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Kingsmere Avenue Traffic and Parking Review Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2020-49

Department(s): Engineering Services

Author(s): Rachel Prudhomme, Director, Engineering Services

Meeting Date: July 20, 2020

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Kingsmere Avenue Traffic and Parking Review dated July 20, 2020 be received; and,
2. That this report and Council extracts be forwarded to the York Region Catholic School Board; and,
3. That this report and Council extracts be forwarded to the York Regional Police; and,
4. That staff undertake the appropriate Category 1 speed management programs on Kingsmere Avenue; and,
5. That staff coordinate with the York Region Catholic School Board for on-site and off-site improvements; and,
6. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to address a request from the Kingsmere Avenue community (from Ivsbridge Boulevard to Stonehaven Avenue) for traffic and parking control, and to improve overall traffic operations. The petition received from the community outlines nine (9) proposed solutions that will be discussed in this report.

Background

At its regular meeting of June 24, 2019, Town Council received a petition from the Kingsmere Community which outlined several traffic and parking issues, and included nine separate requests for solutions. Notre Dame Catholic elementary school is located in this section of Kingsmere Avenue, and its only access is via Kingsmere Avenue.

The petition is being considered in tandem with a previous Staff Report, “Development and Infrastructure Report ES 2015-01” which was presented at the regular meeting of Council on February 9, 2015. This previous report had provided recommendations to Council after an area parking review and an all-way stop review at the Kingsmere/Ataire intersection were conducted.

Discussion

The petition received in June, 2019, included nine separate requests to address the traffic and parking issues. Each issue is discussed individually below.

1. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Install speed reducing lanes along Kingsmere as been done on Stonehaven this year (which has no doubt added to Kingsmere traffic).’

This suggested solution refers to the flexible bollard program. In 2019, a succession of traffic-calming flexible bollards were installed on a length of Stonehaven Avenue.

At the time of this report, staff was already considering installing flexible bollards on Kingsmere Avenue between Ataire Road and Stonehaven Avenue, and south of Stonehaven Avenue on Lockwood Boulevard, as part of its 2020 traffic-calming program. Four (4) successive bollard sets are planned in these locations. Bollards work best in groups of two or more, and should not be located close to school entrances.

2. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Reconsider installing gentle speed bumps along Kingsmere.’

The standard speed hump installed by the Town is designed to encourage drivers to adhere to the 40 km/h speed limit. Analysis of previous installations confirmed that “operating speeds” (i.e. the speeds at which eighty-five (85) percent of vehicles travel) can be brought down to 45 km/h as a result of speed humps. Based on the 2019 traffic counts, the operating speed along Kingsmere Avenue is already at 45 km/h. This is based on a speed study using three (3) speed measurement locations: 1) north of Ivsbridge Boulevard (operating speed of 46.9 km/h), 2) in front of the school (operating speed of 43.7 km/h), and 3) south of Ataire Road (operating speed of 44.6 km/h). As a result of the existing low operating speeds, the addition of standard speed humps on Kingsmere Avenue would have very little impact on traffic speeds, but it would negatively impact school bus operations for the area schools as bus drivers need to ensure passenger safety as they negotiate the humps. Gentle speed humps (lower

vertical profile) would have less of a negative impact on school buses, but they would have no impact on road speeds.

3. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Request police speed/law enforcement on Kingsmere (as taken place along Stonehaven this past year).’

Speed enforcement is undertaken by York Regional Police (YRP). Staff will forward this request to YRP, but residents are urged to consider doing the same and calling YRP for more enforcement.

4. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Have Newmarket Traffic Control blitz Kingsmere speeding and parking on a very regular schedule.’

As noted above, speed enforcement is under the purview of York Regional Police (YRP). Staff can forward the request to YRP on behalf of the residents, but it helps tremendously if residents also contact YRP directly to ask for more enforcement. On the other hand, parking enforcement is handled by the Town’s Legislative Services. The number of parking by-law enforcement officers at the Town is limited and therefore, parking enforcement is done mostly on an “on demand” and “on call” basis. Legislative Services also undertake regular parking control checks throughout the Town, including in the areas surrounding the 20 elementary and 5 secondary schools within Newmarket’s boundaries.

5. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Install NO STOPPING 3:00 – 4:00pm M-F on the east side of Kingsmere.’

Currently, there is no parking on the east side (school side) of Kingsmere Avenue, and time- and date-limited “No Stopping” on the west side. The introduction of a “No Stopping” zone on the school side (east side) of the street would create a “clear zone” that could improve traffic flow in front of the school. However, the implementation of “clear zones” pushes parking operations onto adjacent local streets, as has been evidenced at several other schools in Newmarket. This type of measure requires a review of both the parking and traffic operations on the school site, which would have to be done by the School Board prior to implementation. Section 7 provides further clarification.

6. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Install NO STOPPING at the intersection of Kingsmere and Ataire to at least give cars an opportunity to do a U-turn within the road allowance rather than using private driveways.’

