

Speed humps coming to portion of Centre Street to discourage wrong-way drivers

Speed humps will be coming to Centre Street between Spruce and Wells Streets, pending approval from Central York Fire Services.

Council approved the latest traffic calming measures for Centre Street last week, part of a bid to discourage drivers from ignoring the one-way traffic controls on the western part of the street designed to prevent the residential thoroughfare from being used as a traffic bypass of Yonge and Wellington.

A solution to prevent drivers from ignoring the one-way direction has been the subject of debate for over two years, and despite significant time spent on the subject in recent months, the approval of speed humps did not come without question.

Councillor Rachel Gilliland, for instance, said she was not convinced the speed humps would have the desired effect and cited feedback from neighbours' or lack thereof.

David Waters, Planner for the Town of Aurora, said municipal employees hand-delivered surveys to 97 homes not only on Centre Street, but also Wellington, Spruce, Walton Drive and Catherine Avenue asking if there were 'operational issues' with the one-way section of Centre and whether traffic calming measures were needed.

38 surveys received a response and the results found that 'residents do have issues with the one-way operation of Centre Street in terms of the impacts with drivers going the wrong way,' said Mr. Waters.

'Of the 38 surveys that were delivered to the residences, we received nine responses, about a 24 per cent response rate, and the split between speed cushions 'yes and no' was about five for and four against,' he continued. 'It's little over 50 per cent in terms of those residents who felt speed cushions would solve the operational issues with people going the wrong way on Centre Street.'

With 35 per cent of the residents saying it would solve a problem, Councillor Gilliland said it could mean 65 per cent of residents said it would not.

'Is this actually going to solve the problem of people going the wrong way down the street on a one-way street?' she questioned. 'I look at my assessment and say no, we're just going to say it is okay to drive down this one-way street slower. I am not convinced we're going to solve this problem. I think they're going to come back and say it is still happening.'

'I just feel we're putting a band-aid on something.'

The potential of more traffic calming measures on Centre was most recently brought forward by Councillor Sandra Humfries.

She expressed frustration that the need for something more was still being debated after two years.

'There's a real reason for this, and it is to deter people from making a left turn at Centre Street versus Wellington,' she said. 'The whole thing is to deter people from going through there instead of going to Yonge and Wellington. Everyone wants to avoid Yonge and Wellington and that was a shortcut and it really caused havoc. For me, this is a very unique area. You could say, 'no, it's not worth it,' and leave it alone. It's up to you, but I come here pleading with you guys because we have tried everything: we've tried police, we've had signage? it's human nature to try and take a short cut, so what you want to do is try and deter them by making it harder for them to go fast.'

'We're talking about four driveways and eight houses. They're the ones that are going to get injured. If you don't want to believe the neighbours, then don't. I am really disappointed. If we're going to go back to a two-way street, it will be a disaster.'

Councillor Wendy Gaertner was of the mind there are 'no good solutions to this problem' as it is an 'anomaly' but the Town has to

do the best that we can.

"This is a safety issue for our residents and we should try to do the best for them," she said. "I think we have to do it."

From Councillor Michael Thompson's point of view, none of the myriad traffic calming measures have solved the problems and not just on Centre.

"We still see speeding on Kennedy, Mavrinac, Conover, but it helps to mitigate the issue," he said. "We're looking for the perfect response to it and I don't know if there is a perfect solution, but at least this proposal will help mitigate it a little bit and will help lessen the severity of it and improve the safety of the area. You will still have people who do that, but I would rather do something than nothing."

Councillor John Gallo offered a similar view, stating there is a definite need to do something.

"I just don't think that is going to deter them from doing this," he said. "They already know they're breaking the law. Getting a little bump while breaking the law is not going to stop them," he said.

But, for Mayor Tom Mrakas, there were few alternatives on the table.

"We have a certain amount of options available to you. One is remove the one way which the residents in the area don't want. The other is putting up a block wall so you don't allow anyone to leave the area. That is not going to happen," he said. "The other one is full on enforcement and that can't happen. YRP (York Regional Police) can't be there all the time. It is just not going to happen. They can show up there every once in a while, and not to minimize what is going on here, but YRP has bigger issues to deal with than to sit and catch people who are going the wrong way."

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter