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SPEED LIMIT REVIEW YONGE STREET, HIGHWAY 7 TO MAJOR MACKENZIE DRIVE TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated February 22, 2010, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services, with the following additional recommendation:

- 2. The speed limit on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive in the Town of Richmond Hill be immediately reduced to 50 kilometres per hour as a special circumstance.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides information on the review of the existing posted speed limit on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive as requested at the February 3, 2010 Transportation Services Committee meeting and the February 18, 2010 meeting of Regional Council.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional staff receives requests to review posted speed limits on Regional roads from residents and from staff of local municipalities. When reviewing existing speed limits, staff considers a number of factors to ensure the regulatory speed is applicable to the existing roadway characteristics and roadside environment.

The original request to review the speed limit on Yonge Street came from the Town of Richmond Hill Council

In May of 2008, a resolution was received from the Council of the Town of Richmond Hill requesting a review of the speed limit on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive. During this time period, staff was in the process of revising the policy on setting speed limits on Regional roads. This policy was referred back to staff twice which created some outstanding requests to review the speed limits on specific Regional roads.

The review of the speed limit on Yonge Street south of Major Mackenzie Drive is one of the outstanding requests pending Regional Council's consideration of the proposed draft policy on setting speed limits on Regional roads.

The results of the review of the speed limit on Yonge Street were included in a report entitled *Speed Limit Revisions and Review Various Regional Roads* and presented to the Transportation Services Committee meeting of February 3, 2010 and then Regional Council on February 18, 2010. This report was adopted by Council; however, the report did not recommend any changes to the posted speed limit on Yonge Street.

At its meeting of February 3, 2010, the Transportation Services Committee and Regional Council requested staff review the existing speed limit on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive in the Town of Richmond Hill.

Staff used two policies to review posted speed limits, one adopted by Regional Council in 2004 and the other, a proposed draft policy recently presented to Regional Council

The current policy on setting speed limits on Regional roads was adopted by Regional Council on September 23, 2004. This policy is based on a number of factors including completion of field studies to determine operating speed; analysis of collision history to identify any relevant patterns or trends; assessment of physical roadway characteristics; and evaluation of any existing or proposed adjacent land use.

On February 18, 2010, Regional Council considered a report entitled "Policy Update Establishing Speed Limits on Regional Roads". The report, as adopted by Council, requested the local municipalities and York Regional Police to review the proposed draft policy by the fall of 2010 and requested staff to report back in 2011 on the results of that review.

This proposed draft policy and the existing policy as adopted by Regional Council in 2004 were used to assess the speed limit discussed in this report.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

In general, the goal of a speed limit review is to establish the regulatory speed limit in accordance with the current roadway characteristics, actual operating speed, and collision history. The speed limit review process consists of:

- A review of the roadway characteristics
- Speed studies to determine the operating speeds

- A summary of the recent collision history and potential safety issues
- Existing and proposed development in the area

The current posted speed limit on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive is 60 kilometres-per-hour

From the Toronto boundary, Yonge Street north to Elgin Mills Road has a variable cross-section. It features a six-lane cross-section from Steeles Avenue to just south of Elgin Street and a four-lane cross-section from Elgin Street to Langstaff Road. North of Langstaff Road through the Highway 407/Highway 7 interchange, Yonge Street is six lanes then it narrows back down to four lanes just north of High Tech Road all the way north to Elgin Mills Road.

The jurisdiction for Yonge Street is the Region's with the exception of the part from Major Mackenzie Drive to Elgin Mills Road, which is under the jurisdiction of the Town of Richmond Hill.

Along this length of Yonge Street, the posted speed is not consistent. The six-lane/four-lane section of Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 is 50 kilometres per hour. At Highway 7 the speed limit increases to 60 kilometres per hour and then drops again to 50 kilometres per hour north of Major Mackenzie where the road is a narrower four lane cross-section and under the jurisdiction of the Town of Richmond Hill (see *Attachment 1*).

The inconsistency exists in that the width, travel characteristics, pedestrian activity and roadside environments on Yonge Street are similar to each other north and south of Highway 7, but they have different posted speed limits. The part of Yonge Street appropriately posted at 50 kilometres per hour, with a narrow four lane cross section, street front commercial, high pedestrian volumes is the Richmond Hill section which is like a downtown street. It is nothing in character like the 50 kilometre per hour stretch just north of Steeles Avenue. The two stretches of Yonge Street between Steeles Avenue and Elgin Mills Road which are both posted for 50 kilometres per hour are nothing like each other in development form, adjacent uses or pedestrian volume.

