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OPERATIONAL SAFETY REVIEW – JANE STREET MAJOR MACKENZIE DRIVE TO TESTON ROAD CITY OF VAUGHAN

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, December 14, 2005, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The existing speed limit of 70-km per hour on Jane Street (Y.R. 55) from the north limit of Major Mackenzie Drive (Y.R. 25) to 76 metres south of the south limit of Teston Road (Y.R. 49), in the City of Vaughan, be reduced to 60-km per hour.
2. The Regional Solicitor prepare the necessary by-law.
3. Staff be directed to approach affected property owners to review the prospects of extending a centre median to prohibit left turn movements from (and to) driveways on Jane Street (Y.R. 55) north of Major Mackenzie Drive (Y.R. 25).
4. The Regional Chair send a letter to the Minister of Transportation and Solicitor General urging them to consider the use of digital cameras and technology for red light cameras.
5. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Clerk of the City of Vaughan and to the Chief of York Regional Police.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides information to Committee and Council on the findings of an Operational Safety Review that was undertaken on the Jane Street corridor between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road.

3. BACKGROUND

At its meeting on April 25, 2005, the Council of the City of Vaughan passed a resolution requesting The Regional Municipality of York to conduct a comprehensive safety review of traffic volumes, vehicle speeds and collision history on Jane Street, from Major Mackenzie Drive to Teston Road, and to implement traffic improvements to ensure the safety of motorists travelling along Jane Street north of Major Mackenzie Drive.

The City of Vaughan requested that the 70-km per hour speed limit between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road be reduced and a red light camera be installed at the intersection of Jane Street and Major Mackenzie Drive.

In response to this request from the City of Vaughan, the Region retained a consulting firm that specializes in road safety (Synectics Transportation Consultants Inc.) to perform an Operational Safety Review of the Jane Street corridor between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road.

As part of the Region's 2004 Traffic Safety Improvement Program, a separate Operational Safety Review was conducted at the intersection of Jane Street and Major Mackenzie Drive by a different engineering consultant (SRM Associates) that also specializes in road safety.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

During the Operational Safety Review of the Jane Street corridor, the following issues were investigated and analyzed in detail:

- Collision reports to identify causative factors.
- Collisions statistics to identify trends and patterns.
- Roadway and intersection geometry (i.e. lane widths, turning lanes, horizontal and vertical alignments, cross-section etc.).
- Adjacent land uses and access.
- Traffic control devices (i.e. traffic signals, road signs and pavement markings).
- Signal timing parameters (i.e. amber and all-red intervals).
- Pedestrian and transit facilities.
- Vehicle and pedestrian volumes.
- Vehicle operating speeds.

The study concluded that the overall design of the study corridor should safely accommodate different road users and minimize driver error. The horizontal and vertical alignment was found to provide adequate sight distances to all intersections along Jane Street. The urban cross section, provision of medians, and high degree of access control were found to be effective in minimizing the potential for conflicts and collisions. No major concerns identified were associated with pedestrian, cyclist and transit facilities.

The results of speed surveys revealed that overall, motorists are choosing speeds at or close to the posted speed of 70-km per hour, although some excessive speeds were observed.

Minor issues associated with lane drops, signage and pavement markings were noted. The lane drop issue will be addressed with the future widening of Jane Street from two lanes to five lanes between America Avenue/Brandon Gate Drive and Teston Road (currently programmed in the proposed 2006 Roads Capital Budget). Regional staff will review the requirements for road signs and pavements markings and will coordinate the implementation of these where required.

The most significant safety issue noted during the Operational Safety Review relates to left-turn movements into and out of the two full movement gas station driveways on either side of Jane Street immediately north of Major Mackenzie Drive. As a result of the close proximity of these driveways to Major Mackenzie Drive, left-turn vehicles, particularly from the driveway on the east side of Jane Street, are often in conflict with vehicles that have just turned left onto Jane Street from Major Mackenzie Drive during a fully protected left-turn phase. Also, during certain times of the day, northbound drivers are prohibited by by-law from turning left into the gas station on the west side of Jane Street. However, it was observed that numerous drivers disregard the turning prohibitions that are in place.

4.1 Extend Centre Median Island

In 1999, the Region of Niagara enacted a by-law authorizing the widening of Fourth Avenue in St. Catharines from two lanes to five lanes with a continuous centre median island. By preventing left turn movements with the construction of such a median would prevent westbound drivers from accessing a Tim Horton's property.

Tim Hortons initiated legal action against the Region of Niagara claiming that the Region could not enact such a by-law as it was contravening Section 298(1) of the Municipal Act which states that a by-law shall not be passed for stopping up, altering or diverting any highway or part of a highway if the effect of the by-law will be to deprive any person of the means of ingress and egress to and from the person's land or place of residence. The court found in favour of Tim Hortons.

