

King's TMP helps align local, regional network

By Mark Pavilons

King will soon have an updated Transportation Master Plan, but the decision didn't come without a lot of debate and compromise. A strong contingent of residents, largely from the Snowball community, turned out to oppose certain recommendations in this guiding document that centred around the 17th Sideroad.

What concerned most residents in attendance was specific recommendations to improve the 17th Sideroad. They believed these to be concrete plans, which would ultimately lead to a "thoroughfare," bringing with it increased traffic volume and speeds, impacting their rural areas.

But both consultant Brett Sears from WSP and King CAO Dan Kostopoulos stressed the TMP is a blueprint and strategic plan, aligning all other plans in King and York. Council has the final say in terms of budget and approving any projects in the future and recommendations in the TMP are not cast in stone.

Similar concerns were raised by citizens over possibly uploading the 15th Sideroad to York Region. This, they believe, would also result in a four-lane transportation corridor, ruining King's countryside.

Public outcry came before assurances from staff that neither of the roads will be converted overnight, if at all.

One resident said uploading the 17th as a regional road would be "frightening" due to inherent dangers and the topography. There have been a number of fatal accidents on the road and it would only get worse in the future.

Kingscross resident Ian Hilley said the TP is a significant document and he would like to see a "diminished emphasis" on a link of the 15th to Highway 400.

A Snowball resident, and avid cyclist said the 17th is a scenic road that would be negatively impacted by an increase in traffic.

One woman, representing a group of 18 Snowball residents, said the 17th should never be widened, given the topography and the fact much of it is in the Oak Ridges Moraine.

A King City resident was "vehemently opposed" to any expansion of the 15th. He said he doesn't mind paying taxes, as long as they're not used to accommodate non-residents racing through King. It's an opportunity, he said, for council to stand up and listen to the citizens.

Other Snowball residents asked councillors to take a careful look at how the community is being modified through road network changes. They asked councillors to take a cautious approach.

The "bulldozers aren't warming up," Sears pointed out, noting the TMP "is a long-term vision. It's a blueprint for the future, not a notice to proceed. He said the TMP is an attempt to set King up for "success" and this plan is something that will work for this municipality.

The recommendations contained in the TMP "set out what can be done in an orderly fashion. It's a long-term rationalization of the road network, but council is always in charge.

Regarding the 17th, Sears said it already meets the criteria as a regional road and uploading it to York does have some benefits. They're not, however, recommending the road be widened at all.

"The reality is it is a regional road, it just isn't designated," Sears said. "Nothing has to change."

Kostopoulos noted there is a process to designate a road as a regional road. The benefits would be a cost saving to King coupled with an improvement of service and maintenance.

Mayor Pellegrini pointed out the 15th is not even on York's 10-year projection.

Sears also pointed out their work involved linking future work in King with York's long-term transportation plan. Nothing will be done without a full process, but they're trying to coordinate the TMP with future regional linkages.

Kostopoulos did say there is some urgency in approving the TMP. York needs to have it so they can consider it as part of their view of King's Official Plan.

He also reminded citizens that nothing in the TMP is a given "council has the ultimate authority over every project.

Councillor Jordan Cescolini said the Township does need to better inform residents.

Councillor Bill Cober noted they have to have a plan (TMP), but it will evolve and change over time.

Originally adopted in 2015, King's first Transportation Master Plan set out a strategy regarding roads needs, infrastructure, traffic

and future transportation needs.

With the approval of the new Official Plan in 2019, there was a need to revamp the transportation plan.

Included in the updated plan are a re-evaluation of local and arterial roads; reviewing connecting links and identifying transit networks.

Input from the public was sought at open houses in the fall of 2019. The draft updated plan was presented Feb. 10 during a working session of council.

Population, employment, land use and travel behaviour were all analyzed. The Township is envisioning active transportation facilities, transit routes and roads that support the communities and planned growth, over the next decade.

Staff took into account greater connectivity within the transportation network, as well as environmental concerns with certain roads.

The existing and proposed active transportation network was reviewed to look for any gaps and areas where infill links can enhance connectivity. The network not only includes roads, but walking and cycling paths, as well as recreational uses such as skateboarding.

The TMP also identifies improvements to the active transportation network. Expansion over time, of more than 250 kilometres of facilities, is expected to cost roughly \$50 million. This will be shared among other levels of government. However, the total cost to King for full implementation in the long run is pegged at roughly \$28 million.