

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Development of Traffic Calming Policy

Motion:

That Council approve the development of a Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure at a cost not to exceed \$25,000 to be funded from the Financial Stabilization Reserve.

Purpose:

To develop a Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure that provides a standardized and consistent approach to responding to neighborhood traffic issues.

Background:

Regularly issues arise during the year that require further study or technical investigation in order to determine the best course of action, or to prepare appropriate recommendations to Council. An example of this would be to determine the feasibility of using the current RCMP building for another purpose. Often such investigations could be funded within the existing budget, however as the need to conduct them has become more regular, including the expenditure as an actual budget item has been considered the best practice.

As part of the 2015 draft budget, Project Management included a request for \$30,000 to conduct studies and technical investigations, however the information for specific 2015 investigations was not included. During budget deliberations, members of Council preferred that Administration present specific initiatives on an as-needed basis, as opposed to establishing a technical investigation budget.

The primary investigation initiative planned for 2015 was to be the development of a traffic calming policy and procedure, to provide Administration with a standardized approach to neighborhood traffic issues. Council and Administration frequently receive feedback from citizens regarding excessive vehicle speed in various locations throughout the City. There are a number of specific areas currently of concern, which is why this matter is before Council now, and not delayed to the 2016 budget deliberations. This would allow work to be done in 2015 so Council could consider any recommended options as part of the 2016 budget, otherwise a two year delay occurs.

Overview:

Traffic calming could be defined as physical measures to alter motorist behaviour on a street or street network. Traffic calming also includes traffic management, which involves changing traffic routes or flows within a neighbourhood.

Traffic calming is intended to improve the quality of life for residents on traffic calmed streets, achieve slower speeds for motor vehicles, and increase the safety and the perception of safety for non-motorized users of the street. Traffic calming is also intended to promote increased pedestrian, cycle and transit usage in an effort to help reduce the negative effects of motor vehicles on the environment.

The objective of traffic calming is to achieve uniform driving patterns, at reduced travel speeds. That objective is consistent with resident expectations on roads where lower speeds are desired to enhance safety and livability in communities and neighbourhoods. That objective is not tenable on roads where higher speeds are desired. Consequently, physical traffic calming should not normally be used on roads intended for higher speeds, or those which move large volumes of traffic, such as arterial roads.

Some of the most common types of traffic calming measures are:

1. Traffic circles;
2. Raised circles in the middle of intersections, intended to slow the speed of vehicles as they travel around the circle;
3. Choker, chicane or pinch points, which are devices, that create an impediment on the road by placing a fixed object on the street, forcing motorists to divert around the object or slow down on a narrower section of road; and
4. Speed humps, which are raised sections of road to reduce speeds.

Many communities across Canada utilize traffic calming however implementation in those places are guided by a Traffic Management Guides and Calming Criteria / Policy, which has been developed by each community to meet their unique needs. This criteria / policy provides administration with a standardized approach to neighborhood traffic issues.

Discussion:

As previously noted, Council and Administration frequently receive feedback from citizens regarding excessive vehicle speed in various locations throughout the City. In response to these complaints Project Management (Engineering) have deployed radar based traffic counters. These traffic counters not only count the vehicles travelling on the roadway, but log the speeds of the vehicles over a one week time period. With this data, traffic reports are generated, which not only provide traffic counts, but the speed data of the vehicles.

The V85 speed is the indicator used by traffic engineers to determine the speed of traffic. V85 refers to the speed at which 85% of drivers travel at or below. V85 is also the speed people feel comfortable driving on the particular section of roadway regardless of the speed limit. This means that drivers will naturally adjust their speed to something close to this speed.

In most cases the measured V85 speed of traffic is at or below the posted speed limits on local roads when traffic studies are conducted by the City. However, 50 km/hr on some local roads may feel too fast for pedestrians and homeowners within neighbourhoods.

In some cases the V85 is abnormally high. In these situations the data is analyzed to look for patterns for enforcement (is it one or two people at certain times of the day). Enforcement can work in the short-term, but studies have shown that once drivers realize that enforcement is not always there, driver behaviour will begin to revert back. The most effective means of reducing the V85 is installing an engineered solution.

Engineered solutions (traffic calming) can be retrofitted into an area, and these are designed to make it uncomfortable for drivers to drive at excessive speeds. Depending on the class of roadway and existing conditions, there are many different options available.

Traffic calming can be a hot-button solution within a neighbourhood. The measures taken will affect all residents within the area, as well as emergency services responding to the area. For this reason policies and procedures must be developed prior to the implementation of retrofit traffic calming so that a criteria is established for the need, type, and implementation of the solution. This will allow residents with concerns regarding speed within their neighbourhood to follow a defined process that could lead to a neighbourhood accepted solution. This will also clarify our approach to traffic calming so that a consistent approach is taken across the City.

Traffic calming must be done at the neighborhood level, and not just at a single location (in most cases). Implementing traffic calming measures on a roadway may just move traffic to the next road and thus move the problem along if not implemented at the neighbourhood level.

Traffic calming installations will vary in cost starting at \$30,000 for a simple installation, ranging upwards of \$500,000 for full neighbourhood implementation. The range depends on the types of issues, location of the issues, and the class of roadway being impacted.

The policy and procedures to be developed will clearly identify the types of traffic calming allowed on different classes of roadway, outline the steps required to implement the measures, and define the warrants required to justify the implementation.

Council's feedback will be sought during the development of the policy to guide the establishment of, and explain the criteria and warrants. The policy will define the threshold speeds, the public support required, and the process to implement a solution. The policy will create a fair implementation process for any neighbourhood concerned with speed and traffic.

Plans/Standards/Legislation:

The development of this policy / procedure aligns with Council's Strategic Plan: Strategy 1 – Position for Growth, **1.8** Identify local strategies to address traffic issues within the City.

Financial Implications:

The development of a Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure would be funded from the Financial Stabilization Reserve. This amount is not to exceed \$25,000.

Alternatives:

1. That Council approve the development of a Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure at a cost not to exceed \$25,000 to be funded from the Financial Stabilization Reserve.
2. That Council approve the development of a Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure, and that the request be funded from Pay-As-You-Go in the 2015 budget.
3. That Council not approve the development of a Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure, and that the request be included as part of the 2016 budget deliberations, with no further study on traffic calming being taken in 2015.

File No.:

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Date: January 16, 2015

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Date: January 20, 2015

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Date: January 21, 2015

Submitted to: City Council

Date: January 27, 2015