



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of December 5, 2024

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 22, 2024
From: William Doyle, Acting Director, Engineering and Public Works
Subject: Speed Limit Reductions on Arterial and Collector Streets

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to prepare amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw (No. 09-079) to reduce posted speed limits on arterial and collector streets as described in Appendix B of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Committee of the Whole Report addresses the implementation of speed limit reductions on arterial and collector streets in Victoria as part of continued implementation of *Go Victoria*. The report recommends amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw to reduce posted speed limits, aiming to enhance road safety and align with the City's *Vision Zero* goal. The proposed changes include lowering speed limits from the default 50 km/h to 40 km/h or 30 km/h, with a focus on creating safer, more predictable, and consistent speed zones. The report highlights the importance of these changes in reducing traffic-related fatalities and injuries, improving pedestrian and cyclist safety, and supporting the city's broader transportation and mobility goals.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's direction on implementing speed limit reductions on arterial and collector streets as part of continued implementation of *Go Victoria*.

BACKGROUND

The basis of all municipal speed limits is the Provincial Motor Vehicle Act (MVA), which establishes the default speed limit of 50 km/h. The MVA provides municipalities the authority to change speed limits on their roadways by updating their bylaws and installing speed limit signs. Streets that are the default 50 km/h speed limit are not required to be signed as per the MVA; however, any road that is changed by a municipality to a different speed is required to have a posted sign.

The first speed limit reductions on major streets in Victoria started decades ago, with the introduction of 30 km/h to Fernwood Road, Rockland Avenue, Hollywood Crescent, Foul Bay Road, Craigflower Road and others. In 2014, Council directed staff to implement 40 km/h speed limits on select major streets including the entire downtown core, Southgate Street, Quadra Street, Gorge Road and portions of Richmond Road, Bay Street, Douglas Street and Richardson Street. These changes were largely due to neighbourhood-identified transportation priorities and/or community concerns but not typically accompanied with any physical changes to roadway design.

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Since 2016, the City has been more intentional about reductions to posted speed limits. The introduction of the All Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycling network included speed limit reductions on several corridors. Shared-use routes, such as Haultain-Kings, were reduced from 50km/h to 30 km/h and AAA routes on major streets, such as Fort Street, were changed from 50 km/h to 40 km/h. These changes were complemented with significant streetscape interventions to prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety such as reduced vehicle lanes widths, protected bicycle lanes, crosswalk enhancements, traffic diverters and/or intersection upgrades.

In 2022, Council directed staff to lower speed limits on all local streets from the default 50 km/h to 30 km/h. Victoria is one of the first Canadian municipalities to roll out a 30 km/h speed limit on the entire local street network. By the end of 2024, seven neighbourhoods will be complete, with the four remaining neighbourhoods to be complete before the end of 2025. On-going data collection helps to identify zones that may require traffic calming evaluation by staff and/or targeted sites that can be shared with Victoria Police to inform enforcement activities. Concurrent with Council's approval to lower speed limits on local roads in 2022, staff were directed to report back with options for reducing speed limits on arterial and collector roads.

As a result of past initiatives, 40 percent of the City's 100 km of arterials and collector streets are posted at 40 km/h or less. The remaining 60 per cent of streets are unposted with the default 50 km/h speed limit. By the end of 2025, all 160 km of the City's local streets will be signed 30 km/h. Combined, over 75 per cent of the street network will be posted at 40 km/h or slower.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

In 2019, the City adopted a sustainable mobility strategy, *Go Victoria*, which established *Vision Zero* as a safety-first model to guide transportation investments city-wide and emphasized safer road design and lower vehicle speeds to reduce accident frequency and severity.

While ICBC data indicates that Victoria is seeing a downward trend in crashes involving injuries, there is still significant work to be done to eliminate traffic fatalities. From 2013 through 2023, the City experienced between zero and three traffic-related fatalities each year, with an average of two fatalities annually.

Between 2015 and 2023, the City saw a roughly 35 percent reduction in injury-involved ICBC collision claims, about a 33 percent reduction in pedestrian-involved claims and approximately a 10 percent reduction in cyclist-involved claims. Cyclist and pedestrian collisions also comprised a lower percentage of overall collisions. The majority of collisions in Victoria occurred at intersections of arterial and collector streets. At the same time, the City has made significant progress on mode shift targets. Cycling mode share for City of Victoria residents increased by four percent between 2017 and 2022, representing approximately 6900 more cycling trips per day.

Speed Management as Part of Vision Zero

The City's ongoing commitment to *Vision Zero*, with prioritization of walking, cycling, and transit, supports a need for slower, safer streets. Addressing speed is fundamental to making streets safer, as motor vehicle speed is a central factor in fatal and serious-injury crashes.