The Region of Niagara appealed the decision and in 2001, the Court of Appeal for Ontario overturned the original decision and found in favour of the Region of Niagara. The Court of Appeal ruled that Section 298(1) of the Municipal Act only applies when the effect of a by-law will be to completely deprive a person of the means of ingress and egress to and from the person's property. The Appeal Court acknowledged that the only remedy that the plaintiff has is a claim for compensation for injurious affection (i.e. loss of business) under the Expropriations Act.

In terms of the Appeal Court decision, York Region is therefore within its rights to extend the centre median on Jane Street to improve traffic operations and safety. However, there is a risk of potential claims for damage should the Region undertake such action without due consideration. As a result, it is proposed that Regional staff enter into discussion with the gas station owners to further investigate the feasibility of extending the median island on Jane Street further to the north.

4.2 Speed Limit and Traffic Calming

Although, in terms of the Region's speed limit policy, a reduction in the speed limit is not warranted, it is recommended that the 70-km per hour speed limit between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road be reduced to 60-km per hour.

Travelling southbound on Jane Street, approaching Teston Road, the 80-km per hour speed limit changes to 60-km per hour at a point approximately 670 metres north of Teston Road. The speed limit remains at 60-km per hour through the Hamlet to about 780 metres further south. Between Teston Road and America Avenue, the 60-km per hour speed limit becomes 70-km per hour.

Reducing the 70-km per hour speed limit to 60-km per hour will result in a greater uniformity in speed limits along Jane Street. It will create a more effective transition between the rural road environment north of Teston Road, and the urban road environment south of Teston Road.

Given the built-up and residential nature of the land-uses surrounding Jane Street, high pedestrian activity and its history of three fatal pedestrian collisions, lowering the speed limit will also be a pro-active measure to ensure the continued good safety performance of Jane Street.

To promote public acceptance of a lower speed limit, the Region is proposing to investigate ways to change the character of the road environment. To this end, the Region will investigate the feasibility of constructing a landscaped centre median on Jane Street, where possible, between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road. This will include discussions with staff from the City of Vaughan.

4.3 Red Light Camera

At Regional Council of October 20, 2004, Clause 5 of Report No. 10 was approved. In adopting this report, Regional Council supported the use of red light cameras as a tool to improve the safety of Regional road intersections. The report also recommended staff report back to the Transportation and Works Committee, with an implementation program.

The current process for actually taking the photograph of the vehicle running the red light uses "wet film" technology. In effect, a roll of film is placed in the camera and at the end of each day, it is collected and taken for processing. The current red light camera legislation allows only the use of this wet film technology. With the vast improvements in digital technology and the anticipated cost savings, it is felt that the Region should lobby the Province to amend the current legislation, which designates a certain camera and film processing, to allow the use of digital imagery to capture the vehicle licence plate.

In this regard, a letter should be sent by the Regional Chair to the Minister of Transportation and the Solicitor General urging them to include the use of cost-effective digital camera technology for red light cameras. This should be readily accomplished as the technology is already in use, for example, on Highway 407. Once we have a better understanding, if and when digital technology will be acceptable in the legislation, an implementation program for the Red Light Camera Program will be developed.

4.4 Action Plan

Regional staff will continue with the following proposed action plan:

- Review all road signs and markings and coordinate the implementation of any changes or additions, where required.
- Request York Regional Police to enforce the northbound left-turn prohibition at the gas station driveway just north of Major Mackenzie Drive on the west side of Jane Street until such time as the centre median island can be extended.
- Enter into discussion with the gas station owners to further investigate the feasibility of extending the median island on Jane Street, north of Major Mackenzie Drive, further to the north.
- Lower the existing 70-km per hour posted speed limit on Jane Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road to 60-km per hour.
- Increase the number of speed limit road signs on Jane Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road.
- Investigate the feasibility of constructing a landscaped centre median on Jane Street, where possible, along Jane Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs associated with implementing all the recommendations of the action plan are included within the 2005 and 2006 Business Plan and Budget

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There are no local municipal implications associated with this report.

7. CONCLUSION

In response to a request from the City of Vaughan, the Region retained the services of an engineering consultant to perform an Operational Safety Review on Jane Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road. With the exception of the gas station driveways, immediately north of Major Mackenzie Drive, the review concluded that there are no major safety concerns along Jane Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Teston Road. The Region will investigate the feasibility of extending the central median island to address the safety concerns at the gas station driveways. Minor safety issues will be addressed through the widening of Jane Street north of America Avenue, lowering the speed limit to 60-km per hour, implementing a landscaped centre median island, law enforcement and a review of road signs and pavement markings.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)