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TRUCK RESTRICTIONS ON NINTH LINE

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, August 23, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. A truck restriction on Ninth Line (Y.R. 69) between Highway 7 (Y.R. 7) and Highway 407, in the Town of Markham, not be implemented.
2. “Alternate Truck Route” signs be placed in strategic locations to assist in directing trucks to the Markham By-pass once it is completed.

2. PURPOSE

During a Regional Council meeting held on April 27, 2006, staff, was requested to report on the status of banning trucks on Ninth Line between Highway 7 and Highway 407 in the Town of Markham.

3. BACKGROUND

The Region receives many requests to ban heavy trucks from using various Regional roads. Many of these requests come from residents in new developments backing onto Regional roads. Their complaints stem from the noise and speed of trucks, mainly throughout the night and early morning.

Regional roads are classified as arterial roads with the main function being to provide service to all types of vehicles, including passenger cars, trucks (medium and heavy) and buses. Additionally, Regional roads provide connectivity to the major highways throughout the Region for the transfer of goods and services.

Each year, Regional Council enacts a by-law for half-load restrictions on certain Regional roads during the spring thaw. The half-load restrictions are placed on roads that are not structurally capable of supporting full loads during the spring thaw when roads are at their weakest. Regional Council has also enacted by-laws, on a limited basis, to provide for restricted loads on certain Regional roads year-round. The roads where this prohibition has occurred are in poor condition or do not have the structural adequacy to support heavy trucks.

At the meeting of the Transportation and Works Committee on October 4, 2000, a report entitled “Heavy Truck/Load Restrictions on Regional Roads” was adopted. The report was submitted to provide information on the Regional road system and what restrictions the Region can place on the use of the roads by trucks. At the same meeting, the Commissioner of Transportation and Works was requested to prepare a staff report on the available legal options and operational feasibility of truck restrictions and truck routing on several sections of the Regional road network.

At the meeting of Regional Council on October 26, 2000, a report entitled “Truck Restrictions on Regional Roads” was adopted with amendments. This report did not support the implementation of truck restrictions on certain roads on the Regional road network, however, was amended by Regional Council to include a truck ban on Ninth Line between Highway 7 and 16th Avenue, in the Town of Markham (see Attachment 1).

The current policy on truck restrictions is based on the authority given to the Region through the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Municipal Act, 2001*. These Acts basically allow the Region to restrict commercial vehicles by weight alone. Currently, Regional Council enacts a by-law each year to restrict certain roads to half-loads during the spring thaw. Regional Council has also enacted by-laws, on a limited basis, to provide for restricted loads on certain Regional roads year round. These by-laws are enforceable based on the actual weight of the vehicle.

Regional Council has also previously approved the placement of “Alternate Truck Route” signs in two areas to provide truckers with an alternate route around sensitive areas. Although these alternate routes may reduce truck traffic in these areas, these signs are not enforceable and are provided to encourage truckers to avoid areas where truck traffic may be considered above average and where complaints pertaining to truck traffic have been documented.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

There are two types of restrictions available to the Region for limiting the use of a road by heavy trucks.

1. The *Highway Traffic Act* allows a municipality, by by-law, to designate the date on which a reduced load period shall start and end. This regulation limits the axle loads to five tonnes per axle to limit the weight of trucks and is routinely done every spring. Some roads have weight restrictions placed on them year round.
2. The *Municipal Act, 2001* permits the municipality to pass a by-law restricting heavy trucks. This “No Heavy Truck” by-law restricts commercial vehicles to less than three tonnes when unloaded and less than five tonnes when loaded.

The previous reports on truck restrictions identified three areas that can initiate a heavy truck restriction on Regional roads:

1. Noise
2. Safety
3. Strength of the pavement structure

Legal Services advises that there are no legal means of restricting truck traffic on Regional roads except through weight restrictions. To facilitate enforcement of related by-laws, a heavy truck is defined as a vehicle with an unloaded weight of at least 4.6 metric tonnes.

Ninth Line provides an important link in the Regional road system. This road section provides access to the Markham-Stouffville Hospital and to neighbourhoods on both the west and east sides of Ninth Line. This road section also provides a connection to Highway 407. The annual average daily traffic (AADT) on Ninth Line south of Highway 7, based on traffic information from 2005, was measured at approximately 18,100 vehicles per day and has increased from an AADT of approximately 11,000 vehicles per day based on traffic information from 1999, which represents a 64% increase over this time period. Truck volumes have also grown proportionally with this general increase in traffic.

Development of this area has been ongoing for a number of years. The concerns related to truck traffic can be partially attributed to the overall development in the area. As well, the construction of the Markham By-pass has been progressing and eventually will provide a continuous alternate route between Highway 407 and Highway 48 for all types of vehicles travelling in a north-south direction. This route could be signed as an alternate truck route to provide an alternate route for heavy trucks. However, as discussed previously Alternate Truck Routes cannot be enforced.

In consideration of the above information, a heavy truck restriction is not recommended on this section of Ninth Line between Highway 7 and south of Highway 407. It is recommended, however that Alternate Truck Route signs be placed in strategic areas to direct trucks to the Markham By-Pass once it is complete, which is expected in late 2006. This should help relieve some of the truck volumes on the Ninth Line.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The proposed recommendation to place “Alternate Truck Route” signs to direct trucks to use the Markham By-pass once completed should help reduce heavy trucks on the Ninth Line.

7. CONCLUSION

During a Transportation and Works Committee meeting held on April 27, 2006, staff was requested to prepare a report on the status of banning trucks from Ninth Line between Highway 7 and south of Highway 407, in the Town of Markham.

Legal Services advises that there are no legal means of restricting truck traffic on Regional roads except through weight restrictions. To facilitate enforcement of related by-laws, a heavy truck is defined as a vehicle with an unloaded weight of at least 4.6 metric tonnes. In general, the Region adopts heavy truck restrictions solely for reasons of weight carrying capability of the pavement structure of the road.

Truck restrictions are not recommended for Ninth Line between Highway 7 and south of Highway 407.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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