

Changes coming to King and Keele in King City

By Mark PavilonsEditor

To facilitate improvements in King City and improve traffic flow, King is opting for some changes to King and Keele. Staff noted that stopping prohibitions and no-parking zones will improve pedestrian safety and connectivity in the core. Council supported amendments to the York Region Bylaw to prohibit or regulate parking and stopping on Regional roads. Councillors also supported intersection improvements at King Road and Keele Street and a pedestrian crossover on Keele Street. King is also asking that York review the current and future timing for the left turn lanes for both north and south bound on Keele Street (at King Road) and increase the timing of the current signalization. King also wants York to assume Keele Street, from Lloydtown/Aurora Road to Davis Drive; and 17th Sideroad from Jane Street to Dufferin Street as regional roads. Staff is being directed to develop a comprehensive communication plan related to the implementation of parking changes along Keele Street and report back to Council prior to the end of 2023, and that staff consult with the King Chamber of Commerce in the development of the plan. The area, staff noted, serves as a major thoroughfare for commuters travelling to the GO station, Highway 400, and throughout the Township. This combination of pedestrian and vehicular traffic results in significant congestion, especially during morning and afternoon peak hours. Some contributing factors being a bottle-neck effect due to the on-street parking permissions along both sides of Keele Street and the absence of dedicated left-turn lanes onto King Road. Some commuters have taken to using the local roads of Burns Boulevard and Burton Grove to avoid the King/Keele intersection during peak hours. This significantly increases traffic and vehicle speeds in these neighborhoods, staff said. Several traffic-calming measures have been implemented in both areas to help reduce non-local traffic:

- No Heavy Trucks sign on both Burns Boulevard and Station Road.
- Eight speed humps along Burton Grove, Patricia Dr. and Warren Rd.

No Through Traffic from Station Road onto Burton Grove, 4 p.m. 6 p.m., Monday to Friday. Traffic-Calmed Neighborhood signage.

Local Traffic Only signage. Multiple studies have been commissioned by both the Township and York Region to improve traffic flow while ensuring pedestrian and motorist safety. Staff pointed out that a consistent recommendation is that the Township and Region implement dedicated left-turn lanes on Keele Street. The 2020 Township of King Active Transportation Strategy recommended several locations on Regional roads within the Township for millstock pedestrian crossings. The location that was identified as the highest priority is along Keele Street in the King City Core Area (approximately 120 meters south of King Road at the All-Saints Anglican Church). This area received high scoring as an efficient method to connect patrons between parking on Doctors Lane and the businesses on Keele Street. The 2020 King Township Transportation Master Plan (TIM), approved by Council in February 2020, identified the following list of potential road candidates for upload to York Region: Caledon-King Townlike ? 17th Sideroad to Township's South limits. Caledon-King Townlike ? Highway 9 to 19th Sideroad. Miller's Sideroad ? Dufferin Street to Bathurst Street. 17th Sideroad ? Jane Street to Dufferin Street. The 2020 King Township TIM also identified the following list of future potential Road candidates for upload to the Region: 15th Sideroad ? 10th Concession to Keele Street. 10th Concession ? 15th Sideroad to King/Vaughan Road. 8th Concession ? 15th Sideroad to King Road. Dufferin Street ? Miller Sideroad to Davis Drive West. Keele Street ? 18th Sideroad to Davis Drive West. Township staff reviewed the Regional Road Assumption Policy and met with staff from York Region to discuss the proposed road candidates from the Township's Transportation Master Plan. With the current configuration, if no improvements are implemented, the intersection is expected to operate over capacity by 2026. This is characterized by frequent individual cycle failures (when vehicles are unable to proceed through the intersection due to back-up), poor traffic progression, and the wait for right/left turning is at the maximum acceptable limit. York Region has prepared a design, the following improvements are recommended: Provide a 3.5-m wide left-turn lane with storage, parallel and taper lengths on the southbound approach. The stop bar of the southbound left-turn lane will be set back to accommodate eastbound left-turning trucks. Provide a 3.2-m wide left-turn lane with storage, parallel and taper lengths on the northbound approach. The two left-turn

