

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 5, Report No. 38, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted, as amended, by the Council of the City of Vaughan on November 15, 2016, as follows:

By receiving the following Communications:

***C10 Mr. Danny Giacomel, dated November 1, 2016; and
C11 Mr. Carl Rossi, dated November 1, 2016.***

**5 WESTON DOWNS COMPREHENSIVE TRAFFIC STUDY
WARD 3**

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the City Manager and the Director of Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations, dated November 1, 2016, be approved;**
- 2) That York Region be requested to provide a status report in Q1 2018 respecting implementation of the described improvements which are the responsibility of York Region;**
- 3) That local traffic signage be enhanced in the Weston Downs community; and**
- 4) That the presentation by Mr. John Hemingway, Hatch Corporation, South Service Road, Burlington, and Communication C30, presentation material titled “*Weston Downs Traffic Study*”, be received.**

Recommendation

The City Manager and the Director of Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations, in consultation with the Deputy City Manager of Planning and Growth Management, recommend:

1. That the Weston Downs Traffic Study Report, prepared by Hatch Corporation, be received;
2. That York Region be requested to install demand responsive traffic signal controllers at all signalized intersections on Weston Road from south of Langstaff Road to north of Rutherford Road and on Langstaff and Rutherford Roads from Highway 400 to Pine Valley Drive to improve overall traffic operations along these corridors;
3. That York Region be requested to advance the timing for implementation of capital improvements for Weston Road from Langstaff Road to Major Mackenzie Drive and Rutherford Road from Weston Road to Pine Valley Drive as identified in the York Region Transportation Master Plan within the first three to five years of the current 10-year construction program;
4. That York Region be requested to extend the current limits of capital improvements for Rutherford Road from the original limits of Pine Valley Drive westerly to Highway 27 as identified in the York Region Transportation Master Plan within the first three to five years of the current 10-year construction program;
5. That York Region Transit (YRT) be requested to consider establishing services within the Weston Downs neighbourhood in an effort to manage travel demands;

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 5, CW Report No. 38 – Page 2

6. That City staff work with the local school boards and York Region to investigate measures and programs in an effort to address school traffic-related issues and promote active and sustainable modes of transportation; and
7. That the City Clerk forward a copy of this Report to York Region, the York Region District School Board and York Region Catholic School Board and the Ministry of Transportation.

Contribution to Sustainability

This report contributes to the goals and objectives within Green Directions Vaughan, the City's Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, specifically:

Goal 3: To ensure that Vaughan is a city that is easy to get around with a low environmental impact.

Objective 3.2: To develop and sustain a network of roads that supports efficient and accessible public and private transit.

Economic Impact

There is no economic impact associated with this report.

Communications Plan

A copy of this report will be posted on the City's project webpage.

The City Clerk will circulate a copy of this report to the Region of York, York Region District School Board, York Region Catholic School Board, and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the traffic issues and findings from the Weston Downs Comprehensive Traffic Study.

Background - Analysis and Options

In June 2015, Council directed staff to undertake a traffic study to identify potential traffic solutions for the Weston Downs Community.

The Weston Downs neighbourhood is bounded by Rutherford Road to the north, Weston Road to the east, Langstaff Road to the south, and Pine Valley Drive to the west. The neighbourhood consists of single-detached residences, with two elementary schools (St. Gregory the Great and St. Clare). Several minor collector roads exist within the community that includes Babak Boulevard, Orr Avenue, Velmar Drive, Village Green Drive, Astonia Boulevard, Valeria Boulevard, and Greenpark Boulevard. All other roads within the community are classified as local roads. There are no continuous major north-south roads connecting the north and south half of the community to provide access to and within the Weston Downs neighbourhood. A location plan is included as Attachment 1.

Some residents of the Weston Downs community expressed concerns about high volumes of traffic on local roads as a result of the area having been developed with limited north-south collector roads. Over the years, the City has worked with the Region and the community and has completed several traffic studies and has proposed various solutions.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 5, CW Report No. 38 – Page 3

City Staff, in consultation with Regional staff, selected Hatch Corporation in September of 2015 to complete a comprehensive traffic study of the Weston Downs community.

