

Navigating King's first roundabout

By Mark Pavilons

The creation of the first traffic roundabout in King is causing a bit of apprehension.

But King politicians and regional staff are working with landowners to alleviate problems early on in the process.

York Region has chosen to build a roundabout at the intersection of Keele and the Lloydtown-Aurora Road, slated for 2015.

For one resident, who will see some of his land expropriated for the construction, he's not convinced a roundabout is warranted.

'All you really need are (speed limit) signs as a deterrent,' he said (he preferred not to be identified).

The resident admitted it's an accident-prone intersection, but survey data used by the Region is out of date. 'We don't want this,' he stressed.

Traffic on the Lloydtown-Aurora Road is busy in spurts, during rush hour, he noted. He suggested the Region take minor measures first and monitor the results before spending the time and money on a roundabout.

Joyce Harrison and her daughter Dawn Muloin, who live on the northwest corner of the intersection, had concerns and met with Mayor Steve Pellegrini, Councillor Debbie Schaefer and regional staff to get more details on the project. They voiced their concerns about how it will impact their property.

'We are still very concerned because we have not heard the results of the meeting yet and we want to give them time to help us resolve the issues,' Muloin said.

The mayor said it was important to have parties on site, to actually see the physical layout of the land. He admitted this family will see the brunt of the impact and regional staff are now examining the configuration more closely and may perhaps lessen the impact to the property owners.

As a rule, the Region expropriates more land that is immediately necessary, in case more is needed in the long-term.

It's an ideal spot for the traffic-calming roundabout, the mayor contends. They force drivers to slow down and it addresses the speeding problem. Roundabouts are not new and they're proven to work, once drivers get used to them.

The roundabout, he said, is a better solution than traffic lights.

The long-term costs (20+ years) for roundabouts are less than signals, according to Councillor Debbie Schaefer.

'For quite a while this intersection has been identified as requiring something different than the current stop signs for north/south travel on Keele; there have been many serious accidents over the years and some deaths,' she said.

Schaefer has driven in Europe where roundabouts are very common.

'I am only surprised that it has taken York Region as long as it has to make this policy,' she observed. 'The flow of traffic is much more efficient with a roundabout. I think of this every time I am sitting at a red light at an intersection wanting to make a left turn and there is not a car in any direction in sight!'

The traffic calming aspect is important to her, especially considering that speeding is a very serious problem on Lloydtown Aurora Road, particularly between Keele and Jane.

At the meeting with staff and a local resident, Schaefer said the Region designed it in such a way to put the roundabout's centre in the centre of current intersection so that each property owner in each of the four quadrants is equally impacted. It was agreed that in this case perhaps some alternate shifting should be considered. The only land with dwellings is the Harrison property.

The Region has agreed to assess the possibility of shifting the roundabout south or east somewhat. The Region is also assessing feasibility of changing the drive way for one property to position it more safely.

'We are doing our best to reduce the impact on the affected residents, but I realize that it may not be possible to totally eliminate the impact,' she said. 'But I do not see a better solution. A light would only encourage more speeding as drivers would seek to 'catch the green or yellow' and a light would not encourage driving slower. Changing the speed limit, putting up more signs is not going to cause traffic to go slower.'