Since the question was raised previously at Transportation Services Committee, it should be noted that from Lake Shore Blvd to Steeles Avenue in the City of Toronto, Yonge Street has a speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour. The sole exception is the stretch from Yonge Blvd. to Highway 401 which is posted at 60 km per hour and is commonly known as 'Hoggs Hollow'. Since 1954, all arterial roads in the City of Toronto have been posted with a 50 kilometre per hour speed limit, unless by-lawed otherwise. Higher speed limits of 60 kilometres per hour exist on more suburban arterials in Toronto with reverse frontage, controlled access, large suburban setbacks and/or limited access.

Regional staff were requested to meet with staff of the Town of Richmond Hill to discuss the current posted speed limit on Yonge Street

Based on a discussion at Transportation Services Committee, staff was requested to schedule a meeting with staff of the Town of Richmond Hill regarding the speed limit on Yonge Street. On February 8, 2010 Regional staff met with staff of the Town of Richmond Hill to discuss their request to review the current posted speed limit on Yonge Street. During this meeting, Town staff advised that future development along the Yonge Street corridor would eventually create the need to lower the posted speed limit. Regional staff agreed with this statement; however, suggested that changing the speed limit at this time would be premature and suggested that a potential speed reduction may be appropriate within the next two years.

Additionally, the roadside environment of both sections of Yonge Street, north of Major Mackenzie Drive and south of Major Mackenzie Drive were compared. In the opinion of Regional staff, the road section north of Major Mackenzie Drive, which is under the jurisdiction of the Town of Richmond Hill, differs from the section south of Major Mackenzie Drive, which is under the jurisdiction of York Region. This difference is based on a narrower right-of-way, on-street parking and reduced property setbacks versus a wider right-of-way, no permitted on street parking and more substantial property setbacks, pending future development in the area. This difference is reflected in the posted speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour and 60 kilometres per hour for each respective road section.

Regional staff expressed concerns that reducing the speed limit on the section of Yonge Street south of Major Mackenzie Drive to match the speed limit north of Major Mackenzie Drive would not reflect the roadside environment and may actually reduce overall compliance with the speed limit on both sections of Yonge Street, ultimately increasing traffic speeds through the downtown core of Richmond Hill. This is an area of unresolved difference of professional opinion.

During this meeting, staff of the Town of Richmond Hill and Regional staff concurred that an action plan was required to consider a future reduction of the posted speed limit on Yonge Street

During the meeting on February 8, 2010, Regional and Town of Richmond Hill staff agreed that a further review of the current speed limit on Yonge Street was required that included the entire section of Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue to Major Mackenzie Drive. Regional staff committed to conduct additional speed studies at key locations on Yonge Street and analyze the current speed limit using the draft policy on setting speed limits *and* the recent Transportation of Canada (TAC) guidelines entitled *Canadian Guidelines for Establishing Posted Speed Limits*. Regional staff also assured staff of the Town of Richmond Hill that any future development in the area is considered in conjunction with this analysis.

The action plan to review the posted speed limit on Yonge Street has been discussed internally and will encompass the completion of several studies on Yonge Street, from north of Major Mackenzie Drive through to north of Steeles Avenue

Following the meeting with Town of Richmond Hill staff, Regional staff met to discuss an action plan to address the review of the speed limit on Yonge Street as requested by the Council of the Town of Richmond Hill, the Transportation Services Committee and Regional Council.

In order to ensure a comprehensive and thorough review of this speed limit, Regional staff committed to conduct the following studies at key locations on Yonge Street between Steeles Avenue up to north of Major Mackenzie Drive

- Speed studies using a handheld radar unit to determine operating speeds
- Speed studies using a stationary radar unit to record operating speeds
- Speed studies using stationary road tubes for a one week period to record operating speeds
- Speed studies using state of the art blue tooth technology and remote sensors to capture speed data

This data will be compared and analyzed using the both speed limit policies adopted by Regional Council and the recent Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) guidelines to assess the posted speed limit on the entire section of Yonge Street north of Steeles Avenue to south of Major Mackenzie Drive.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to this report. The cost to review and assess the speed limit, as discussed previously in this report, is part of the day-to-day operations for staff.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The review of the current speed limit on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive is based on a request from the Council of the Town of Richmond Hill, the Transportation Services Committee and Regional Council. On February 8, 2010, Regional staff met with staff from the Town of Richmond Hill to discuss the review of the posted speed limit on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive and determine an action plan. Regional and local staff collectively determined a course of action to review the area based on potential future development within the Yonge Street corridor and necessary studies to be conducted by Regional staff.

