy for us to monitor once these are in place," said Mr. Simanovskis.

While that satisfied Councillor Gaertner, others had some reservations over cost, including Councillor Abel, particularly when it came to Kennedy Street West. Estimating that specific block will see the installation of 21 speed cushions based on cost estimates, he said it seemed like "a lot of speed cushions for one wee area."

Those are nevertheless the guidelines that have been handed down, said Mr. Simanovskis, noting these are not going to be 21 speed cushions one after another, rather rows of three.

"Each of those [cushions] is a \$2,000 investment," said Mr. Simanovskis. "You're looking at a large number of individual installations."

Questioned by Councillor Tom Mrakas whether it would be cheaper to install one long speed cushion across a street rather than three smaller ones in a row, Mr. Simanovskis said this is the preferred option from the perspective of the fire department and emergency services and the cost would be comparable. The Councillor nevertheless said this would be his preferred option.

"I drive a pickup truck and with the individual ones I have no problems going right through it because my wheel base is big enough to allow me to go through it," said Councillor Mrakas. "If you do drive a pickup or a vehicle with a slightly larger wheelbase, these [cushions] actually have no effect."

Councillor Mrakas added he was under the impression cushions on Kennedy Street West would continue straight through to Bathurst, an impression that was shared by Councillor Abel, who questioned whether they could be extended to Aurora's western limit within the same budget by reconfiguring the number of speed cushions allocated to other areas ?strategically.?

That would pose a challenge, said Mr. Simanovskis.

?Moving west along Kennedy, the slopes are steeper than what we recommend for speed cushions so, as staff, we wouldn't support the installations of speed cushions in that section and if we don't put what we have requested here, then the series of cushions are not going to meet the recommended standards of actually achieving speed reduction.?

Joked Councillor Abel in response: ?Because of the slope, it is probably better to look at a way of doing it ? maybe a nail belt or something.?