

Street Safety and Neighbourhood Speed Limits Update

Summary of Previous Council Direction, Policy and Neighbourhood Speed Limit Changes

Calgary City Council has considered lower speed limits in neighbourhood settings on various occasions in the past in different contexts and under different legislation. Approaches ranging from city-wide changes to one-off street speed limit changes have been explored or implemented. The following summarizes the history of this issue since 1980.

1982 Feasibility Report:

In 1981 Administration was directed to investigate the feasibility of implementing a 40 km/h speed limit on all residential streets within the city and report back through the SPC on Operations and Development. This motion was made in response to the large number of complaints made about speeding vehicles in residential neighbourhoods. At the 1982 February 22 Meeting of Council a report was presented discussing the feasibility of this (OD82-11).

The feasibility report focused on the legal complications that the then governing Highway Traffic Act of 1975 presented. Specifically, urban areas were permitted to adopt lower maximum speed limits, however the amount of signage needed to complete this was considered quite expensive and work intensive. Furthermore, as most complaints at the time focused on excessive speeding above 50 km/h it was thought that police resources could first focus on these violations. A recommendation that the Province of Alberta be requested to change the unposted speed limit on residential streets in urban areas was made at Committee but lost on a tie at Council.

1992 Riverdale Avenue Report:

After the 1982 feasibility report, there were several cases where communities asked for a speed limit change on individual streets. In 1992 Administration was requested through Council to investigate Riverdale Avenue SW where a recent petition had circulated on reducing the speed limit on that roadway. A large majority of residents were in favour of a reduced speed limit and were concerned with speeding traffic in their neighbourhood. Administration and Calgary Police Service conducted speed and traffic studies, ultimately recommending various signage improvements, but no speed limit change. At the SPC on Transportation Transit and Parking on 1992 May 26 these recommendations were carried, and two further amendments were made to 1) reduce the speed on Riverdale Avenue to 40km/h, and 2) to study reducing speeds on all neighbourhood streets in Calgary, specifically addressing a city-wide speed reduction. At Council, this final recommendation was amended to not address city-wide speed changes but a report addressing speed in general was undertaken.

1992 Speed Reduction Report:

Following the Riverdale Avenue report, Administration prepared a report analyzing speed reduction strategies for all neighbourhoods in the city. This report found that neighbourhood speed issues were being investigated one-by-one as complaints were raised by Council or communities. Addressing each in isolation was becoming inefficient and was causing other downstream effects on other nearby streets. The report explored various means for reducing

speeds and the relative compliance of each of these strategies. In general, it concluded that speed changes are better achieved through environmental changes such as traffic calming and narrower roadways than simply changing speed limits on existing roadways. The report introduced various traffic calming features like speed humps, speed buttons and rumble strips, and recommended piloting these to confirm their intended effects. The report introduced a method for determining where and when speed issues would warrant intervention and a procedure for consulting communities, planning and implementing any traffic calming changes. This recommendations in this report were approved at the 1992 November 30 meeting of Council

As in the 1982 report, the Highway Traffic Act at the time was seen as a significant barrier, adding considerable cost to a city-wide speed limit change. A recommendation was made that The City work with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) to approach the Province to change the Highway Traffic Act to allow for a lower unposted speed in urban areas. Calgary alone approached the Province for this change. Without the broader support of more communities, the Province chose to not incorporate this change into the proposed Traffic Safety Act when that was drafted between 1999 and 2001.

2000 Feasibility Report

In the 1990s following Riverdale Avenue speed limit change to 40km/h many other communities began to advocate for speed limit changes. In parallel with the traffic calming program used at the time, many other streets were changed to 40 km/h per hour. Examples of neighbourhood streets with signed 40km/h speed limits can still be seen in many communities.

In 1999 a Council motion directed Administration to again comprehensively review the feasibility of introducing a 40km/h speed limit for local streets in all neighbourhoods. Communities across the city had continued to request lower speeds on their streets and at the time, other Canadian cities were just beginning the trend of lower neighbourhood speed limits which renewed interest. At the 2000 February 15 meeting of the SPC on Transportation, Transit and Parking a report was presented again concluding that The City should approach the Province through AUMA to amend legislation to lower unposted speed limits in urban areas. This report again concluded that the cost constraints imposed by the Highway Traffic Act were the most significant barrier to introducing a citywide change.

Traffic Calming Policy:

Following the 2000 report, the traffic calming program was formalized into Council Policy TP002 Traffic Calming Policy. This document contains a process and several implementation tactics for making neighbourhoods safer for all travel modes.

Step Forward Pedestrian Strategy:

At the 2016 May 2 Meeting of Council, Council adopted the Step Forward pedestrian strategy (TT2016-0250). This strategy includes 49 actions all aimed at improving the safety and quality of walking in Calgary. One of the actions in this plan was to work with the Province of Alberta, through the development of the City Charter, to enable reduced unposted speed limits for residential areas. After Step Forward was approved, the ability to set our own unposted speed limit for Calgary entered City Charter negotiations. Progress continued throughout 2016 and 2017 and this item was included in the City Charter when presented to the legislature.

City Charter:

In 2018 the City of Calgary Charter Regulation (City Charter) was enacted by the Province. It includes the ability to set an unposted (default) speed limit for Calgary through The City's Traffic Bylaw. This provision significantly reduces the effort and cost needed to make large-scale changes to speed limits than under previous legislation.

Following this action from Step Forward being completed, at the 2018 September 10 Meeting of Council a Notice of Motion on Street Safety and Neighbourhood Speed Limits (C2018-0960) was presented to implement the new Charter authority. The Notice of Motion directed Administration to endorse and implement a reduced speed limit on neighbourhood streets, following recent international and Canadian best practice and the conclusions of Step Forward, and report through Council with a recommended plan. This work is currently underway.