

Council looks at John West Way traffic calming

Council is looking at further ways to calm traffic on John West Way after giving the green light to a new four-way stop on the busy residential street.

Last week, local lawmakers gave formal approval to a new all-way stop on John West Way at Amberhill Way.

The intersection in question services both a dense residential townhouse development as well as the driveway and parking lot shared by Town Hall and the Aurora Seniors' Centre.

The change in traffic pattern came following a motion from Councillor Rachel Gilliland and a delegation to Council from members of the Aurora Seniors' Association (ASA).

The ASA said they were concerned about the safety of members, many of whom were forced to park on the west side of John West Way, having to get out of their vehicles into traffic, because they simply couldn't find a spot in the packed parking lot.

While Council said moving forward with the all-way stop was a step in the right direction, some members said it was merely a band-aid solution that didn't solve a larger issue, including Councillor John Gallo who said some astute residents shared their worries in correspondence about the negative impacts of four-way stops.

I continue to believe that this is not really going to be solving our problem, said Councillor Gallo, stating the real problem was creating more parking for Seniors' Centre members in the shared lot. We have proclaimed that there is a climate emergency and the resident that emailed us was very astute in advising us that stop signs, particularly four-way stop signs, are not exactly the best way to go if we're really looking at the environment because they produce far more CO2 when you're stopping, idling and taking off. Based on this report, some 800 cars every day will now be stopping just down the street from here and I continue to believe we have not really solved the problem.

I am clearly in favour of safety and I would not want any accidents to happen and clearly, for me, the problem is the cars parking on the street, not necessarily the cars driving up and down the street.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner shared these concerns, building on Councillor John Gallo's suggestion that a better solution might be in allocating parking around nearby Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park for municipal staff, thus freeing up space for seniors.

?I think we should try that before we put in any stop signs,? she said. ?At the end of the day, the real solution is to encourage our staff and some seniors to be walking and cycling and carpooling, or taking public transit. I think it is something we, as a corporation, should try and figure out how to encourage staff to do that. I think we'll have to leave it up to the seniors' but I have seen some of them walk on the track and they are pretty good walkers. We have to think, in the long term, what we're really trying to accomplish.?

Councillor Harold Kim said he shared some of the environmental concerns voiced around the table, but, in the end, said that safety is ?paramount? and parking around Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park might not be sufficient to make a ?dent? in the problem.

?We're trying to do away with cars,? he said. ?Finding more parking?eventually people will catch up to that capacity and exacerbate that. That threshold will eventually be reached, so we're going to have to put a cap on parking to some degree. If we want a totally environmental solution, we'd have seniors ride their bikes or run, and we know that is not going to happen.?

In the end, those voting in favour of the all-way stop contended that Council was looking at two independent issues. The problem of parking at Town Hall would still need to be addressed, but an all-way stop is a step towards traffic calming, a benefit they said would be enjoyed by residents beyond the Seniors' Centre.

?It is a completely separate problem,? said Councillor Gilliland. ?It is not specifically about the seniors. Addressing the climate, one could argue cars these days are designed to turn off when they stop. Cars are waiting an extra long time when they're trying to make that very unsafe turn. It is a very unsafe entrance and exit, regardless of whether there is a parked car on that road or not. I do truly believe this is needed.?

Councillor Sandra Humfries also supported the motion, suggesting a solution to the parking problem might be ?relocating? Petch House and creating more parking behind the Seniors' Centre.

?Even if we had enough parking for the Seniors Centre and it wasn't an issue, I would still be in favour of putting an all-way stop in this section here,? concluded Mayor Tom Mrakas. ?I would be in favour of adding another one over by Evelyn Buck Lane. I think is needed and it is not for this specific issue, directly effecting the Seniors' Centre. It is about the traffic coming down on John West Way. I have heard from many residents that people use it as a thru-way and we need to discourage that.?

Following Council's

approval, staff will continue to monitor traffic operations on John West Way as a result of the approved speed limit reduction while also taking a closer look at parking and sight lines on the street near Town Hall.

Other nearby problem areas identified by Council include, as suggested last month by Councillor Gaertner, a four-way stop on Hollidge Boulevard at McMaster Avenue.

By Brock Weir