Car crashes at higher speeds are more likely to occur than at lower speeds due to factors such as reduced driver field-of-vision, slower reaction time and longer braking distances. At slower speeds, pedestrians can make more effective decisions about when to cross the road, and drivers have more capacity to stop in time. Higher speed crashes are more forceful and likely to be fatal, with

speed being directly correlated to whether a person will live or die. Pedestrians are particularly at risk, with research suggesting at least a 90 percent chance of surviving crashes at 30 km/h or below, but less than 20 percent chance of surviving impacts at speeds 50 km/h or above.

As outlined in *Go Victoria*, speed limit reductions are the most effective when paired with street design to encourage slower speeds and reduce the chance and severity of a collision. Data measured on Government Street (Chatham to Bay Street) indicates a 10 percent reduction in operating speeds after the four-lane road design was reduced to two travel lanes with dedicated left turn lanes, crosswalks and protected bike lanes, despite no change in the 50 km/h default speed limit.

Reducing posted speed limits on their own has merit. Research from the National Association of Transportation Officials (NACTO) notes that lowering city-wide speed limits is an inexpensive and scalable way to improve safety outcomes and may lead to measurable declines in both high-end speeders and total number of crashes, even without associated enforcement or engineering changes. As such, reduced posted speed limits is a key strategy in the City's Vision Zero toolkit to complement ongoing engineering measures and investments to further increase road safety.

Strategy to Reduce Speed Limits on Arterial and Collector Streets

The incremental changes over the years have established a street network where a significant portion of Victoria's streets have a posted speed lower than 50 km/h (see Appendix A). Changes have generally been applied based on street classification, typology and characteristics.

Research from NACTO recommends maximum speed limits of 30km/h or 40 km/h on major streets in the urban environment, with higher speed limits only in select, limited cases. 42 km of Victoria's major street network is already posted at 40 km/h or slower, 30 percent of which is on the truck route network and 60 percent on the transit network. 160 km of local streets will be reduced to 30 km/h by the end of 2025.

Local streets are characterized by narrow right-of-way (varying widths, but typically less than nine metres wide or one travel lane), on-street parking, street trees, no transit service, and carrying fewer than 1,000 vehicles per day at typical operating speeds of 30-35 km/h or less. The 30 km/h speed limit reduction program for local streets was established based on this street classification.

Arterial and collector streets support thousands of vehicles per day, goods movement and transit and are defined by a wider cross-section, typically with two to four travel lanes, marked crosswalks, bicycle lanes, transit infrastructure, treed boulevards and/or medians, on-street parking and traffic signals. Arterial and collectors also directly provide access to schools, parks, community centres, commercial villages, large employment centres, and areas of high pedestrian activity, among others. Speeds on our arterial and collector streets are typically within 10 km/h of the speed limit, with some rare exceptions including major arterials like Douglas Street and Blanshard Street north of Caledonia, which have six-lane cross-sections and in some blocks, can see operating speeds greater than 60 km/h.

In developing the recommendations for speed changes on arterial and collector streets, the following speed categories are proposed for updated zones:

- 50 km/h
 - arterial streets outside the downtown with six lanes. This includes Blanshard Street and Douglas Street north of Caledonia Street.

- 40km/h
 - arterial streets with fewer than six lanes
 - arterial streets that are planned for modifications with features such as narrower travel lanes, protected cycling infrastructure, wider sidewalks/boulevards
 - collector streets (except those recommended to be 30 km/h)
 - streets within the Downtown

- 30 km/h
 - collector streets with narrow cross-sections
 - collector streets that front a park/playground, school or village centre
 - collector streets with characteristics such as significant curvature, or existing traffic calming features

Notwithstanding the criteria outlined above, staff are using their professional judgement in recommending new posted speed limits that creates zones and corridors of a posted speed limit to improve understanding and consistency for vehicle drivers. This includes considering a consistent speed limit along a corridor and how speed limits are applied across municipal boundaries.

Blanshard Street and Douglas Street north of Caledonia Street are six lane arterials that connect to provincial highway systems, and inherently the wide cross-section promotes higher speeds. Due to the physical design of the road, changing speed limits alone are unlikely to have an impact on driver behaviour and, in the case of Douglas Street, could have an impact on transit travel times on the region's primary transit corridor. While it is an option to reduce the posted speeds on these corridors to 40 km/h, maintaining the default 50 km/h speed limit is proposed until more significant design changes and infrastructure investments occur, along with future changes to land use and travel patterns.

Establishing lower speed limits for the arterial and collector streets is a low cost and important part of improving safety on our major network. Changes will provide increased consistency and predictability for users while still supporting regional mobility needs. As population densities, travel patterns and land use changes, speed limits will continue to be adjusted and refined in the future to advance towards the City's *Vision Zero* goal.

