

Survey says: speed cushion pilot outreach fell short

By Brock Weir

Council is set to take another look at a pilot project that would see speed cushions installed on Kennedy Street West, Mavrinac Boulevard, Conover Avenue, McMaster Avenue, and Stone Road this week following concerns raised by residents.

Lawmakers went into last week's General Committee meeting set to tackle a recommendation from municipal staff rejecting the pilot project outright because area surveys in each neighbourhood fell short of the 70 per cent threshold of support. But, they voted to go ahead with the pilot for Kennedy Street asking for further information on other proposed streets to take a further look at this issue down the line.

'The policy states that a 70 per cent support of all area residents will be required in that order to satisfy the installation of the speed cushions in the street,' said Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure, in his report to Council.

According to the report, 128 letters were mailed to homes in the Conover Avenue neighbourhood, receiving just 30 responses and 26 of those household responding in favour of the speed cushions. While that represents 87 per cent of those responding being in favour of the program, it is representative of just 29 per cent of the entire area.

412 letters were sent out to the Kennedy Street area, receiving 205 favourable responses representing 44 per cent of those mailed out. Out of the 327 letters mailed to the Mavrinac area, 83 responded, 47 per cent voting in favour of the pilot, with 196 set to McMaster and 36 out of 54 responses giving the plan a thumbs-up while over on Stone Road, 65 of the 115 respondents (out of 451 mailed out) gave the go-ahead.

This raised some alarm bells among Councillors who said the responses were not what they could have been because they also surveyed streets connecting to the ones in question and the results were not necessarily reflective of the immediate issue.

'In the past when something like this is done [the survey] is only done on the street,' said Councillor John Abel, who proposed the pilot project last fall. 'When the scope was broadened, I could have easily predicted that the results would be diluted and those in the surrounding areas would not appreciate the impact of those who were immediately impacted. I am very disappointed, especially [for] those who are concerned about speeds in which people go in their neighbourhoods. We all live in this community. People are bound by their cars and often drift quickly in their fast moving vehicles and a reminder to slow down with a speed hump is an easy way to bring them into residential conformity with safety.'

Councillor Paul Pirri said he shared these concerns.

'I foresaw this problem,' said Councillor Pirri. 'I sent an email suggesting we should be tracking this additional information so we are aware of what the residents on the street would like to see. If there are two streets where 70 per cent of people on those streets want bumps put in place, I think it makes sense that once Mr. Simanovskis has that information for us, [we can] put forward one motion at the right time and move forward with those two streets. The residents like it, the residents want it, so it will move us along in the right direction.'

From the perspective of Councillor Sandra Humfryes, extending the survey to the surrounding streets was a problematic move that achieved predictable results.

'Speeds outside of the ones who aren't really concerned don't want speed humps because they are the ones using those streets,' she said. 'Really, it is a shame it went this way but I think we can recover quickly, take a look at [Kennedy and Mavrinac], move forward on the traffic safety of those streets, and then carry on.'

But, for other Councillors, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Councillor Michael Thompson, for instance, said he did not think speed cushions were necessarily the right solution to a street like Mavrinac, which already has roundabouts. An 'incremental

approach? to those streets, he said, might be a better option in continuing to monitor speed and look at alternatives.

?I think we need to do something,? he said. ?I just don't know if speed humps in all five are the right solution.?

On the other hand, Mayor Geoff Dawe said what happens on one busy street does have an impact on those that connect to them.

?One of the issues we constantly run into is when we make a decision about one street it affects the street on the other side,? he said.

?We have to be careful about what we do here. There is no real alternative from going from Bathurst to Kennedy. As soon as the people in the other streets hear what happened tonight, they will be here in two weeks asking for their street.?

Added Councillor Humfries: ?Whatever we do on the street for safety impacts all streets around, and people all want their streets safe.?