



Corporate Report

NO: R268

COUNCIL DATE: DECEMBER 18, 2006

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: December 13, 2006
FROM: General Manager, Engineering FILE: 5460-90
SUBJECT: Surrey Association of Sustainable Communities (SASC) Traffic Calming
Presentation - Engineering Comments

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report, along with Council's resolution, to the Surrey Association of Sustainable Communities.

PURPOSE

The SASC made a presentation to Council on July 10, 2006 in relation to the City of Surrey's policies, implementation strategies, and funding of traffic calming. A summary of this presentation is appended. Council requested a report on the issues raised by the SASC.

BACKGROUND

Council approved a revised traffic calming policy in May 2006. These policy changes allow for future funding to include a development component, changes to the qualifying criteria for traffic calming to be promoted by the City, and the introduction of a two-year "wait and monitor" period for traffic calming on collector roads.

DISCUSSION

The SASC supports Council's actions to establish traffic calming policy and practice, welcomes the increases in funding, the initiatives to provide traffic calming through

development, and the consultation with residents. There are a number of issues which the SASC considers need attention. These are:

1. Lack of traffic calming plan and system;
2. Insufficient public participation;
3. Too much emphasis on evaluation criteria which are too high;
4. Role of Collector Roads;
5. Insufficient Funding; and
6. Need for Monitoring System.

Each of the points raised by SASC, together with staff comments, are outlined as follows:

1. Lack of Comprehensive Traffic Calming Plan and System – *in particular the focus on individual sites rather than neighbourhoods and the reactive rather than proactive approach.*

The potential benefits of promoting area wide traffic calming projects are understood but within Surrey the many traffic calming requests received rarely come from neighbouring or closely located roads. Staff are alert to the potential for displacement of traffic from individual schemes but experience has shown that for the bulk of the 17 projects implemented so far, there has not been a measurable displacement of traffic onto neighbouring streets. Staff are unaware of any complaints from adjacent streets or requests for measures as a result of calming being introduced. This is a reflection of the careful design of the projects, in particular, the amount and scope of measures introduced. The exception to this has been where traffic diverters have been installed within one area wide project and there has been a clear displacement of traffic from one street to another. Staff will be undertaking post construction monitoring on a number of projects to more objectively evaluate how changes to traffic flows and speeds have occurred as a result of traffic calming.

In those areas where there have been neighbouring requests for traffic calming or where there has been some concern about possible changes to traffic patterns, area wide plans have been developed. Such an approach has been taken in:

- Fraser Heights
- Boundary Park Area
- Southmere Crescent Area
- Parkway Area in Fleetwood
- North West Whalley
- South Newton (through the NCP planning process)
- All New NCPs

Where appropriate, such an approach will continue to be taken. However, staff are mindful of the often significant increase in costs associated with these plans, and therefore such projects are, by necessity, sometimes phased in their implementation to help ensure the resources available are employed fairly and equitably across the City.

The majority, although not all, of traffic calming projects are generated through public request. This is considered appropriate as it is very important that traffic calming is promoted in those locations where there is high public support, allied with the required speed and volume criteria. Not all streets or neighbourhoods want traffic calming due to factors such as potential noise, vibration, visual impact or individual concerns over devices being placed outside particular properties. Staff would be concerned that some streets may have traffic calming introduced where there was not majority support.

We believe we have a very comprehensive traffic calming plan and system.

2. **Insufficient Public Participation** – *In particular, the SASC referred to the City's approach to consultation commenting on its reactive nature, using consultation to only ask for approval of a particular plan, restricting consultation to a limited number of streets, insufficient opportunity for ongoing involvement and the ability to change proposals by the public. The SASC recommends the creation of Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Committees (NTCC) for projects to improve community representation, feedback, liaison, and post project monitoring.*

Consultation is a fundamental element of the development of traffic calming projects. It is essential that there is a minimum level of community consensus on both the need for and the nature of the traffic calming be introduced, although it can be difficult to achieve appropriate and useful consultation as part of a project development. For the traffic calming program, staff do not present a "blank piece of paper" to the community to consult on. Consultation commences once staff have developed proposals which are considered to be effective in reducing speeds, and which take into account engineering opportunities and constraints and the City's responsibilities to the wider traveling public. There is an assumed acknowledgement of the ability of staff to develop an effective initial plan based on previous experience, skills and technical knowledge. This approach does not constrain or inhibit the ability for residents to object, support, suggest adjustments or alternatives. Staff are always receptive to adjustments and alterations and many traffic calming proposals have been changed to varying degrees whilst others have been rejected.

