

Kennedy Street could be prioritized as speed cushion pilot faces delay

By Brock Weir

Problem areas on Kennedy Street West could be prioritized after a speed cushion pilot program on three area streets hit a roadblock at Council last week.

Councillors voted to defer a final decision on how to proceed with a \$100,000 pilot program to install a series of speed cushions to calm traffic on select stretches of Kennedy and Mavrinac Boulevard, and a stretch of McMaster Avenue.

Staff recommend Council put the matter on the backburner until the spring to take advantage of competitive pricing in the New Year after bids for the contract this year came back more than the \$100,000 already approved by Council.

Rather than delaying the program outright, Councillors questioned whether there would be any benefit in splitting this out into three separate projects to ease residents' concerns.

"I am looking at Kennedy Street and I think that is the one that had the most concern and I would hate to see that go another [six or seven] months before anything happened on that one," said Councillor Tom Mrakas. "I would have no problems moving forward with the Kennedy Street aspect of this instead of the other two and having it go out to tender later on."

Although Councillors supported the sentiment, they said more information needs to come forward on costs and timelines before splitting the project in time for their next General Committee meeting this week.

Earlier this month, Councillors learned the pilot project for the three streets would come in more than \$41,000 over-budget if they did not go out to tender for a second time this winter.

"We are preparing [the tenders] for February and March," said Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure. "We could do it earlier, but we can't do the work until the roads are basically clear of snow. We wouldn't start the work until the end of April anyway. Ideally, if we put the tender on the streets in mid-March we would have a pricing available and ready to contract.

"Once you award a tender, there is an expectation the contractor usually starts in the first couple of weeks. If we issue it too early, it could put them in a situation where they are either forced to start during the winter or ask for an extension which could cost us [more]. We're trying to align the tender period with the construction period and do it in a period of time where we actually get good, valuable tenders."

While Council members were not opposed to saving money by delaying the project a few months, some said residents in these areas would be disappointed, questioning what could be done in the meantime to curb speeders in the area.

"I think everyone at this table knows some of the residents are going to be pretty unhappy to hear this," said Councillor Wendy Gaertner, asking the Town ask the York Regional Police to increase ticketing in the selected areas. "Anything we can do to show residents that we're serious about this?"

Also looking for stop-gap measures was Councillor Michael Thompson, who asked if speed boards, roadside signs warning drivers they are going over the speed limit, could be installed until the speed cushions are ready to be installed.

"At a minimum, if we are going to delay it, we need to do something to address the issue and that at least is a good first step.

Another alternative was offered by Councillor John Abel: street painting to warn drivers that traffic calming is coming while giving them an idea where the measures might be installed. Mr. Simanovskis said that is something to look into and street painting, such as zig-zag lines to confuse drivers, has shown to be effective in making them slow down.

Rubber speed cushions were also floated around the table by Councillor Harold Kim as a possible more environmentally-friendly alternative. That idea was quickly nixed by Mr. Simanovskis, who said the fact they need to be bolted down into the road causes problems.

"If we're going to install these devices, the asphalt are the most reliable and longer serving. The rubber ones do damage and the fact we have to remove them in the winter is problematic because it adds wear and tear to the pavement," he said. "The path that we're on is going to get us to a place where we're actually going to have a speed cushion and a place that is going to be effective and long-term, assuming the community is happy with the outcome, versus a short term win versus long maintenance and longer term cost issue."

Council approved temporary speed cushions be installed on Kennedy Street West from McGee Crescent to Murray Drive, Mavrinac Boulevard from Borealis Avenue to Spring Farm, and McMaster Avenue from Hollidge to Hollandview Trail.