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YORK REGION TRANSIT POLICY FOR TRAFFIC CALMING ON PUBLIC TRANSIT ROUTES

The Transit Committee recommends:

- 1. The following report, August 22, 2003, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works be received;**
- 2. This matter be referred to York Region Transit Staff to establish a working group to include local municipalities, Regional Transportation and Works, Fire and EMS Departments, for the purpose of drafting a policy for region-wide traffic calming measures on public transit routes; and**
- 3. Local municipalities be encouraged not to implement traffic calming measures on existing and/or anticipated York Region Transit routes until a policy has been adopted.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The policy entitled 'Traffic Calming on Public Transit Routes' (*see Attachment 1*) be adopted and that York Region staff be authorized to communicate the policy to the local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Transit Committee and Regional Council approval to formally adopt a York Region Transit (YRT) policy for traffic calming on public transit routes.

This policy will serve to identify issues surrounding the affects of traffic calming devices on public transit. It will establish guidelines for the Region and the local municipalities when considering the implementation of traffic calming devices on streets currently operating transit buses and those where transit buses may operate in the future.

3. BACKGROUND

Traffic calming has become a world-wide initiative to reduce vehicle speeds, traffic volumes passing through neighbourhoods, air pollution and noise levels. The use of traffic calming devices appears to be gaining acceptance and local municipalities in the Region are now facing increased demands for traffic calming solutions.

YRT has received several requests for comments from the local municipalities regarding the installation of traffic calming devices on residential streets. Several of the selected streets are current transit routes. In addition to YRT's own operating concerns, the concerns of the TTC, who operate buses on designated routes for YRT, must be considered. The TTC has commented that their policy does not permit them to operate buses on streets with traffic calming devices. YRT staff feel that the traffic calming issue requires immediate attention so as not to risk jeopardizing those services provided by the TTC, as well as other YRT services.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Many Canadian Cities such as the City of Toronto, the City of Brampton, and the City of Victoria, British Columbia have studied the impact of traffic calming. Although it has been identified that traffic calming measures will reduce response times for emergency vehicles and impact public transit, the municipalities consider the benefits of traffic calming to well outweigh the negative.

YRT wishes to ensure that buses can negotiate traffic calming schemes in a satisfactory manner without damaging buses and maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for both customers and bus operators. Local municipalities should be aware of the operating issues surrounding the installation of traffic calming devices on transit services.

At the earliest stage of development of traffic calming schemes, YRT should be notified of the intent to introduce traffic calming on a particular road, and where necessary, YRT should be consulted and be allowed to participate in the design of the scheme.

4.1 Relationship to Vision 2026

YRT will work with the area municipalities and other partners to support the goals stated in York Region's Vision 2026, and will focus on the following action areas:

“Housing Choices for Our Residents”:

- Planning for Strong Live, Work, Play and Learn Connections;
- Creating Well-Designed and Liveable Communities.

“Infrastructure for a Growing Region”:

- Ensuring that our transportation network co-ordinates with development;
- Continuing to improve service and infrastructure for successfully integrated transit service;
- Promoting transit usage as a practical and wise alternative to private vehicle use.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Although it is unknown at this time what the financial impact will be, it is certain that the Region will incur costs as a direct result of traffic calming measures.

Some traffic calming devices damage the skirt panels and drive train of certain buses, resulting in substantial maintenance costs. As well, the buses will have to be taken out of service for repairs which will affect operations. Reduced speeds and discomfort to transit passengers could reduce ridership on those routes where traffic calming exists. Staff will have to dedicate time reviewing and commenting on municipal plans, and a review of existing traffic calming measures already in place will be necessary.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local planners and engineers will have to consider the impact on public transit when designing and/or approving traffic calming devices. Increased noise levels and pollution may occur as a result of certain traffic calming devices. Where vertical traffic calming obstacles are used, public transit service will not be provided.

7. CONCLUSION

Regional Council endorsement is being sought for YRT's policy for Traffic Calming on Public Transit Routes.

YRT supports municipal introduction of well planned traffic calming measures into the municipal landscape. It is, however, necessary to continue to provide transit services to all areas of York Region while maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for the general public, transit customers and bus operators.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing is included with this report and is also on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)