



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of June 23, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 3, 2022
From: Philip Bellefontaine, Director, Engineering and Public Works
Subject: Local Street 30km/hr Speed Limit

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the Director of Engineering and Public Works to prepare amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw No. 09-079 to reduce speed limits on local roadways to 30km/hr.

BACKGROUND

A reduction of speed limits on local roadways was a 2021 action identified in Councils 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan. In January 2021, Council endorsed a plan to implement reduced blanket speed limits in coordination with neighbouring municipalities based on participation in a provincial Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) pilot project, which was anticipated to start in late 2021. In early 2022, staff were informed that an MVA pilot would not be undertaken at this time, therefore, an alternative approach, based on changes to City Bylaws, is being advanced.

Reducing speed limits supports road safety and neighbourhood liveability. Slower streets contribute to improved comfort for pedestrians and cyclists and decreased noise levels. When they do occur, collisions with vulnerable road users at 30km/hr or less correlate with a 10% probability of death when compared to a 30% probability of death at 40km/hr or 85% at 50km/hr.

This report provides an overview of the planned implementation approach to achieve Council's Strategic Plan action of reducing speed limits on local roads.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Speed Limit Reduction Processes

In its 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, Council identified a 2021 action to reduce default speeds on local neighbourhood streets from 50km/hr to 30km/hr. Reducing speed limits has several benefits including improving overall road safety and supporting neighbourhood live ability. Slower streets contribute to improved comfort for pedestrians and cyclists and decreased noise. When collisions do occur, incidents with vulnerable road users at 30km/hr or less correlate with a 10% probability of death when compared to a 30% probability of death at 40km/hr or 85% at 50km/hr. Slower speeds can also reduce the impact and severity of collisions that occur between motor vehicles.

Currently the default speed limit for all streets within the City of Victoria is set by the Province at 50km/h unless otherwise posted. Different speed limits are enforceable on individual streets, provided signage is posted on every block in accordance with the Motor Vehicle Act. Over the past

several years there has continued to be municipal advocacy, individually and through the Union of BC Municipalities, to the Province to reduce default speed limits as a part of the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA).

In 2019, the Province amended Part 13 of the MVA to enable pilot projects to research, test, and evaluate new technologies and policies. It was anticipated that a Pilot Project on default 30 km/hr speed limits would be launched in fall 2021. The City was poised to work collaboratively with other municipalities in the Capital Region on a coordinated initiative, including the District of Saanich, District of Oak Bay, and Township of Esquimalt.

In January 2021, staff presented a report to Council with recommendations on the implementation of city-wide 30km/hr speed limits on local residential streets. At that meeting, Council directed staff to:

Finalize any outstanding stakeholder engagement, pending approval of resources through the 2021 Financial Planning process, and prepare an application to participate in the Motor Vehicle Act Pilot Program to reduce default speed limits on local roads without a continuous centre line in the City of Victoria from 50 km/hr to 30 km/hr as per the 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan.

Resources for participation were set aside in the 2021 Financial Plan with the intent to finance the rest of the initiative in the 2022 and 2023 budgets.

City staff learned from Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) staff in January 2022 that the Minister has not provided direction to begin another MVA pilot project and there is currently no timeline to do so. Similarly, there are no plans for broader Act reform that would change default speed limits from 50km/hr to 30km/hr.

In the absence of a MVA change or a Pilot Project, municipalities will have to continue regulating speeds on roadways through local Bylaw with the installation of signage for each roadway (or designated portion of) where the speed limit has been changed from the 50km/hr default. This means local governments will have to sign every block, meaning additional infrastructure and resources to implement the change.

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 without a change to the Motor Vehicle Act, each municipality will be required to make changes to their individual bylaws to lower speed limits and implement the required signage. This could result in inconsistency in timing and delivery across the region.

Speed Limit Reductions on Local Roads

Schedule A of the Streets and Traffic Bylaw includes a list of all arterial, secondary arterial, collector, secondary collector, and downtown streets (Appendix A), Schedule B of the Bylaw includes a list of all streets with speed limits which have been modified from the default 50km/hr. It is proposed to modify Schedule B such that the default speed limit on all streets, except those listed in either Schedule A or those in Schedule B with a speed limit lower than 30km/hr, becomes 30km/hr. This change would effectively change all local streets to 30km/hr.

