

## Traffic Calming Measures and Policies

*(City Council on June 7, 8 and 9, 2000, amended this Clause by adding thereto the following:*

*“It is further recommended that:*

- (1) the Chair of the Toronto Police Services Board, in consultation with the Mayor, be requested to submit a report to the Works Committee, through the Toronto Police Services Board, on the possibility of using the existing Community Action Policing program for traffic enforcement;*
- (2) the Toronto Police Services Board be requested to review:
  - (a) the effectiveness of the Divisional organization of traffic enforcement; and*
  - (b) the potential for traffic enforcement by non-police officers;**
- (3) the Toronto Police Services Board be requested to investigate the possibility of parking police vehicles which are not being used in active service in appropriate locations, in order to encourage reductions in speed; and*
- (4) the Chief Administrative Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Toronto Police Services Board, be requested to submit a report to Council, through the Works Committee, on the possibility of creating a separate police unit, to be financed from revenues from ticketing, to enforce speed limits throughout the City of Toronto.”)*

**The Works Committee recommends that the Toronto Police Services Board be requested to increase the enforcement of traffic regulations regarding speed limits within streets in the City of Toronto to the fullest extent possible.**

The Works Committee, reports for the information of Council, having:

- (1) deferred consideration of the report dated May 9, 2000, from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services until such time as the department’s review of traffic calming measures is complete and the proposed policy is brought before the Committee; and
- (2) requested the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services, when reporting back to the Committee, to include comment on staff’s discussions with the Police on ways and means in which they can increase the enforcement of speed limits.

**The Works Committee submits the following report (May 9, 2000) from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services:**

Purpose:

To report, as requested by the Chair of the Works Committee on motion to enact a moratorium on the approval of all new traffic calming measures.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement :

There are no financial implications associated with the receipt of this report.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background :

The Works Committee, at its meeting of April 19, 2000, in considering a communication of the same date from Councillor Bill Saundercook, Chair of the Works Committee, expressing concern at the increase in the number of traffic calming measures across the City, referred the communication and the following motion to the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services for a report (Clause No. 11(t) of Report No. 8 of The Works Committee):

“That the Works Committee recommend that the City immediately enact a moratorium on the approval of all new traffic calming measures until Council approves a city-wide traffic calming policy that takes into consideration the needs of the Emergency Services and the impacts on neighbouring residential streets following the installation of measures on a specific street.”

Comments:

What is Traffic Calming:

Traffic calming can be defined as:

“The implementation of physical and visual measures that are intended to mitigate vehicle speeding and aggressive driving behaviour to improve road safety and create an environment where the needs of all road space users, not just motor vehicles, are enhanced.”

The approach taken in Toronto is that traffic calming does not prohibit access or force traffic to divert to other local streets like the more traditional traffic management techniques such as turn prohibitions, one-way street mazes, road closures and physical diversions.

There are essentially three fundamental ways to achieve traffic calming:

- (i) vertical deflections (such as speed humps, raised intersections);

- (ii) deflect vehicle path (such as chicanes or road realignments); and
- (iii) road or intersection narrowings (including introduction of on-street parking).

There are numerous types of devices or ways of accomplishing these three effects, most of which have been applied in Toronto. Each has its advantages and disadvantages, but in the end, the objective is the same: to physically limit the ability to speed and to alter the driver's visual perception to encourage moderated operation. Regardless of the method used, in order for traffic calming to be effective, some element of change in the roadway should be present every 60 m to 90 m. Wider spacings tend to perpetuate an acceleration/deceleration cycle. There is no doubt that traffic tends to travel in accordance with the natural characteristics of a road. If it is wide and straight with no visual diversion, speeds will be higher.

Interest in traffic calming in Toronto, the Greater Toronto Area and throughout North America is increasing. Traffic calming has been used around the world increasingly for over 25 years and is now widespread in many cities, particularly in Europe. Toronto itself installed its first speed humps in 1974. During the 1990s, many Canadian and American jurisdictions experimented with traffic calming to help reduce traffic impacts in residential neighbourhoods. The former Cities of York, Toronto and North York have installed a variety of traffic calming measures. Etobicoke and East York have not used traffic calming, while Scarborough experimented with speed humps several years ago but removed them after a few months.

#### Implementing Traffic Calming:

All requests for traffic management plans and speed control measures originate in the community and are assessed in accordance with the policies of the pre-amalgamation municipal Councils.

These procedures, although somewhat varied, generally approach neighbourhood traffic management planning in a co-ordinated, area-wide manner. It is based on community input and consensus building intended to secure public acceptance of a neighbourhood traffic management initiative. In fact the policies are based on neighbourhood demand and not measures imposed by the City.

In practice, however, as Councillors know, despite countless hours of volunteer and staff effort, and concerted attempts to involve and notify all residents of an affected area, the implementation of neighbourhood traffic management or calming plans continues to be very divisive in many instances. Years of work often lead to acrimony in neighbourhoods and inconclusive results. Evaluation of need and neighbourhood-wide consensus is a difficult problem when looking at a more complex traffic calming solution or a larger area plan.

