



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue –
Request for traffic calming devices (speed humps)

Date:	December 20, 2006
To:	Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Transportation Services Toronto and East York District
Wards:	St. Paul's, Ward 21
Reference Number:	Ts07013tey.top.doc

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to outline the findings of a study undertaken to reduce the vehicular speed by installing traffic calming devices (speed humps) on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue.

In light of the low traffic volumes and the results of the speed and volume survey which did not indicate a speeding problem, the installation of speed humps would have little impact on further lowering the operational speeds and are not technically warranted nor recommended on the subject section of Helena Avenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transportation Services recommends that:

1. Traffic calming devices not be installed on Helena Avenue between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The adoption of the above-noted Recommendation will not result in any financial impact. If, however, Council decides to approve installing traffic calming devices on this section of Helena Avenue, the following financial impact will result:

1. The estimated cost for installing four speed humps would be \$12,000.00. Transportation Services has requested that the 2007 Capital Budget process allocate \$750,000.00 for traffic calming initiatives and installing speed humps on Helena Avenue would be subject to competing priorities and funding availability.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

At the request of Councillor Joe Mihevc, on behalf of area residents, Transportation Services staff conducted a study on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue to determine the need for the installation of traffic calming devices.

COMMENTS

Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue is a local roadway which operates two-way with a posted speed limit of 40 km/h.

A review of the Toronto Police Service collision records for a three-year period ending August 2006 revealed that there were no collisions reported on this section of Helena Avenue where speeding could have been a contributing factor.

We have assessed the subject location against the City of Toronto's Traffic Calming Policy. According to the policy guidelines, the prime criteria for the installation of traffic calming devices are vehicle speeds and traffic volume. Other environmental factors are also considered, such as road width, pedestrian facilities and roadway grade. The subject section of Helena Avenue was also evaluated for safety and was found to have sidewalks on both sides of the roadway and the road grade is less than eight percent. Because the basic criteria were met, further consideration of speed humps was continued. The proposal was further evaluated under the technical criteria, with the results summarized in the attached chart listed as appendix "A".

Based on our assessment, Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue does not meet all the criteria as set out in the traffic calming policy for the installation of traffic calming devices. Specifically, the traffic calming policy states that speed humps should not be considered on a street carrying less than 1,000 vehicles per day unless the operating speed is greater than 55 km/h or if there is evidence of an excessive speeding problem. The study indicated an average daily volume of 575 vehicles with an operating speed of 44 km/h. There were 13 incidents (2.2 percent) of excessive speeding recorded (vehicles travelling in excess of 55 km/h).

Therefore, the installation of speed humps is not technically warranted on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue at this time.

Alternative Recommendations

Even though the results of the study conducted were not favourable, if Toronto and East York Community Council wishes to proceed with the installation of speed humps on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue it will be necessary to adopt the following alternate recommendations:

1. appropriate staff be authorized to conduct a poll of eligible householders on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue to determine resident support, in accordance with the City of Toronto Traffic Calming Policy; and consultation with emergency services such as Fire Service, Emergency Medical Service and Toronto Police Service be undertaken;

2. subject to favourable results of the poll;
 - (i) The City Solicitor be requested to prepare a by-law for the alteration of the section of roadway on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue for traffic calming purposes as follows:

“The alteration of Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue by the installation of four speed humps, as generally as shown on the attached print of Drawing No. 421F-8621, dated December, 2006”;
 - (ii) Pursuant to the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Act, Notice of Completion be issued; and
 - (iii) Transportation Services reduce the speed limit from forty kilometres per hour to thirty kilometres per hour on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue, at the same time as the speed humps are installed.

The installation of speed humps will result in slower operating speeds for all vehicles, including emergency service vehicles, and could result in increased response times in the event of an emergency.

In accordance with the provisions of the City of Toronto Traffic Calming Policy, a formal poll must be conducted of householders who would be directly affected by the placement of speed humps on this section of Helena Avenue. Under this policy, a minimum response of 50 percent plus one ballot must be received of which at least 60 percent of the responding households must be in favour of the installation of speed humps in order to proceed with the installation. Accordingly, subject to approval by Council of the alternate recommendations outlined above, appropriate staff would conduct a poll of householders on Helena Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue. If the poll is in support of this traffic calming proposal, then the installation would be scheduled based on relative need and competing priorities. In the event of an unsuccessful poll, a two-year moratorium would be in effect prohibiting another poll regarding traffic calming at the same location.

