

Traffic infiltration addressed in Master Transportation Study

Council is once again raising the issue of promoting Industrial Parkway for use as originally intended: a Yonge Street bypass.

Signage to promote Industrial Parkway, which begins at Yonge Street in Aurora's south end, before ending at St. John's Sideroad, as a bypass of Aurora's busiest thoroughfare, were explored by Council last week as they examined the Town's proposed new Master Transportation Study.

The study, which was formally presented to lawmakers at last week's General Committee meeting, shines a light on options to address the infiltration of traffic into residential neighbourhoods abutting Yonge Street.

It also takes into account traffic originating from neighbouring municipalities like Newmarket and King diverting through residential streets in Aurora in order to avoid major arterial roads and intersections.

The study found that Aurora Heights Drive and Mark Street are currently being used as commuter routes for this 'external traffic' looking to avoid Bathurst, Yonge and Wellington, while Centre Street 'remains used as a pass-through route for external traffic' despite morning peak restrictions and one-way conversion between Spruce and Wells.

Internal traffic was explored as well and the study found that Mark Street is also being used by Aurora residents to bypass the Yonge and Wellington intersection, while 'internal traffic' was using Centre in a similar way.

It notes Elderberry Trail in Aurora's south end, is also being seen as a traffic cut-through, a situation that could benefit from continued monitoring.

'Concerns can potentially be addressed by improvements at the Yonge-Wellington intersection,' said Michael Bat, Traffic Analyst for the Town of Aurora, in his report to Council, adding that moves to create a right-hand turn lane for southbound Yonge Street traffic at Wellington will help alleviate the situation. 'These improvements are critical to mitigating pass-through traffic volumes east of Yonge Street, including improving operations for all movements at the intersection which may be achieved through the proposed southbound right turn lane and/or implementation of a road diet concept.'

But Council members

questioned whether a solution might also be found in going back to basics on Industrial Parkway.

Mayor Tom Mrakas, for instance, asked whether the study had taken a closer look at the possibility of lane configurations on Industrial not only to allow for bike lanes but a dedicated lane that can be allocated to northbound or southbound traffic depending on peak traffic times.

“We did not look specifically at that as a major issue,” said project manager Jonathan Chai. “When we looked at the traffic demands of the Town, we didn't see any major issues, particularly on Industrial Parkway, with respect to peaking. That could be addressed more at the intersections because those tend to be the major bottlenecks where you could have dedicated turn lanes, which I believe are there today.”

But Mayor Mrakas said it was worth taking a closer look, particularly where Industrial Parkway North meets St. John's Sideroad.

“I think as we grow and as we continue to grow, we're going to find struggles as far as handling the traffic volume that is going to [come] as we intensify throughout the Town,” he said. “That traffic is going to have to go somewhere and I think a lot of people are travelling [to get] to Wellington and the 404. They're coming from up north, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and they're travelling down St. John's. If we don't make Industrial Parkway an ideal place for them to come off of Yonge and get down to where they're going, they're going to continue down Yonge and I think that is going to be more problematic as we start to intensify.”

Councillor Sandra Humfryes agreed, adding that signage earmarking Industrial Parkway as a Yonge bypass was “critical.”

By Brock Weir