The City worked closely with the Region and retained Hatch Corporation to conduct a comprehensive traffic study for the Weston Downs community. The study identified traffic issues, undertook technical analysis to address the traffic issues identified, and engaged the community throughout the study. The community engagement process is outlined in Attachment 2.

The traffic study determined that congestion is present at key intersections in and around the community as a result of high volumes on Regional roads and Provincial highways.

The Weston Downs area road network does not have a continuous mid-block collector road system, with gaps in the Regional road network. The traffic study indicated that traffic congestion is found on the surrounding Regional roads, especially during the afternoon hours, where several intersections are operating at, or near capacity, with long traffic queues and delays. These intersections include:

- Rutherford Road and Babak Blvd,
- Rutherford Road and Weston Road,
- Weston Road and Greenpark Blvd,
- Weston Road and Langstaff Road, and
- Langstaff Road and Valeria Blvd.

There are limited alternatives to avoid the congested areas on Regional roads and Provincial highways, other than to travel through the Weston Downs community. Average traffic infiltration (cut-through) during peak hours is in the range of 20-30% of total trips (one in four trips from Regional roads), while community trips are in the range of 60-70% of total trips (three out of four are local community trips). The traffic analysis can be found in the Weston Downs traffic study executive summary outlined in Attachment 3.

Three short-term solutions were developed in consultation with the community that results in limited effectiveness in addressing the root causes of the aforementioned traffic issues. Each short-term option has diverse impacts to mobility and access within the community.

Three short-term solutions were presented to relieve traffic volumes within the community:

1. Introduce turn restrictions on Regional roads
2. Introduce turn restrictions on local roads
3. Convert Santa Barbara Place to a one-way southbound street

1. Turn restrictions on Regional roads.

Turn restrictions on Regional roads involve the use of “No Right Turn”, “No Through Movement” and “No Left and Through Movement” signs at the intersections of Rutherford Road and Babak Blvd and Rutherford Road at Velmar Drive. These signs would restrict turns during peak periods (7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) in order to reduce traffic volumes during those times. Turn restrictions on Regional roads are expected to provide a moderate reduction in traffic volumes. However, this option will restrict access for residents, and require regular enforcement to be effective. This option is subject to the approval of York Region who is not in support of turn restrictions on Regional roads. Details of the advantages and disadvantages of Turn restrictions on Regional roads can be found in Table 1.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 5, CW Report No. 38 – Page 4

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Turn Restrictions on Regional roads

Advantages of Turn Restrictions on Regional roads	Disadvantages of Turn Restrictions on Regional roads
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective in reducing traffic infiltration (cut-through traffic) within the community. This option targets traffic at the periphery of the community, forces the traffic to stay on the Regional roads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As three of every four trips originate within the community, most trips won't be eliminated.• These restrictions will apply to both community traffic and cut-through traffic, forcing both community and cut-through traffic to travel on the already congested Regional road network. Therefore, increasing traffic volumes on Regional roads, and other local roads.• Requires regular enforcement to be effective.• The York Region 2016 Transportation Master Plan update considered vehicular turning restrictions on Regional roads to have negative impact to the operation of the Regional road network, and future applications would be minimized.

2. Turn restrictions on local city roads.

Turn restrictions on local roads involve the use of “No Right Turn” and “No Left Turn” signs at several intersections within the community. These signs would restrict turns only during peak periods (7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) in order to reduce traffic. These turns would limit traffic volumes on Santa Barbara Place during peak periods, and prevent drivers from using other adjacent local roads to cut-through the community. This option restricts movement within the community during peak hours, redistributes traffic volumes to both Regional and local roads. Details of the advantages and disadvantages of turn restrictions on local roads can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Turn Restrictions on local roads

Advantages of Turn restrictions on local roads	Disadvantages of Turn restrictions on local roads
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces traffic volume during the peak hours on certain streets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restricts access for residents.• Increases volumes on Regional roads and other local roads.• Requires regular enforcement to be effective.