The installation of traffic calming measures is subject to the provisions of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Act as a “Schedule B” activity. This requires two mandatory points of contact with the public and review agencies. A “Notice of Study Commencement” must be issued and after Council approval has been given, “Notice of Completion” must be issued allowing for a 30-day comment and input period.

Should the residents of Helena Avenue be in favour of the attached speed hump proposal, we applied the Traffic Calming ranking criteria for the purpose of setting priorities for the

installation of speed humps or other traffic calming measures. The street obtained 11 points out of a possible 100.

No alterations to parking regulations are required, nor would the number of parking spaces be affected, and the effects on winter services, street cleaning and garbage collection should be minimal.

Consultation with emergency service agencies (Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services) is required in order to ensure that the design and layout of a traffic calming proposal does not unduly affect their operations. At this time we have not consulted with emergency services, however, Toronto Fire Services has provided the following general statement in the past regarding the installation of speed humps:

“...Toronto Fire Service is supportive of initiatives that improve the life safety of our citizens. Our concern is that the physical calming measures being proposed may negatively impact emergency response to the area.

The vertical restrictions imposed by speed humps have a much greater affect on large fire vehicles than smaller passenger vehicles. Response time increases with every obstacle a fire vehicle encounters on route from the fire station to the incident. Although the increase at each hump may only e seconds, the cumulative effect can be a significant amount of time that could result in increased property damage unnecessary injury or loss of life.

Speed humps are generally hard on large, heavy vehicle (fire vehicles) and increase the potential to suffer mechanical damage. This in turn can lead to vehicle being placed out of service for considerable periods of time. Aside from the costs associated with repairs, there is a decrease in the resources available to respond to other emergency situations.”

One of the provisions of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Act specifies that other reasonable alternative solutions be investigated prior to the recommendation of any solutions involving roadway alterations, such as speed humps. In this regard, as an alternative to speed hump installation, the following options were considered as part of staff’s review on Helena Avenue.

Police Enforcement:

Enhanced enforcement of the maximum speed limit requires the dedication of police resources. Many local streets generally do not have sufficient incidences of excessive speeding to justify radar enforcement on a frequent basis. Enforcement might be provided by the Police Service on a semi-regular basis for a one or two-week period. Frequent users of the street become aware of the police presence and generally adjust their speed accordingly. However, once Police Service staff detects a reduction in the number of enforceable speeding infractions, radar enforcement is likely to be withdrawn and incidence of speeding could recur.

Enhanced Public Awareness:

In some instances motorists might not consciously be aware of the speed at which they are travelling. Therefore, enhancing public awareness of the speed limit is an option. Transportation Services has initiated a “Watch Your Speed” program whereby a trailer equipped with a radar unit, speed limit sign, and display board, is deployed on a problem street for two or three days to record vehicle speeds and give the approaching motorist an immediate read-out of their speed relative to the speed limit. The intention of the “Watch Your Speed” program is to increase public awareness and encourage responsible driving in the community.

Other Types of Traffic Calming Measures:

Traffic calming measures such as pinch-points and chicanes are in limited use across the City. Such measures result in the loss of on-street parking spaces and generally have a minor impact on the operational speed of traffic. The loss of parking is a concern in many residential neighbourhoods in the central area of the City, especially on streets such as Helena Avenue, where there has been a history of a high demand for on-street parking spaces. Although feasible, it would not be prudent to remove on-street parking spaces on Helena Avenue for the sake of installing other physical traffic calming measures.

Do Nothing:

This too is an option that could be considered on Helena Avenue where the investigation has indicated that the speed profile and operating characteristics of the street are typical of many local streets in residential neighbourhoods across the City and do not suggest a potentially resolvable problem presently exists.

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SIGNATURE

Andrew Koropeski, P.Eng.
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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix “A” – Table 1: Traffic Calming Warrant Criteria
Drawing No. 421F-8621, Dated December 2006

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