Following approval of the bylaw amendments, staff would commence implementation of the 30km/hr speed limit signage. The sequence and order of implementation will be informed by an equity lens as well as collision history, speed profile data and coordination with major capital projects. Anticipated implementation would prioritize streets with presence of vulnerable populations and target areas such as parks, schools, care facilities, community centres, streets with

documented high speeds, and streets without sidewalks. Due to the scale and scope of this initiative, it is anticipated that the roll out of the 30km/hr speed limit changes would take place over several years. Consolidation of signage and reduction in sign clutter would be a focus during implementation.

Complementary Speed Management Initiatives

In addition to lowering speed limits, the City will continue delivering physical traffic calming interventions through capital programs and the annual traffic calming budget via a data-driven approach. Examples include curb bulges, centre medians, speed humps, traffic circles, and traffic diverters to decrease vehicle speeds and volumes of non-local traffic on local roads.

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

While focusing on the implementation of the local street speed reduction initiative, staff will also initiate a comprehensive review of speed limits on collector and arterial roads to evaluate speed management opportunities as part of the City's commitment to Vision Zero.

OPTIONS AND IMPACTS

Option 1: Direct the Director of Engineering and Public Works to prepare amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw No. 09-079 to reduce speed limits on local roadways to 30km/hr. (RECOMMENDED)

Under this option, the City would proceed with Bylaw changes and implementation of reduced speed limits on local roads. This approach will require additional resources in Transportation and Public Works, with support from Engagement for communications. Delivery would be phased with sequencing described within this report. The benefits of this approach provide clear consistent and enforceable methods to communicate reduced speeds. Staff would bring forward supplemental resource recommendations to support signage and educational programs for reduced speed limits through future Financial Plans. Under this option, the City will also continue delivering physical traffic calming interventions through capital programs and the annual traffic calming budget via a data-driven approach.

Option 2: Maintain the current approach to speed limits on all streets and deliver changes incrementally as part of approved capital programs or traffic calming initiatives.

Under this option, local streets would remain with the default 50km/hr speed limit and any future speed limit reduction on a particular street would require a bylaw change and council approval. Staff would continue to deliver vehicle speed reductions through incremental changes as a part of capital programs or traffic calming initiatives. Staff would continue to use a data driven approach and would focus efforts on streets with the highest needs. The primary focus would be on physical interventions and education to improve road safety with bylaw changes approved through Council decisions. Municipal wide reductions would be either achieved with a future change to the default speed in the Motor Vehicle Act or with the announcement of a future Motor Vehicle Act pilot project.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Lowering speed limits is consistent with the Official Community Plan under Goal 7: Transportation and Mobility (7A, 7B and 7C) and Goal 15: Community Well-being (15F and 15G).

Accessibility Considerations

Reducing speed limits can improve the comfort of people with disabilities including those with mobility challenges, hearing or vision loss when using city mobility networks. People with disabilities will continue to be stakeholders through the process to deliver reduced speeds.

As part of the implementation of new speed limit signage, staff will minimize new sidewalk obstructions by placing new signage on existing sign and electrical poles, or by placing new signage in the front or back boulevard. Sidewalk obstructions caused by utility and sign poles can have a negative impact on the comfort for all pedestrians and cause new barriers for those with vision loss or people who use mobility devices.

Financial Plan Considerations

As part of the 2021 Financial Plan, Council approved year one of funding (\$135,000) to commence the pilot project. Since the MVA pilot project did not launch as anticipated, resources were carried forward into the 2022 Financial Plan and are available to begin planning and implementation.

Because implementation can no longer rely on the streamlined “gateway” signage approach through the MVA pilot, staff would re-assess resource requirements to complete this initiative and bring forward funding asks in future financial planning processes. Physical interventions such as traffic circles, speed humps, median islands, and diverters along with educational efforts will also be integrated into capital budget requests to support the bylaw change.

CONCLUSIONS

In its 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan, Council identified a 2021 action to reduce default speeds on local neighbourhood streets to 30 km/hr. In the absence of broader Motor Vehicle Act reform or a suitable Pilot Project model, the City of Victoria will be required to change Schedule B within the Streets and Traffic Bylaw and regulate speeds with the installation of signage.

The City will prioritize streets with presence of vulnerable populations and target areas such as parks, schools, care facilities, community centres, streets with documented high speeds, and streets without sidewalks. Staff will also continue to deliver physical interventions to reduce speeds on local roads 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: Streets and Traffic Bylaw No. 09-079 Schedule A – Street Classification
Appendix B: Streets and Traffic Bylaw No. 09-079 Schedule B – Speed Zones