The Town’s Traffic Bylaw (Bylaw #2011-24, as amended) allows U-turns at the Kingsmere/Ataire intersection. The Parking Bylaw (2019-63, as amended) under Section 8. (1)(a) prohibits stopping within an intersection. Therefore, vehicles may make U-turns at the intersection, but no vehicle may stop within the intersection. The Town has no jurisdiction over the use of private driveways for turning around and is unable to monitor and ticket drivers’ behavior in this area. The use of private driveways for turning around is at the discretion of the driver and it is not an enforceable offence.

7. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Redesign the parking / school bus pick-up on Notre Dame property.’

One of the root causes of the traffic and parking concerns on Kingsmere Avenue is the flow of traffic on the school property itself. This school has been operating for approximately 20 years. The school catchment area is quite vast and numerous school buses operate at the school.

When the School Board was planning to build this school, a Site Plan Agreement was signed with the Town to guide the development. In 2005, this was superseded by an “Amending Agreement”, signed by the School Board and the Town, in which the School was allowed to add portable classrooms to the site. In both agreements, Section 17 states clearly that:

“The Board covenants and agrees to provide and erect all signs delineating traffic flow, designated parking areas, bus loading and unloading areas, parent pick-up and drop-off areas, no parking, fire route and all other signs as required to ensure safe and convenient flow of traffic. Further, the Board will ensure that the site will function at all times to accommodate traffic related to the school site property without adversely impacting on Town roads and agrees to make any future required modifications to achieve this result.”

Therefore, the School Board is required to implement improvements to mitigate any traffic or parking operations that impact Town road operations. Suggested solution #5, noted above, as well as #7, would fall within this type of review.

8. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Better positioning visual speed traps to catch violators.’

This request may be referring to Newmarket’s solar speed board sign program. The solar speed signs are considered an educational tool to instantly inform motorists of their speeds. The location of the solar speed board signs depends on utility pole location (for proper mounting), as well as nearby street trees that can create too much shade, thereby preventing the sun from charging the boards. The Town also relies on automatic tube recorders (ATRs) to determine speeds and volumes. The latter devices are not as visible as the speed boards and they do not provide immediate speed and volume readings.

9. PETITION REQUEST: ‘Town to petition for the installation of a permanent radar speed trap in the vicinity of the elementary school.’

The Town is fully supportive of the Automatic Speed Enforcement (ASE) program proposed by the Province. Currently, York Region has announced a 2-year in-service pilot review of ASEs. The Town will be monitoring experiences with both the York Region and the City of Toronto ASE program. These programs are very expensive to operate, mostly due to the cost of the cameras. It is therefore advisable to learn from the best practices of York Region and the City of Toronto before the Town entertains the implementing of its own ASE program.

Conclusion

Based on the above information, the following are the next steps:

1. In addition to the flexible bollard program, other “Category 1 Measures” from the Town’s 2014 Traffic Mitigation Strategy will be implemented on Kingsmere Avenue to help reduce the speeds. “Category 1 Measures” include signage, enforcement and education initiatives, the use of which is governed by the Town’s by-laws and the Ontario Traffic Manuals (OTM). The speed management program (solar speed signs and boulevard lawn signs) will also be implemented, and YRP and the Town’s own forces will be encouraged to enforce traffic and parking laws.
2. Notre Dame School’s traffic and parking operations have been impacting the community for quite some time since it was built 20 years ago. School operations and the volume of children in the catchment area have significantly changed since the property was first designed. It may be time for the School Board to review the traffic and parking operations at Notre Dame School, as well as the existing school’s infrastructure and facilities. This type of review has had very positive results at a number of other schools within the Town.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This report links to Newmarket’s Strategic Plan direction, Well Planned & Connected, by improving travel within Newmarket through inter-connected neighbourhoods, as well as providing varied transit options, cycling trails, paths, and bike lanes.

This report also aligns with Council’s 2018-2022 Strategic Priority Pillar on Safe Transportation (Streets), by ensuring safe streets and reducing traffic congestion.

Consultation

The Town received a petition requesting a number of solutions for various traffic and parking issues. As per the Town’s policy, a letter (dated July 15, 2019) was sent to each household within the study area to solicit additional input.

A copy of this report will be forwarded to the community that was polled, including all those who signed the petition, prior to the Committee of the Whole meeting so that residents may attend the meeting or present a deputation if they so wish.

Human Resource Considerations

Not applicable to this report.

Budget Impact

Any budget items associated with this will be minimal and can be accommodated in the annual Operating Budget of the Transportation Business Unit.

Attachments

None.

Approval

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Director, Engineering Services

Peter Noehammer, P.Eng.,
Commissioner, Development & Infrastructure Services

Contact

For more information on this report, please contact Mark Kryzanowski, Manager, Transportation Services, at 905-953-5300, extension. 2508.