The additional effort and staff time required for this approach would slow implementation of projects urgently wanted by the public. In addition, staff, with direction from the Transportation Committee and Council, are delivering cost effective projects. Staff rarely receive 100% support when consulting on traffic calming projects both in terms of what is proposed but also the need for traffic calming at all. Staff receive many, varied and often opposing views and opinions on traffic calming and it can be a challenging task securing a sufficient level of community consensus and support sufficient to allow a project to be implemented.

The City welcomes and values the input from other groups. Liaison with organizations such as the Ocean Park Community Association and the Fraser Heights Residents Association takes place to help advise and inform staff of local opinion and areas of concern on traffic calming issues. Staff will arrange a follow-up meeting with the SASC to outline this report and provide briefing on the City's programs and processes relating to traffic calming.

We believe we have an appropriate level of public consultation.

3. Evaluation Criteria – *In particular the use of fixed thresholds.*

The use of objective speed and volume evaluation criteria is considered appropriate and necessary both to ensure traffic calming is introduced in those locations where speeds are the highest, where most benefits can be achieved and to maintain fairness and equity in our response to the requests from across the City. The application of criteria in relation to levels of support and response rates also helps ensure measures are implemented in those locations where there is broad support. This approach also avoids the implementation of measures where the majority of traffic is not traveling at high speeds, thereby helping maintain wider support and respect for traffic calming from the wider traveling public.

We firmly believe that the evaluation criteria is an essential component of a comprehensive traffic calming program.

4. Collector Roads – *Implementation of traffic calming on Collector roads is not supported by the SASC.*

Recent policy changes have introduced a presumption against traffic calming on collector roads due to concerns over the impact on the important function of these roads to carry traffic, possible displacement of traffic onto neighbouring local roads and the impact on the emergency services and transit. This moratorium will remain in place for a minimum of two years, during which time already approved collector road traffic calming projects will be constructed. Staff will undertake monitoring and evaluation of these projects.

There remains a significant demand for traffic calming on collector roads and it is considered appropriate on a pilot basis to implement the already approved projects. We will monitor our pilot projects on collectors to re-evaluate our policy in context of their comments.

5. Insufficient Funding - *The SASC would support increased allocation over and above the approximately \$1 million approved by Council to fund the currently unfunded projects to reduce waiting times and in the context of the SASC recommendations to fund the more comprehensive traffic calming projects.*

Council has increased funding for traffic calming in recent years allowing for an accelerated level of project delivery and provided more certainty for planning future programs by approving a DCC component. Approximately 20 projects have been constructed this year with a further 12 planned in the near future. Staff will look to provide additional funding through the road utility recently recommended by this Finance Committee for traffic calming to allow implementation of an additional 8-10 projects for 2007. These include a number of higher cost projects. Through other initiatives, notably the inclusion of traffic calming within all new NCPs, traffic calming will be planned more comprehensively and implemented sooner than in the past.

6. Need for Monitoring System – *in particular the need to involve the public.*

Traffic Calming within Surrey is relatively new and there is a need for post project monitoring and assessment from an engineering perspective, as well as from a public opinion standpoint. Staff will undertake a study of traffic calming in the City looking at different types of traffic calming devices, and the level of intervention (i.e., physical size and spacing of measures). This will provide staff with a more objective understanding of what measures are most effective and appropriate for different locations and circumstances.

Staff plan to undertake resident surveys on some traffic calming projects either already introduced or expected to be constructed in the next few months to help establish what expectations the public had before the project was introduced, whether the public considers projects have been successful (compared with recorded speed and volume data), and any concerns and issues about traffic calming. Staff know that public opinion in relation to traffic calming has changed significantly in recent years. The large increase in requests partly reflects that. It is also known that this may well change again with potential for a reduction in support from some neighbourhoods or increasing frustration from other legitimate road users not from a particular neighbourhood. Being alert to public perceptions and views on traffic calming will be important in assessing the sustainability and success of the traffic calming program.

We agree with the need to monitor the system in improve its performance.

CONCLUSION

The SASC raised a number of valid points in their presentation of which our program addresses. The City will seek to better inform community groups such as SASC to highlight and improve our program. The demand for traffic calming has increased in recent years and remains high. Additional funding for traffic calming may be available as part of the new 'roads utility' approach. Additionally, Council approved additional Development Cost Charge funding for traffic calming earlier this year. These two increased funding sources, as and when they become available, would allow faster implementation of traffic calming projects. Staff will continue to consult with the public as projects are developed, and is committed to improved monitoring of the program to ensure continued use of the City's financial resources at those locations where there is the greatest need public support, and where most benefits can be achieved.

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