3. One-Way Street on Santa Barbara Place.

The conversion of Santa Barbara Place into a one-way southbound street would eliminate northbound traffic infiltration (cut-through traffic) during the evening peak period (4:30p.m. to 6:30 p.m.). In addition, during the evening peak hours, vehicles on Valeria Boulevard would not be permitted to turn left or right onto Columbus Avenue, to prevent drivers from using Columbus Avenue as an alternative route. This option results in the lowest reduction of overall traffic since southbound traffic during the morning is not affected, but most effective in reducing the traffic volumes on Santa Barbara Place. However, this option results in restriction to access within the community, and redistributes traffic to both local and Regional roads. Details of the advantages and disadvantages of the One-Way Street on Santa Barbara Place can be found in Table 3.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 5, CW Report No. 38 – Page 5

Table 3: Advantages and Disadvantages of One-Way Street on Santa Barbara Place

Advantages of One-Way street on Santa Barbara Place	Disadvantages of One-Way street on Santa Barbara Place
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce traffic volume during the evening peak periods.• Most effective in reducing the traffic volumes on Santa Barbara Place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restricts access for residents.• Increase volumes on Regional roads and other local roads.• Impacts waste management, emergency response and school bus routes.

The York Region 2016 Transportation Master Plan has identified long-term solutions to address traffic concerns along the corridors of Rutherford Road, Weston Road and Langstaff Road.

The traffic study identified long-term solutions to address the traffic concerns in the Weston Downs community. Long-term options include Regional road capital improvements that are currently part of the York Region 2016 Transportation Master Plan, specifically the widening of the roadway from four (4) to six (6) lanes to increase capacity at the following locations:

- Weston Road - Langstaff Road to Major Mackenzie Drive (2027 -2031);
- Rutherford Road - Weston Road to Pine Valley Drive (2027-2031);
- Rutherford Road – Pine Valley Drive to Highway 27 (2032 -2041);
- Langstaff Road – Keele Street to Weston Road (2027 -2031); and
- Special Study Area – near Pine Valley Drive extension

An environmental assessment has already been secured for Weston Road and Rutherford Road, enabling the projects to advance to implementation within the next three to five years. In addition, the City and Region continue to monitor and participate in the OMB appeals process related to the Vaughan Mills Center Secondary Plan which includes lands east of Weston Road and south of Rutherford Road to Highway 400 to advocate for increased connectivity and east west transportation options.

The extensive public consultation process identified a clear lack of consensus for a preferred short-term solution with relatively strong support for doing nothing.

As noted above, the City undertook an extensive community engagement component with the residents of Weston Downs throughout the study process in an effort to work with the community to understand the traffic issues present and to identify potential solutions. Three (3) public information sessions and two (2) community advisory committee events were held. A project webpage was set up, notices were sent to residents, and ongoing emails and comments, telephone calls were received regarding the study. A review period was given to the community from August 17 to September 15 to provide input on the three proposed community solutions. These meetings, workshops and correspondence yielded many valuable insights into the existing traffic issues and proposed options to address the traffic concerns present. Feedback from the community engagement is outlined in Attachment 4.

Approximately 20% of the community (348 of 1,846 households) provided input on the three short-term options identified. Regional road turn restrictions and do nothing (not an option presented on the comment form) received the highest support compared to the other alternatives. The ranking of preferred solutions from the third public information session and the review period can be found in Table 4 below.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 5, CW Report No. 38 – Page 6

Table 4: Public Comments – Short-term options

Total Comments from the 3rd PIS and Review Period	Most Preferred Solution
Turn Restrictions – Regional Road	30%
Turn Restrictions – Local Roads	2%
One-Way Santa Barbara	15%
Do Nothing (<i>was not an option on the form</i>)	30%
Turn Restrictions with Permit	22%
No Response	1%
Total	100%
Total Comments Received	348

With no short-term preferred technical solution and a lack of consensus within the community, it is recommended the Region advance improvements to their road network to address the root causes of the traffic issues present, as well as pursue additional solutions that can be implemented immediately.

