



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: June 8, 2020

SUBJECT: Traffic Operational Changes in Response to COVID-19

PREPARED BY: Loy Cheah, Senior Manager, Transportation, Ext. 4838

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Report entitled “Traffic Operational Changes in Response to COVID-19” be received; and
2. That Council approve the traffic management plans to install until October 31, 2020, temporary bike lanes on:
 - a. Bullock Drive between Laidlaw Boulevard and Austin Drive;
 - b. Enterprise Boulevard between Warden Avenue and Main Street Unionville; and
3. That Council approve the traffic management plan to restrict access to local traffic only on Main Street Unionville between Fred Varley Drive and Carlton Road until October 31, 2020; and
4. That Council approve the preliminary budget for implementing these projects estimated at \$23,000 per month for five (5) months for a total amount of \$115,000; with \$65,000 to be funded from account #640-101-5699-20032 Active Transportation Awareness Program, and \$50,000 to be funded from account #083-5350-20051-005 Traffic Operational Improvements; and
5. That staff be authorized to consider other requests for temporary traffic operational measures, to investigate the need and feasibility, and to implement appropriate temporary measures only when the need and feasibility have been confirmed, and only until October 31, 2020; and
6. That Operations Department conduct periodic monitoring of the temporary installations and make adjustments to the equipment as needed; and
7. That staff report back before the end of the year on public feedback and project performance for all projects resulting from this report; and further
8. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report acts on the May 12, 2020 Council direction “*That staff be directed to explore and bring back to the June 8, 2020 Development Services Committee a report on the*

implementation of a temporary expansion of the cycling network in Markham where warranted, to fill gaps in the current cycling network.” This report also provides a recommendation regarding traffic management on Main Street Unionville.

BACKGROUND:

On May 12, 2020, Council directed staff to report back on implementing temporary bike network expansion to fill gaps in the cycling network. To provide context, there are currently a number of developing factors that are changing pedestrian and cycling patterns, and they include the following:

- Based on current information from public health officials, physical distancing requirements are expected to continue for the foreseeable future;
- Public transit services provided by YRT/Viva, GO and TTC are much reduced relative to pre-pandemic levels of service; for instance, all YRT/Viva routes have seen service reductions while some routes have been suspended;
- Early indications from major cities suggest that a portion of regular transit users may not be ready to return to using public transit due to physical distancing requirements and fears of being infected while taking transit;
- Due to the Provincial lockdown of certain businesses and activities, the lack of normal recreational opportunities (e.g. fitness centres, sports fields, community centres, parks, etc.) may be leading more people to use walking and cycling as their alternative recreational activity;
- Traffic volumes on City streets are much lower than pre-pandemic levels and may be attracting interest to recreational and utilitarian cycling from people who are not regular cyclists; weekday traffic counts conducted in late April and early May 2020 shows the 85th percentile traffic volumes on 4-lane collector roads are down significantly, ranging from reductions of 23% to over 90%, with most of these roads experiencing reductions of above 50%;
- As warmer weather arrives and more Ontario businesses are allowed to open, walking and cycling volumes along residential and commercial streets are expected to increase.

Based on the above factors and due to physical distancing requirements, there is a need to provide more physical space for pedestrians and cyclists to:

- Facilitate pedestrian movements on busy streets like Main Street Unionville;
- Improve the cycling network connectivity for recreational cycling and access to places of employment and other destinations; and
- Provide alternative routes to popular trails.

In essence, while the pandemic conditions remain, there appears to be an increase in pedestrian and cyclist movements along public rights-of-way due to the factors listed above. This shift may continue beyond the end of the pandemic and associated physical distancing requirements, especially if some of these factors remain over the longer term.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**21 candidate cycling gap projects have been identified through on-going work of the Active Transportation Master Plan**

Staff have identified through the on-going development of the Active Transportation Master Plan, cycling network gaps that may provide opportunities for early testing of these projects through this Council initiative. A total of 21 candidate projects have been identified and they are highlighted on the latest cycling network map in Attachment “A” and listed in Attachment “B”.