Implementation

With Council's direction, bylaw amendments would be completed, and staff would implement lower speed limits on arterial and collector streets (as shown in Appendix B) starting immediately with a plan to be complete by end of 2027. Sequencing would be informed by equity considerations, collision history, speed data and coordination with major capital projects. Consolidation of signage and reduction in sign clutter would also be a focus during implementation.

Staff are ready to proceed with changes using existing municipal powers and will continue to work with partners in Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt on coordinated efforts, noting that as per the Motor Vehicle Act, each municipality still needs to continue to make changes to their individual bylaws to lower speed limits and implement the required signage.

Complementary Speed Management Initiatives

In addition to lowering speed limits on arterial and collector streets, the City will continue to deliver corridor and intersection redesigns on the major street network through annual capital programs to further increase road safety and support other mobility objectives. Examples include reduced travel lane widths, narrower cross-sections, centre medians, slip lane removals and protected bicycle lanes.

Victoria Police Department will continue to take a safety-first approach to enforcement and prioritize high risk behaviours such as impaired, prohibited, distracted and dangerous driving behaviours. Education to encourage slower speeds on major streets will also continue to be delivered through partnerships with the CRD and other community partners like ICBC.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Option 1: Direct staff to prepare amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw No. 09-079 to reduce speed limits on all arterial and collector streets to 40 km/h or 30 km/h according to the map in Appendix B (RECOMMENDED).

Under this option, staff would return with Street and Traffic Bylaw amendments focused on reduced speed limits on most arterial and collector streets. This approach provides clear consistent and enforceable methods to communicate reduced speeds, consistent expectations and messages about speed across the city, and enables the most efficient delivery using existing staff resources. Once complete, 99 percent of all City streets would be posted at 40 km/h or less.

Option 2: Direct staff to prepare amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw No. 09-079 to reduce speed limits on all arterial and collector streets to 40 km/h or 30 km/h according to the map in Appendix B, with the addition of Blanshard and Douglas streets north of Caledonia Street (not shown in Appendix B).

This option builds on Option 1 and would result in 100 percent of the streets in the City with a speed limit of 40km/h or less. As with Option 1, this approach provides clear consistent methods to communicate reduced speeds, consistent expectations and messages about speed across the city. The addition of Blanshard and Douglas Street would be an acknowledgement of Council support for staff to accelerate the delivery of engineering investments on these corridors to support lower operating speeds, recognizing the short-term limitations and practical challenges of enforcement.

Option 3: Direct staff to prepare amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw (No. 09-079) to reconcile all the streets that have already been posted with lower speeds per Appendix D.

This option is a house-keeping administrative task which would direct bylaw updates only for corridors where signage has already been installed in coordination with previous capital projects. On these corridors and street segments, no additional work in the field is required. Under this option, other arterial and collector streets would remain at the default 50 km/h speed limit, and any future speed limit reduction on a particular street would require a bylaw change and Council approval.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Lowering speed limits is consistent with Chapter 7 (Transportation and Mobility) and Chapter 15 (Community Well-Being) of the Official Community Plan.

Accessibility Impact Statement

Reducing speed limits below the default 40km/h aligns with the City's Accessibility Framework by focusing on creating a safe, inclusive and accessible built environment. Reducing speed limits can improve the comfort of people with disabilities, including those with mobility or cognitive challenges, hearing or vision loss. Slower speeds are also more comfortable for seniors, parents and caregivers and youth. The placement of new signage will focus on consolidating existing signage and reducing barriers to clear, accessible paths and sidewalks.

2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Reducing speed limits aligns with Council's strategic priorities on Transportation and Community Well-Being & Safety.

Impacts to Financial Plan

Implementing recommended changes on arterial and collector streets can be achieved within existing resources that are part of the draft financial plan. Costs will either be integrated with planned major capital projects or delivered through the City's annual traffic calming budget.

CONCLUSIONS

Concurrent with Council's approval to lower speed limits on local roads in 2022, staff were directed to report back with options for reducing speed limits on arterial and collector roads. After conducting a network analysis of existing speed zones and referencing best practice, staff recommend reducing speed limits on the majority of arterial and collector streets. To proceed with these changes, the City will be required to change Schedule B within the Streets and Traffic Bylaw and regulate speeds with the installation of signage.

In prioritising the implementation, staff will consider equity, collision history, speed data and coordination with major capital projects. Staff will also continue to deliver physical interventions to reduce speeds through annual capital programs and collaborate with other municipalities and agency partners in the region on road safety education and encouragement programs.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

Appendix A: Current Arterial and Collector Street Speed Zones

Appendix B: Proposed Arterial and Collector Street Speed Zones

Appendix C: Option 1 - Proposed Speed Changes

Appendix D: Option 2 - Speed Changes Already Posted Not Reflected in Bylaw