The Weston Downs area road network has limited north-south capacity for traffic, with gaps in the Regional road network. The traffic study indicated that traffic congestion is found on the surrounding Regional roads, where key intersections are operating at or near capacity.

Short and long-term solutions were presented to address the traffic volumes within the community. Each of the short-term options has limited effectiveness in addressing the traffic congestion and involves different impacts to community mobility and accessibility. Further, the community has diverse views on each of the short-term options; with relatively strong support for doing nothing.

It is recommended that longer-term solutions be pursued that add road capacity to the Regional road transportation system, address the traffic congestion found on the surrounding Regional road network, and improve access to the community, as well as pursue additional solutions not identified in the traffic study that can be implemented immediately. These include advancing Regional road capital improvements for Rutherford Road, Weston Road and Langstaff Road and installing demand responsive traffic signal controllers at all signalized intersections in the vicinity of Weston Downs.

York Region Transit (YRT) currently does not have transit routes going through the Weston Downs community. In anticipation of the widening of the Regional roads from four lanes to six lanes, it is recommended that YRT review the current transit services and consider establishing services in and around the Weston Downs neighbourhood in an effort to manage travel demands.

In addition, the Ministry of Transportation has announced long-term plans to widen Highway 400 to include HOV lanes from Langstaff Road to Major Mackenzie Drive which will provide additional capacity.

There are two elementary schools within the Weston Downs community, St. Gregory the Great and St. Clare. Opportunities exist for the school boards, York Region Public Health, and the City to work with the administration at the schools and the community to develop school travel plans, policies and programs. This can address school traffic-related issues and promote active and sustainable modes of transportation (transit, walking and cycling) to and from school to reduce the number of parents who drop off and pick up their children by vehicle.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 5, CW Report No. 38 – Page 7

The City and the Region continue to monitor and participate in the OMB appeals process related to the Vaughan Mills Center Secondary Plan which includes lands east of Weston Road and south of Rutherford Road to Highway 400 to advocate for increased connectivity and east-west transportation options. In addition to connectivity, planned improvements to Highway 400 may assist to address traffic and congestion issues.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

In consideration of the strategic priorities related to Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014-2018), this report is consistent with the following Term of Council Priorities:

- Improve municipal network;
- Continue to develop transit, cycling and pedestrian options to get around the City; and
- Continue to ensure the safety and well-being of citizens.

Regional Implications

The traffic study identified long-term options to address the traffic concerns in the Weston Downs community that included Regional road capital improvements that are currently part of the Region's transportation master plan. It is recommended that the City pursue long-term solutions by requesting the Region to advance improvements to the Regional road network, to address the root causes of the traffic issues present. Further, to request the Region to review the opportunity for upgrades to the traffic control system on Regional roads in the area of Weston Downs to improve overall traffic operations.

YRT currently does not have transit routes going through the Weston Downs community. It is recommended that YRT considers establishing services in and around the Weston Downs neighbourhood to manage travel demands.

Conclusion

The Hatch Corporation traffic report identified that congestion is present at key Regional intersections and the Provincial highway system in and around the community. Working closely with the community, short and long-term solutions were developed to address the identified traffic issues. Given the limitation and lack of support within the community for the short term options, it is recommended that the City pursue longer-term solutions to improve the municipal network, and develop sustainable transportation options, to continue to ensure the safety and well-being of citizens.

Attachments

1. Location map – Weston Downs
2. Weston Downs Community Engagement Process
3. Weston Downs Traffic Study Report Executive Summary
4. Community Input – Issues and Solutions Identified by Residents

Report prepared by:

Margie Chung, Manager of Traffic Engineering, Ext. 6173

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)