lanes on Keele Street line up. Maintain two southbound through lanes on Keele Street, configured as one shared through and right-turn lane and one through lane at the southbound approach. Provide pavement markings on the northwest corner to delineate the southbound shared through and right-turn lane, reducing the need to modify roadway curbs. Provide one northbound through lane on Keele Street, configured as one shared through and right-turn lane at the northbound approach. Modify the northeast corner curb and radius at the intersection to accommodate the westbound right-turn truck movements. Staff are also recommending York Region install streetlamping features, such as curbside planters or decorative bollards, along Keele Street for additional pedestrian comfort. For the new intersection design to function effectively, Keele Street requires four unobstructed north/south traffic lanes, specifically during peak hours. The proximity of buildings to the road, and current sidewalk width, means road widening is not feasible to preserve on-street parking. As such, the Township is requesting York Region amend regional bylaw 2017-37 (to prohibit or regulate parking and stopping on Regional roads). Currently, the only locations for pedestrians to cross Keele Street are at King Road and 850 meters south at Station Road. This leads to instances of jaywalking for patrons who want to access the opposite sides of Keele from further down the block. A more-convenient crossing location is recommended to reduce this dangerous behaviour. The crossing will align with the existing footpath connecting Doctors Lane to Keele Street and provide a secondary crossing option to connect the core area to public parking. The new parking restrictions will follow the completion of the intersection improvements and new pedestrian crossing. Implementation of the intersection improvements and pedestrian crossing are expected to be implemented in 2024. The Region evaluated all road segments identified in the Township's TMP for transfer now and in the future and provided us with their assessment. The assessment indicates that the following two (2) local road segments in King Township's jurisdiction satisfy the criteria set out in the Region's Policy: Keele Street from Lloydtown/Aurora Road to Davis Drive West, and 17th Sideroad from Jane Street to Dufferin Street. As the surrounding areas and the Township of King continue to grow, there is more and more traffic related to regional and inter-regional travel. The King Chamber of Commerce weighed in on the matter, commenting on Keele Street parking. Chamber President Michelle Frauley said the Chamber supports the goal of creating complete communities, including increasing the commercial tax base through the attraction and retention of businesses in King, and creating an environment where people can live, work, play and prosper. Frauley pointed out that local businesses were significantly impacted by the pandemic, including the restaurant and retail businesses located along Keele Street in King City. The recovery of the business sector has been slow, with the challenging economic environment, higher interest rates and labour shortages. We recognize that adding increasing uncertainty to their ability for serving clients with on-street parking adds an additional challenge to their already full plates, and that this issue has caused significant concern with our member businesses. There is no question that with the planned growth and the increased traffic in the area, changes are required. The staff report notes that the intersection will be at capacity by 2026. While the staff report allows for an additional pedestrian crossing, there is much more that could be included in the plan in order to ease the transition for our small local businesses. Firstly, given that the capacity level will not be reached until 2026, there is every opportunity for the municipality to develop additional off-street parking and to ensure that these are in place prior to the removal of the on-street parking, ensuring that at a minimum, the number of parking spaces removed is equal to the new capacity provided. We recommend that Township staff investigate the potential to invest in the additional capacity prior to the intersection development and associated impacts to on-street parking, while also looking at long term development plans for the King Community Centre and other planned developments as to not impact the changes in the near future. This might have the effect of delaying the intersection improvements until 2025, but at least there will have been ample time to ensure adequate capacity for parking with minimal interruption to small businesses. Frauley also said that data from 2009-2018 should be updated to reflect today's numbers. She said lessons have been learned from significant road transformations in the region, including the rapid transit lanes along Davis Drive in Newmarket and others. The impact of those developments to the local small businesses were mitigated with strong investment in signage, wayfinding and a detailed communications plan. We would strongly urge Council to include these essential components as part of an overall transition plan, and potentially request that they be added to the Region's budget, to help both the businesses and the customers navigate the altered parking arrangements. This would be a good investment whether the parking changes are implemented in 2024 or, as we would hope, in 2025. While Keele is no doubt a regional road, it is also a part of our village centre, and should reflect the welcoming neighbourhood look and feel that is currently in place. We are confident that there are options and approaches that would accommodate the growth while preserving of the village feel, and minimizing the negative impacts to the small businesses at the heart of our village centre. By taking an integrated approach with a view to ensuring supports are in place for a smooth transition, including potentially waiting to remove on-street parking until alternative capacity, wayfinding, signage and communications plans are in place, Council would signal to the local business community that they will support efforts to help them prosper, as these small businesses are still fighting economic headwinds to recover from the pandemic. She noted the Chamber stands ready to collaborate with the Township to engage with member businesses and to

support the drive towards realizing the future of King Township, as envisioned in the official plan.