

Study of proposal to widen Industrial Parkway to four lanes gets Council green light

By Brock Weir

The future of Industrial Parkway will be given further consideration in February after Council voted to investigate widening the busy street to four lanes.

Council gave the thumbs-up to an investigation into the feasibility and cost of widening Industrial Parkway last week, with an eye of realising the original vision of the street into a bypass for Yonge Street traffic.

The motion was initially put forward by Councillor Tom Mrakas, who said anticipated growth in Aurora will only lead to further traffic congestion, and this was the most practical way to address this issue while also avoiding drivers trying to avoid Yonge Street by travelling through residential neighbourhoods.

?I do believe [Industrial Parkway] was a poorly designed bypass to begin with, but it is nevertheless a bypass which should be used,? said Councillor Mrakas. ?Looking at some of the things we're looking to do when it comes to the Aurora Promenade Study, we're looking to divert some of that through traffic that diverts onto Yonge Street and into that corridor, and I think the best place to divert it is down Industrial Parkway.?

When he drives down Industrial Parkway as it is now, Councillor Mrakas says he sees the street as three lanes already in terms of width to accommodate parking. Therefore, there would be less land to expropriate by creatively revising the lines on the road. He also suggested it would be more practical to do this sooner rather than later.

?20 to 25 years from now, it might be something we would be kicking ourselves for not looking at doing and saving ourselves an enormous amount of costs,? he said. ?I think spending \$15 million now would be better than spending \$25 million 10 years from now. It is just something that we're going to need to do when we look at everything altogether instead of products individually. Traffic is going to need to go somewhere and I think a bypass is where it needs to go.?

Although Council voted to undertake a cursory study with some early cost estimates and comments about whether it would indeed be feasible, other Councillors were a bit more tempered in their enthusiasm.

?I am happy to support the motion as is just to get the report on the second meeting cycle in February, so we can then get that information and make a determination on whether to move forward,? said Councillor Michael Thompson.

Speaking against the motion, Councillor Paul Pirri said other retrofits of Industrial Parkway should be considered ahead of widening it to four lanes, including time of day restrictions on a third lane.

?I think there is a much more practical solution to that problem and that is to utilize the space we have for three lanes, as opposed to widening the road, to put in four lanes,? he said. ?If we were to utilize the lanes a little bit differently that is something that is more feasible.

?If we're trying to move people off Yonge Street after the train has gone through in the evening, we could allow for southbound traffic in the extra lane and, in the morning, we allow for northbound traffic in the extra lane south of Wellington. I think it is smart that we look at trying to solve those problems effectively, but I don't think tearing up a perfectly good road, although not straight at all in the slightest, is the solution we are looking for.?

While other proposed changes for Industrial Parkway were put on hold pending the outcome of this report, Councillor John Abel said there was no time to waste in coming up with a solution to a growing traffic problem, exacerbated by commuters using the GO Parking garage.

?A right hand lane is paramount,? he said of commuter cars. ?Whatever else we do at [Industrial and Wellington Street] doesn't matter as long as we create that right hand turn lane. We're doing this because we want to consider making this bypass, but why not do it together? [Widening] might take years and we don't have a single day, in my mind, to delay putting a right hand turn in there.?.