Criteria used to prioritize the 21 temporary bike lane projects

Staff developed a simple set of criteria to help prioritize the candidate projects and they are as follows:

1. Transit service on the road (prefer routes with transit as they are commuter routes)
2. Residential driveway frontage (closing the lane in front of driveways impedes garbage collection)
3. Parallel route to the popular Rouge Valley Trail
4. Connects residential areas with schools, recreation or employment zones

Based on these criteria, the assessment resulted in the following top two projects:

1. Bullock Drive, Laidlaw Boulevard to Austin Drive (1.8 km)
2. Enterprise Boulevard, Warden Avenue to Main Street Unionville (2.2 km)

Temporary bike lanes on these two roads would be installed by dedicating the curb lanes as bike lanes. Applying the conceptual design shown in Attachment “C”, preliminary estimates of implementation costs for these two bike lane projects is \$21,000 per month or \$105,000 for five (5) months.

Staff recommend that these two temporary bike lane projects be approved, and that staff report back before the end of the year on public feedback and on project performance.

Request to restrict traffic flow on Main Street Unionville can be accommodated

With the May 18, 2020 regulation changes to the Provincial Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act that allows more retail businesses to open, and with Spring/Summer weather arriving, pedestrian activities are expected to pick up. In particular, streets such as Main Street Unionville may experience some degree of crowding, which may result in the inability for pedestrians on sidewalks to maintain physical distancing.

The City has worked with the Unionville BIA on two traffic operations related measures for Main Street Unionville. They are:

1. prohibition of parking on the west boulevard; and
2. restricting traffic flow to create a more pedestrian-friendly corridor.

The parking prohibition was approved by Council on May 12, 2020.

Staff has investigated the concept of temporarily restricting traffic flow on Main Street Unionville and found it to be feasible with a proper traffic management plan that

recognizes traffic volumes are at a much lower level than normal, and a plan that utilizes the East Lane as the two-way detour route. The cost of this traffic management plan is estimated at \$2,000 per month for a total of \$10,000 over the period from June to October.

Therefore, staff is recommending that Main Street Unionville between Carlton Road to Fred Varley Drive be restricted to local traffic only for the period ending October 31, 2020 or thereabout.

Staff to consider other requests for temporary traffic operational measures based on technical factors

With more retail businesses opening up, it is anticipated that customer queuing to maintain physical distancing onto City sidewalks may occur for some popular establishments in the City. Therefore, staff anticipates receiving additional requests for temporary traffic operations measures to facilitate businesses in some locations.

It is recommended that staff be authorized to consider other requests for temporary traffic operational measures, to investigate the need and feasibility and to implement the temporary measures only when the need and feasibility have been confirmed.

Periodic monitoring of installations by Operations Department will be necessary

As the equipment used for these temporary projects are not secured to fixed objects and could be moved out of position by weather events or members of the public, Operations Department would have to conduct periodic monitoring of these installations and make the necessary adjustments to the equipment as needed.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The preliminary cost estimates of the recommended projects are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Preliminary Cost Estimates of Temporary Projects

	\$/Month	Sub-Total (to Oct. 31, 2020)
Bullock Drive	\$8,000	\$40,000
Enterprise Blvd	\$13,000	\$65,000
Main Street Unionville	\$2,000	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$23,000	\$115,000

It is recommended that these costs, if approved, be funded from accounts #640-101-5699-20032 (Active Transportation Awareness Program) (\$65,000), and #083-5350-20051-005 (Traffic Operational Improvements) (\$50,000).

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The report recommendations align with the City’s Strategic Plan goal of a “Safe & Sustainable Community” in relation to building a comprehensive transportation network in partnership with other levels of government.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Operations Departments has been consulted and support the recommendations in this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Brian Lee, P.Eng.
Director, Engineering

Arvin Prasad, MPA, RPP, MCIP
Commissioner, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment “A” – Map of Candidate Projects for Temporary Bike Lanes
- Attachment “B” – List of Candidate Projects for Temporary Bike Lanes
- Attachment “C” – Conceptual Design of Temporary Bike Lanes