As experience has been gained and improved, less costly techniques have been developed, the approaches of implementing traffic calming measures have also evolved. First, evaluation criteria are being refined which assist in determining whether a particular street is a candidate for traffic calming. Secondly, with the emergence of speed humps as a less intrusive, lower cost form of traffic calming that does not force traffic to alternate routes, the requests have been

processed in a more incremental, streamlined manner than the elaborate neighbourhood plans. For these reasons, speed humps have become the dominant method of traffic calming.

Since the speed hump policies are relatively new, there has not yet been an opportunity to quantitatively measure impacts of installations. Some follow-up was done on an installation last year in North Toronto which showed no appreciable traffic diversion, although the street in question was not a high volume route. Anecdotally, about 80 streets in the City have had speed hump installations (about 500 speed humps in total) and there have been very few complaints from abutting streets. We are now organising a follow-up study of several collector type streets and abutting areas such as Merton Street, Elm Ridge Drive, Eastwood Road, etc., where speed humps have been installed. Results of this study should be available later this year.

#### Emergency Services:

The staff report (July 9, 1997) leading to the adoption of the speed hump policy in the former City of Toronto was very clear in articulating implications of these devices on emergency services. It was noted that physical traffic calming measures encompass roadway designs that reduce the speed of vehicles. Although the intended focus is the passenger or delivery type vehicle which uses a residential street, the impacts will clearly be felt by emergency response vehicles as well (fire, ambulance, police). In order to achieve a safer and more liveable street environment in which the likelihood and severity of collisions (motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians) is reduced on a daily basis, it has to be acknowledged that emergency response time for that portion of the trip which utilises the local street will be impacted.

Research illustrates that jurisdictions around the world continue to grapple with this issue. It is also clear that while in many instances raised pavement elements are the most effective measure in lowering speeds, this also has a higher impact on emergency response than does road narrowing. On the other hand, these traffic calming measures still permit access, unlike road diverters or closures, and may have less impact than the proliferation of “Stop” signs now found in many neighbourhoods.

Both the Fire and Ambulance Services at the time succinctly captured the essence of the situation, indicating in part as follows:

Ambulance Services – “As a department, we applaud and respect every measure that can be taken to improve safety on our streets. It must be realised that when we do encounter such road restrictions as speed humps, bumps, swells or dips, that the response of an emergency vehicle may be delayed responding to a street with these implements in place.”

Toronto Fire Service – “We have reviewed other cities’ traffic calming plans. Concessions have been granted to designate certain routes free of all such devices. Wide scale area planning is needed prior to implementation. The public needs to know upfront the factors that are at stake, traffic safety versus medical and fire response time. The decision as to how to proceed is a

political one, and should be left up to the community to decide which is to prevail.”

It is noted that Transportation staff circulate every traffic calming proposal to the Emergency Services to ensure that they are aware of the proposals and have an opportunity to effect any detailed design changes necessary so that their operations are not unduly impacted.

#### Implications of a Moratorium on Traffic Calming Approvals:

As noted above, all requests for traffic management plans and speed control measures originate in the community and flow through the Ward Councillors. These requests are evaluated and processed in accordance with the prevailing policies. It is clear that speed humps have become very popular and are effective in moderating vehicle speeds.

We have reviewed present demand and note if a moratorium were imposed at this time, in the order of 50 proposals that are in various stages of the review/approval process would be affected. It is assumed that those projects which have received all necessary approvals but are awaiting construction would proceed.

It was pointed out in the staff letter attached to Councillor Saundercook’s communication that as the result of a previous request of City Council, we are reviewing traffic calming policy options for the City. The review is considering the existing (and still applicable) traffic calming policies and practices of the former municipalities of North York, Toronto and York and the December 1998 Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) “Canadian Guide to Neighbourhood Traffic Calming”. Traffic calming experience gained in Toronto over more than five years will be analysed to assist in determining appropriate traffic calming policies for Toronto. Results from the previously mentioned follow-up study of speed hump installations on collector streets will also be considered. The road classification system recently adopted by City Council is likely to influence the types of traffic calming measures considered appropriate for different streets. The needs of the TTC and the emergency services (fire, police and ambulance) will be accommodated in any future traffic calming policy.

The research and consultation process needed to develop a harmonized traffic calming policy is scheduled to be completed this year, resulting in a staff report for consideration by the Works Committee and City Council.

#### Conclusions:

Traffic calming, which introduces physical changes to roadway alignment or appearance for the purpose of limiting vehicular speeds and moderating aggressive driving behaviour in neighbourhoods, has been implemented over the past few years in various areas of the City. Speed humps have emerged as the most common method of traffic calming over the past two years.

In all cases, requests for traffic management plans and speed control measures originate in the community and are assessed in accordance with the policies of the pre-amalgamation municipal

Councils. If a moratorium on approving additional installations were imposed at this time, in the order of 50 proposals (mostly involving speed humps) that are currently working through the process would be affected.

Staff has been directed previously by Council to review traffic calming policy operations for the City. The research and consultation process needed to develop a city-wide policy will be completed later this year.

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The Works Committee reports, for the information of Council, having also had before it during consideration of the foregoing matter comments from CAA Central Ontario in support of a moratorium on all traffic calming measures until the city-wide traffic calming policy has been approved by Council.

The following Councillors appeared before the Works Committee in connection with the foregoing matter:

- Councillor David Miller, High Park; and
- Councillor Sandra Bussin, East Toronto.