Stop sign and crosswalk approved to thwart Yonge and Wellington bypass

A new all-way stop and crosswalk has been approved for Irwin Avenue and Machell Avenue in Yonge and Wellington's northwest quadrant.

Council approved the new traffic calming measure last week following a motion earlier this year from Councillor Harold Kim to look at ways to stop the heritage area becoming a traffic bypass for one of Aurora's busiest intersections.

But in addition to a potential measure to curb drivers using the area as a way to navigate around the traffic snarl, a proposal for a condominium complex on the southwest corner of Yonge Street and Irwin gave the matter extra urgency around the Council table with many area residents stating they were concerned the condo would make an already difficult traffic situation worse.

The views of the neighbours were highlighted at last week's meeting ahead of the vote by area resident Glen Payne who said something had to be done in the name of not only traffic but safety as well.

?In a nutshell, there is so much growth happening directly in front of us on Irwin and Machell that we have to put something in place,? he said. ?It is a big step for us to feel safer.?

When he told at least one neighbour he was delegating to speak in favour of the stop sign and crosswalk, he said a fellow resident told him he had just had a near miss in the area, underscoring, in his view, that something had to be done sooner rather than later.

Although Council approved the new measures, it was not a unanimous decision.

Councillor Rachel Gilliland, for instance, reiterated her position last month that there were still too many unknowns on the issue, particularly as the full extent of the proposed condominium and its impact on the traffic situation has not been fully assessed.

?I wasn't 100 per cent convinced just based on the report back to Council because it didn't meet any of the criteria,? said Councillor Gilliland, referencing a report before Council last month from staff stating that traffic levels as they stand now did not warrant any further measures. ?I do understand that we have a planning application that has come before us, although it is coming back a second time and I strongly support the fact that we have to address the traffic impact study in the area? for me, it was just a matter of finding out whether this is the best solution.

?There are some things?I wanted more information on. For the most part, I think that it is very incomplete with this planning project we have coming forward and I just really want to see other options that might be best solution? I don't want to put the cart before the horse. Maybe there are one-way streets involved. I have no idea what we're walking into here, but I do support keeping the community safe, but I just want to make sure I have all my ducks in a row.?

Supporting the measure was Councillor Wendy Gaertner who said while she didn't know if it would completely do the trick, she hoped it would solve the problem.

?In an ideal world, we would have Local Traffic Only and we would ticket people who weren't obeying that, but that is not within our realm of possibility,? she said. ?I do hope this will provide a solution and hopefully we will hear back [from residents] to tell us if it has worked.?

Similarly, Councillor Sandra Humfryes said she relied on the residents' input.

?People who [live there] know more,? she said. ?I agree with everything the resident said and I am looking forward to having that safety measure in place and seeing how that works out. This is a good start. Who knows what the future has in store, but I think this is a good start for safety measures.?

Added Councillor Kim, addressing the resident: ?When I make a decision, you look at the risk and reward but I don't see any risk. There is no bad decision here because? it is not a huge, long street. The residents have the most to benefit? and I am hopeful the report will pass and it will go in the way that you and your neighbours are advocating for.?

By Brock Weir EditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter