

Speed enforcement cameras eyed by Aurora as Town increases Community Safety Zones

Aurora could see speed enforcement cameras on some Town-owned roads as the municipality looks to increase the number of Community Safety Zones around local schools.

Sitting at the Committee level last week, Council gave the tentative green light to designate all schools in Aurora that front onto Town-owned roads as Community Safety Zones, tasking staff as well to report back on an implementation plan for an Automated Speed Enforcement pilot program in these designated areas.

Areas presently designated Community Safety Zones within Aurora include Orchard Heights, from Laurentide Avenue to Yonge; McClellan Way, from Henderson Drive to Bathurst Street; Murray Drive, from Wellington Street West to Kennedy Street West; and Stone Road, at both its northern and southern intersections with Bayview Avenue.

If this moves forward at the October 22 Council meeting, it will be a first for local Aurora, rather than Regional, roads.

“The use of ASE has been demonstrated to be an effective countermeasure to improve road safety by reducing vehicle travel speeds in targeted areas, such as school zones and Community Safety Zones,” said Michael Bat, Traffic and Transportation Analyst, in a report to Council. “Community Safety Zones (CSZ) are [a] designated stretch of roadways, recognized under Provincial legislation, marked with CSZ signs allowing for the doubling of fines if road users are caught speeding.

“The use of an ASE program can only be implemented within School Zones and CSZs. As part of the ASE pilot program implementation, these CSZs will be used as areas for installation. A follow-up staff report will be presented to Council with a detailed ASE implementation plan that will include further details such as logistics, financial considerations, camera types to be used and ticketing processing options.”

While ratification could be a couple of weeks away, with implementation even longer, support was evident among Council members at last week's Committee meeting.

“What I heard in the last election, even before taxes, was the speeds of cars in the neighbourhoods. I think this is an important safety feature,” said Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, asking for further information to come forward on the financial impact of procuring and installing the camera systems.

“It is long overdue,” agreed Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim.

While Mayor Tom Mrakas didn't comment on the cameras themselves, he questioned whether another layer could be added to traffic safety in school zones, particularly “Slow Down” markers painted on the road, as the Region has done on portions of Wellington Street.

“It is something we can definitely look at,” said Director of Planning Marco Ramunno. “We weren't intending to do it, but the Region has done it because their roads are arterial roads and the volume is higher, but we can identify those as options when we report back in the next phase.”

Councillor Weese signalled his support for the road paintings as well.

“It reminds people [to slow down] and, in fact, I had a resident today asking about that being used as perhaps a traffic-calming mechanism on our own roads,” he said. “I would like to have that noted [and] perhaps this could be put into our traffic calming measures.”

By Brock Weir