

Council moves ahead with traffic measures following study

By Mark Pavilons

Armed with the results of a township-wide traffic study, King councillors set to work on addressing the issues.

As soon as consultants R.J. Burnside & Associates presented their findings, councillors immediately passed recommendations that will have wide-reaching implications to improve road safety.

Councillors endorsed some of the recommendations contained within the study, and asked for community consultations before coming up with tougher traffic calming measures, including a village wide standard of 40 km/h.

Speed adjustments were made on the 16th Sideroad and permanent speed boards will be installed at various locations around King.

Also presented within the study for traffic calming, on school and park area streets, as considered appropriate by the director of Engineering, Public Works and Building.

Consultant Henry Centen presented the traffic speed and volume study to councillors during a marathon council session March 18.

The study, he said, lays the groundwork for future policies that King officials may want to consider. Enforcement, and awareness are key to all traffic issues, he pointed out.

In many cases, the measures have to be tailor made to the location.

Most rural roads in King are posted below the common upper limit of 80 km/h and almost all village roads are 40 or 50 km/h.

The Township created its traffic calming policy in 2004, in response to petitions by residents complaining about the speeds and traffic volumes.

After analyzing local roads, consultants found that 11 roads should remain the same as far as posted speeds. Another 20 roads had proper speed limits, but these should be monitored. Six roads do require increased speed management such as speed boards and monitoring.

Consultants recommending increasing the speed limit from 40 km/h to 60 on the 16th Sideroad, from Keele to Dufferin, and also from Jane to Dufferin.

Police enforcement, signage and even radar speed boards were suggested for the 20 roads across King, including two stretches of the 18th Sideroad. Permanent speed boards, they urged, should be installed on the 10th Concession, from King to the 15th; Mill Road from King to the King Vaughan Road; 18th Sideroad from the 10th to Highway 27; Parkheights Trail, Dufferin and Woodchopper's Lane.

Burnside recommended that the Township considers all-way stops as an effective way to control traffic volume.

While traffic calming measures have merit, they should only be used when the benefits can be show to outweigh the cons.

These include speed humps, transverse rumble strips, raised intersections and crosswalks, textured crosswalks, raised median island, bike lanes, vertical centreline treatments, traffic circles and roundabouts, signage, speed boards. There are many proven techniques and some new ones to consider.

The consultants pointed to 'optical illusion pavement markings,' also known as 3D road art, and the resulting illusion usually forces drivers to slow down.

Shared space, used more commonly in Europe, includes sharing the road with pedestrians, cyclists, etc. Vehicle activated signs that flash when drivers surpass the posted limits, are also common, and some are currently used in King. Studies have shown that these 'feedback' signs reduce speeds by 5 to 10 km/h.

The consultants pointed out that any changes council makes should be reviewed in six to 12 months to see if they're effective.