

August 20, 2007

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RE: Traffic Calming Measures, Hickson Street, between Brock Avenue and St Clarens Avenue.

Upon review of the proposal for installation of traffic calming measures (speed humps), I have the following comments.

Toronto Fire Services is supportive of initiatives that will improve the life safety for citizens of and visitors to the city of Toronto. Our concern is that the physical calming measures being proposed may negatively impact emergency response to the area.

Fire Services is opposed to this speed hump installation as they will slow our responding vehicles and affect our ability to deliver service in the quickest possible manner. The effectiveness of our services is directly proportional to time it takes to receive notification, travel to the incident and begin operations. 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 be seconds, the cumulative effect can be a significant amount of time. A thirty-second delay (3 to 4 humps) is enough to alter the outcome of an incident from a successful fire extinguishment with minimal property damage and rescue of all occupants to complete structure loss with possible fire fatalities.

It is imperative that the individuals directly affected by this installation be made fully aware of the potential negative effects of the proposed calming devices. Careful consideration must be given to accepting delays of emergency response vehicles as a trade off to combat the risks presented by regular vehicle traffic. Hickson Street is a very short, very narrow street with a stop sign at Norfolk Street and a 'S' bend in it. The vehicle daily volume is very low and the 85th percentile speed is well below the posted speed limit. The installation of a speed hump on Hickson Street could not possibly have a significant effect on regular vehicle traffic. It should also be noted that speed humps have been proposed for neighbouring streets, as area becomes saturated with humps further delays are created.

Fire Services recommends that non-physical measures (speed limits or prohibited turns) be implemented and evaluated before physical forms are considered. Desired results may be obtained without imposing a physical obstruction to emergency vehicles. The impact of a speed hump installed in a segment of a street is difficult to evaluate without accounting for all measures that exist on the surrounding streets. It is our opinion that traffic-calming measures need to be evaluated on network-wide bases to better assess the impact to the entire response area.



Terry Bruining