



June 19, 2015

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

Re: TE8.1: 30 km/h Speed Limit on Local Roads in the Toronto and East York Community Council Area

Walk Toronto and the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) strongly support the proposal to reduce speed limits on local streets in Toronto and East York to 30 km/hr.

The safety benefits of speed reductions are well known to the community council, so we will focus on addressing some of the arguments often made against universal speed limit reduction proposals like this one.

It is sometimes argued that speed limit changes are ineffective without changes to the road infrastructure itself.

However, a [recent study](#) by University of Missouri researchers in the town of Columbia, Missouri, showed that simply posting a lower speed limit city-wide does, in fact, reduce speeds. After a universal 5 mile-per-hour (8 km-per-hour) reduction, combined with a city-wide awareness campaign, speeds reductions on various streets ranged from 1 mph (1.6 km/hr) to over 6 mph (10 km/hr) on the roads studied.

Universal speed limit changes appear to work because drivers internalize the new speed limit – it becomes the new normal on that kind of street. Another benefit is that speed limits become consistent for the type of street with the new limit, rather than the current confusing situation in Toronto where speed limits vary from street to street, or even along the same street, depending on whether local traffic calming measures have been implemented.

While the proposed measure only affects part of the City of Toronto, it is a large and distinctive enough part of the city that drivers can internalize the idea that when they are in the older parts of Toronto, they should drive more slowly on local streets. An awareness campaign would make this effect even stronger.

As well, Toronto and East York has an advantage in that its street infrastructure already encourages slower speeds. While the City of Toronto recently established criteria for reducing speed limits without speed bumps, these criteria are overly restrictive.

In fact, most local streets in Toronto/East York are already only 7.3 meters wide, and some are narrower. With 2 meters for parking and a two-way street, that leaves only 2.6 meters each way for cars, barely enough room to pass. Where streets are one-way, they are often characterized by four-way-stops and discontinuities. These are not streets that encourage speeding as it is.



Where local streets are wider or otherwise subject to speeding, it would make sense to continue the current policy of providing traffic calming measures where needed. Slower speed limits will in fact help highlight which streets are most in need of such additional measures.

It is also argued that only a small percentage of collisions happen on local streets. However, the [staff report](#) also admits that almost no pedestrian collisions causing injury happen on streets with 30 km/hr speed limits (less than 1% of the total). By comparison, 15.6% of all collisions causing injury happen on streets with 40 km/hr limits. There are currently, according to the staff report, only 2.5 times as many kilometres of local streets at 40 km/hr than at 30 km/hr, yet these faster streets result in almost 17 times more collisions causing injuries. Over 5 years, the City's own statistics suggest reducing the speed limit to 30 km/hr could result in 2 fewer deaths and perhaps 400 fewer pedestrians injured in collisions. And since these speed changes will be permanent, the benefits will only increase as the years go by. It is important to remember that, even if a citizen is not killed, injuries create a great deal of trauma for individuals, and cost our society in lost work time and health care costs.

But it's not just about deaths and injuries. Reducing speeds on local roads helps to create a feeling of safety on the street, one that encourages people to walk in their neighbourhood. It makes parents feel more confident allowing their children to walk to school or to the park, and it helps seniors feel more confident about venturing out for a stroll. As people spend more time on their street and see their neighbours there, their sense of community and well-being increases. As people walk more, their health improves. Reducing speed limits will encourage walking, with all of the health and community benefits that come with it.

Finally, there is an equity argument for reducing speed limits equally on all local roads at once. It is well known that, at present, traffic calming measures are most likely to be implemented in well-off neighbourhoods that have the resources and influence to go through the difficult process that is required. But low-income communities deserve safe streets as much as prosperous ones. Reducing speed limits universally on local streets will mean that all residents of these kinds of streets benefit equally from safer streets.

Thank you.

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