

King Road traffic issues brought forward

By **Angela Gismondi**

As commercial and residential development along King Road continues to grow, so do the concerns about the movement of traffic along one of the Township's main roads.

A King Road Traffic Review was presented by Nelson Costa, Manager of Corridor Control and Safety Transportation Services for the Region of York at the Committee of the Whole meeting Monday. The presentation was made in response to a request by several members of council who have met informally with York Region representatives to discuss the ongoing traffic matters and the management of traffic issues along regional roads throughout the Township. York Region staff met with Councillor Cleve Mortelliti and Councillor Debbie Schaefer in October 2014 to discuss the issues.

King Road has changed significantly in the last few years. With the reconstruction of King Road almost complete, new commercial development under way at the corner of King Road and Dufferin Street and new residential development being occupied, new and existing residents are expressing concerns regarding safe access to King Road and there are increasing concerns about the safety of pedestrians crossing, particularly in the area of King City Secondary School.

Costa broke King Road down into four sections for the purpose of the review ? from Jane Street to the cemetery, the cemetery to Keele Street, Keele Street to Warren Road and Warren Road to Dufferin Street.

The presentation also included a review of the traffic speeds along the stretch of road. No changes were recommended for the current posted speed limits. King Road from Jane Street to the cemetery will remain 70 km-h and the cemetery to Keele Street will remain 50 km-h to support development in the area. Speed limit signs and boards have also been installed in the area and the Region is working with York Regional Police to make sure there is enforcement, especially at peak speeding times Costa said.

?We hope to change behaviours over time to condition motorists to be aware that the area is being enforced and to watch their speeds,? explained Costa.

King Road from Keele Street to Warren Road, one of the most built up areas of the village commercially, will also remain 50 km-h. The recommended speed limit from Warren Road to Dufferin Street is 60 km-h. Although Mortelliti and Schaefer requested the Region reduce the speed in the school zone near King City Secondary School during school hours, the speeds through this stretch of road do not meet the Region's policy for speed reduction. However, a flashing signal and community safety zone sign will still be installed. There will also be increased fines for those traveling over 50 km-h in the zone. This will be monitored after the flashers go in to make sure it is working as intended. The flashers are expected to be installed this summer, before the start of the new school year.

?The hope is to raise better awareness to motorists that they are entering an area where children are going to and from school,? said Costa. ?There are a lot of pedestrians crossing in the area and over 50 of them using the traffic signal to cross per day.?

Some members of council wondered if the flashing lights and sign would be enough to slow down traffic, especially with students often crossing over to the new commercial development without the use of pedestrian signals.

?On a nice Friday, the high school students make a beeline directly across King Road to the plaza ? they are not going up to Dufferin and crossing at the lights,? said Mayor Steve Pellegrini. ?They're crossing a four or five lane road. There are 200 to 400 kids that go across and back during that time.?

Local resident Linda Lalonde, a parent of a child at King City Public School, said the road needs to be made safer for school children.

?The reason my child doesn't walk to school on a regular basis is because I'm deathly afraid she's going to be hit by a car on King Road,? said Lalonde, who has lived in the area for 20 years. ?A lot of people avoid having their children walk to school.?

She was disappointed to hear that the speed would not be reduced in the area and asked that the idea of adding another crossing guard in the area be reopened. She added she has not seen a lot of enforcement in the area.

A traffic signal was also been requested for King Road and Spring Hill Drive but Costa reported that while it does not currently meet the region's traffic signal criteria, it is expected to satisfy the criteria in 2018. The Region's proposed signal policy will accelerate the installation of the signal to 2016/17.

Councillor Bill Cober asked Costa if the Region would consider accelerating the installation of the signal at Spring Hill Drive even further. By installing it now, it would save the Region and the taxpayers money.

?It's going to be more expensive in a few years so let's just get it done,? said Cober.

Costa explained that the installation cost is not the only cost involved, there is also the cost of maintenance. ?It's important to put the

signals in at the right time," said Costa. "We will continue to monitor the intersection."

Pellegrini asked if the installation of the traffic signal could be accelerated if the Township is able to front-end the cost.

Costa said that the Region will only allow a municipality to front-end if the signal meets 90 per cent of the criteria for installation and if traffic warrants are met. A proposed change in the Region's Policy would eliminate the ability to front end signals, but at the same time it will lower the warrants for installing signals meaning that signals could be installed sooner than under the current policy. Even if the installation was approved, the soonest it could be done is a year from now because of the process that is involved, Costa added.

Jody LaPlante, a former Township employee who now represents King City developers, said he echoes the concerns of council regarding traffic safety. Valley King Developments did front-end the lights at King Road and Burns Boulevard, he noted, and is looking to recoup costs from the Region but the volumes will not be met for another five to six years.

"We believe it serves a greater purpose in King," said LaPlante. "It shouldn't be just the intersection that is looked at, it should be the entire road segment."

He added the developers would be willing to front-end the lights at Spring Hill Drive if they get reimbursed for the Burns Boulevard lights from the Region.

Councillor Linda Pabst pointed out that 30 years ago, there were no traffic lights for people coming off Highway 400 onto King Road.

"They are there now but it took a fatality," said Pabst, adding she used to drive an ambulance and, requested that traffic lights be put there for many years. "Let's not have this happen on King Road."

Pellegrini had another issue for Costa. When the new council was elected in 2011 one of the first things they did was reverse a decision create two abutting cul-de-sacs to accommodate a new residential subdivision at King Road and Burns Boulevard to prevent flow thru traffic into the existing subdivision.

Mortelitti provided some background, explaining a staff report stated that the Region was opposed to this decision, and that they would not support council's decision if the developer appealed. The traffic studies indicated that, as a result of closing Burns Boulevard, a further widening of Keele Street was required from King Road to Station Road, and that closing Burns would exacerbate that problem. Since it is not possible to widen Keele Street further, council was told to reverse the decision on the cul-de-sacs to allow traffic through Burns to take the pressure off Keele Street.

However, a reconfiguration of lanes at the intersection of King Road and Keele Street, was required and although drawings were done by the Region, the work was never completed, Pellegrini explained.

Costa said he was not aware of the project but said he would look into it and report back to council.

Costa's presentation, as well as comments from the public and council were referred to engineering, public works and building department staff for implementation. Staff will continue to work collaboratively with the Region of York to provide for the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and traffic through the Township as resources permit.