

Residents Submission for Committee of the Whole

Date of Meeting: May 15, 2024

Subject: Installation of traffic calming measures on Weldrick Road West between Castle Rock Drive and Bathurst Street, in response to resident petition dated November 25, 2021

Purpose:

To seek council approval to install traffic calming measures on Weldrick Road West between Castle Rock Drive and Bathurst Street.

Recommendations:

- a) That Council receive the resident petition dated November 24, 2021, that was submitted to a former staff member on that date, but not forwarded to the clerk's office as required;
- b) That Council direct staff to install speed humps, rumble strips, lane narrowing devices, or other such active devices that have the effect of reducing the excessive speed of traffic, and dissuade unsafe lane passing.

Contact Person:

Al Itwar, Ward 5 resident, mailing address: 61586-9350 Yonge Street, Richmond Hill

Background:

The city has been sent a petition from the residents of Weldrick Road West, between Castle Rock Drive and Bathurst Street, requesting the implementation of traffic calming measures along this portion of road.

Since at least 2008, speeding has been an issue on Weldrick Road West, between Castle Rock Drive and Bathurst Street. This is due to Weldrick Road West being considered a 'connector road' by City Staff, with itinerant traffic using the road to travel both ways between Yonge Street and Bathurst Street.

When the residents of the street reported this issue to then Ward 5 Councillor Nick Papa, their concerns were dismissed as being unfounded. Subsequent reports to former Regional Councillor Carmine Perrelli, were similarly ignored.

The traffic issues in this portion of Weldrick Road West have dramatically escalated, with excessive rates of speed and frequency of speeding. Further, drivers have begun recklessly passing preceding vehicles at high rates of speed despite oncoming traffic. This behaviour occurs at all hours of the day, and has led to many collisions, both reported and unreported. The area is home to many elderly individuals and young families with children, and is also the drop-off point for several school bus routes-all are being put at risk by the foregoing driving behaviour.

Site Context

Weldrick Road West is a connector road, with one westbound and one eastbound lane. An all-way stop sign exists at the four-way intersection at Castle Rock Drive. The intersection at Bathurst Street is controlled in all directions by full traffic signals. A sidewalk is located on the southside of the street and is heavily used by pedestrian traffic at all hours of the day. The road has a default speed limit of 50km/h. Parking is not prohibited on either side of the street. Single family houses and a church are located on both sides of the street.

Analysis and Findings

Since 2008, residents have observed vehicles travelling at high rates of speed. These observations have been corroborated over the years by several means:

- 1-retired police officers with training in traffic enforcement and investigation have verified the speeding and reckless driving;
- 2-time trials to determine the time taken to travel a fixed distance while driving at the speed limit;
- 3-consultation with York Regional Police officers who have observed the driving behaviour.

Staff suggested that sometime during 2021, traffic speed was assessed using Automatic Traffic Recorders (ATRs), however residents did not observe any such assessment devices being used. In addition, this purported study was undertaken during the height of the COVID pandemic and so would not be representative of regular traffic conditions.

Based on the foregoing, a statistically significant number of drivers are seriously exceeding the speed limit, and further passing vehicles in an unsafe manner, endangering the lives of other drivers and pedestrians.

Given the layout of the roadway, sidewalks, street furniture, and the presence of residential homes, the road is unsuitable for police enforcement. Further, passive traffic calming measures such as education, lawn signs, signage, speed boards, etc., will have no effect.

The residents in the area have been consulted and are requesting the proposed countermeasures.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

The exact cost to install the requested measures is unknown by the author, but given that the city has been made aware of this issue as early as 2008, there is exposure to legal liability since plaintiffs in any motor vehicle accident action can sue the city on the basis of contributory negligence for inaction on the identified issues. The cost to defend and payout only one such action can easily equal the cost of the requested measures.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

The recommendation of this report is consistent with the Council's Strategic Priorities to create a "Strong Sense of Belonging" and to facilitate "Getting Around the City" through promotion of a safe road environment for all users through the implementation of active traffic calming measures. The noted improvements are expected to encourage and ensure compliance by road users such that they traverse the road in a safer manner.

Climate Change Considerations:

The proposed traffic management measures can contribute to climate change mitigation by better organizing the flow of traffic, reducing vehicle, further promoting other mobility options (walking, cycling) through the provision of safe active transportation facilities, and, consequently, reducing carbon emissions in the air.

Conclusion:

To address the residents' concerns and request for the implementation of traffic calming measures, residents are seeking Council approval for staff to install active traffic calming measures on Weldrick Road West, between Castle Road Drive and Bathurst

Street. The improvements are expected to ensure the orderly movement of all-road users, improve safety, and promote the low-speed nature of Weldrick Road West.