

CORRIGAN'S CORNER

“Moves to ease traffic woes stir neighbourhood opposition”

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By Ed Corrigan Councillor for Ward 7

Traffic is like water you block it at one place it comes out somewhere else. Experience shows that when one neighbourhood group pressures City Council to adopt traffic calming measures it has been followed by a larger group demanding their removal. The traffic calming attempts on Corely Drive and Sunnyside are recent examples.

Public concern over traffic in Westmount led to a proposed series of traffic calming measures including all way stops, raised tables and turn restrictions. A survey and map with the changes was sent to all 1700 Westmount households and 480 responded. The results were 23% opposed to all the traffic calming measures; 18% supported them; 59% gave partial support; and 71% opposed turn restrictions. The survey did not consider timed turn restrictions. A public meeting was held where strong opposition was also expressed to the full plan.

The results were analyzed and a reduced set of measures that were supported by about 60% of respondents was proposed. The revised map was sent to all Westmount households. City Staff supported all but one measure. The Westmount Public Advisory Committee also endorsed the plan. Widespread support existed for the reduced plan.

A motion was made at the Environment and Transportation Committee to add a three-month trial for a left-hand turn restriction from Southdale onto Farnham between 7-9 a.m. This restriction was not included on the map sent out to Westmount residents. The consultant and City staff did not have an opportunity to consider the impact and opposed the addition.

Concerns were raised about the impact on the school buses taking children to Westmount and Jean Vanier public schools and to Saunders High School. Children of Westmount residents are also bused to schools outside of the area. There was no prior notice of the proposed turn restriction and no opportunity to discuss the issue and this is not fair.

The prospect of 30 additional school buses attempting to make a left hand turn from Wonderland onto Viscount between 7:00 and 9:00 a.m. could adversely effect rush hour traffic. Concerns for the safety of hundreds of students going to the three schools and now turning left on Viscount via Wonderland also were raised.

Traffic from Lambeth and Southwinds could avoid the restriction by using Pack Road and Boswick and not use Southdale Road which is designed for heavy traffic. Byron residents also could avoid the restriction increasing traffic on Cranbrook. Little or no consideration was given to the domino effect of pushing the traffic onto other roads. These questions need to be addressed before the turn restrictions are implemented even on a three-month trial basis.

While I am sympathetic to safety concerns with respect to speed on Farnham and cut through traffic, a fair process must be followed and one that carefully considers the effect. Rushed decision making increases the chance of errors and promotes a community backlash.

Only by building consensus, and giving proper notice and a fair opportunity to discuss impacts will Westmount traffic issues be solved. The process also has to come to a timely conclusion. In this case a last minute exemption for buses was granted for the left-turn restriction

onto Farnham. A proper process and careful consideration of the impact of traffic calming measures is necessary if traffic control is going to work.