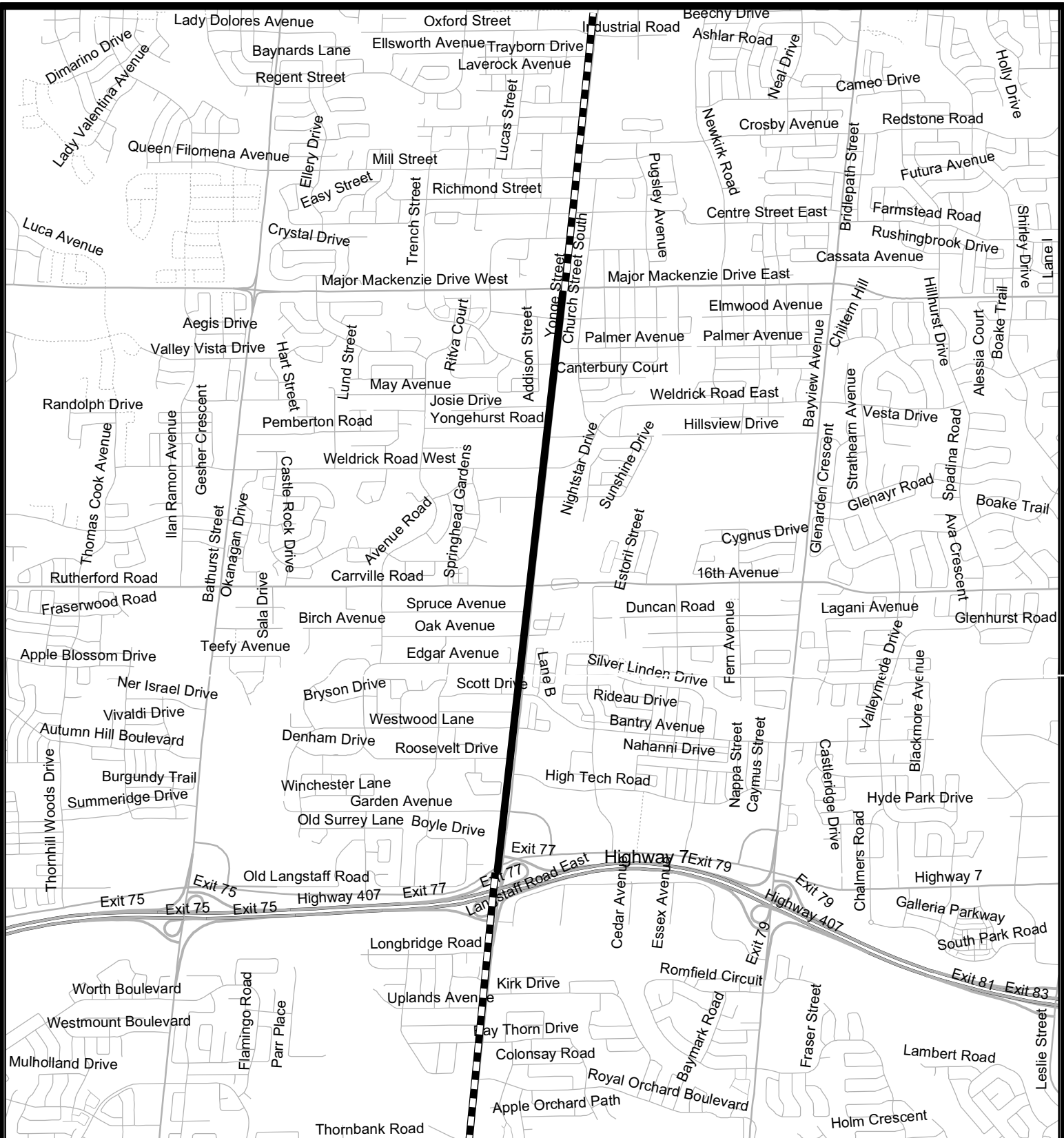
7. CONCLUSION

The posted speed limit of 60 kilometres per hour on Yonge Street between Highway 7 and Major Mackenzie Drive is under review. Regional staff will review this speed limit in accordance with the draft policy entitled *Policy Update Establishing Speed Limits on Regional Roads*, the current policy on setting speed limits on Regional roads which was adopted by Regional Council on September 23, 2004 and the recent guidelines on setting speed limits produced by the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC). Regardless of a future revision to the speed limit on Yonge Street being warranted, the results of this review will be presented to the Transportation Services Committee in a report in accordance with Regional practice.

For more information on this report, please contact Steven Kemp, Director, Traffic Management and Intelligent Transportation Systems at extension 5226.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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



LOCATION PLAN

Speed Limit Review

Yonge Street, Highway 7 to Major Mackenzie Drive

Town of Richmond Hill

 Existing 50-km-per hour
 Existing 60-km-per hour



TRANSPORTATION SERVICES