

Region of Waterloo
Transportation Services
Transportation

To: Planning and Works Committee
Meeting Date: August 13, 2024
Report Title: Community Safety Zones

1. Recommendation

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo approve the following as outlined in Report TSD-TRP-24-010, dated August 13, 2024:

1. Adopt the Two-Step Community Safety Zone Warrant as described in this report and direct staff to utilize the warrant process as the preferred methodology for identifying potential Community Safety Zones along regional roads throughout the Region of Waterloo;
2. Direct staff to report back with a list of designated School Zones which should have a Community Safety Zone designation added prior to the planned Municipal Speed Camera program changes in late 2024;
3. Adopt the strategy of utilizing a Community Safety Zone designation at all School Zones along regional roadways that are to be equipped with a Municipal Speed Camera in the future; and
4. Direct staff to use the newly adopted Community Safety Zone warrant to identify a comprehensive list of prospective Community Safety Zones along regional roads (including those not centred around a School Zone) and report back to Council with options for implementing those Community Safety Zones, including associated impacts to the staffing and resources for the Region's Municipal Speed Camera program.

2. Purpose / Issue:

This report lays out a series of recommendations for the adoption of Community Safety Zones within the Region of Waterloo in support of road safety goals and objectives, and in support of the Region's Municipal Speed Camera program.

3. Strategic Plan:

The recommendations of this report are aligned with the Region's Strategic Plan in the

following key areas:

- Climate Aligned Growth:
 - Foster car-alternative options through complete streets and extended alternative transportation networks.
- Equitable Services and Opportunities:
 - Design equitable regional services that meet local community needs.

4. Report Highlights:

- In response to a Council directive, staff investigated the feasibility of designating the entire Region of Waterloo as a Community Safety Zone and have concluded that a Region-wide Community Safety Zone is not feasible because of limitations in the Highway Traffic Act, and because of the need to protect the potential benefits of Community Safety Zones at the most critical locations.
- Through assistance from a consulting engineering firm with extensive provincial experience, staff have developed a two-step warrant process for identifying suitable Community Safety Zone designations along Regional Roads. The warrant involves an assessment of adjacent land uses, physical roadway attributes, and a points-based assessment of several key road safety risk factors.
- To uphold the potential of Community Safety Zones as a valuable road safety tool, staff recommends using Community Safety Zone designations only in tandem with a Municipal Speed Camera, and that the timing be such that both roadway changes occur at or around the same time.
- Staff recommends adding a Community Safety Zone layer to School Zones along regional roads at or around the time when a Municipal Speed Camera is deployed to provide consistency among Municipal Speed Camera sites around the Region.
- Should Council adopt the recommended two-step Community Safety Zone warrant, then staff further recommends conducting a Region-wide exercise to identify all prospective Community Safety Zones along regional roads, along with a plan for further Municipal Speed Camera deployment to support the expansion of all non-school Community Safety Zones (including the associated staffing and resource implications).

5. Background:

At the February 7, 2023 Planning & Works Committee meeting, Council directed staff to “investigate the expansion of the Automated Speed Enforcement Program to include community safety zones, including to the entire Region.” This report addresses this Council directive by reviewing the merits of Community Safety Zones in (a) the entire Region; (b) near schools; and (c) at other crucial locations within the community.

Community Safety Zones in the Highway Traffic Act

In 1998, the province of Ontario introduced language into the Highway Traffic Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. H.8) that allows any municipality to designate a Community Safety Zone along a highway under the jurisdiction of that municipality. The exact wording is as follows:

“214.1 (1) The council of a municipality may by by-law designate a part of a highway under its jurisdiction as a community safety zone if, in the council’s opinion, public safety is of special concern on that part of the highway. 1998, c. 6, s. 1.”

Feasibility of a Region-Wide Community Safety Zone

Following a feasibility review, staff advise against designating the entire Region as a Community Safety Zone. Some of the main reasons are as follows:

- The relevant section within the Highway Traffic Act has specific language around designating “part of a highway” as a Community Safety Zone, and states that “public safety...” must be “...of special concern” in order to qualify. Given the specifics of those constraints, it would not be feasible to prove that the entire highway network could be reasonably labelled under the “public safety is of special concern” notion, nor would it fit the “part of a highway” language within the Act.
- For Community Safety Zones to be truly effective, they need to be deployed strategically. Designating the entire Region as a Community Safety Zone would cause that designation to lose its intended effect, and would remove a tool which could be useful for highlighting the areas which truly require special attention.
- Designating Community Safety Zones has historically proven to be largely ineffective in the Region in the absence of additional measures such as physical roadway changes or a Municipal Speed Camera. Further, they put additional resource pressures on Waterloo Region Police Services to try to enforce those Community Safety Zones.

For the reasons described above, staff have concluded that Regional Council should designate Community Safety Zones only in strategic locations around the Region.

Community Safety Zone Warrant

To identify where and under what conditions Community Safety Zones should be designated within the Region of Waterloo, staff retained a consulting engineering firm to help establish a warrant process for the Region. This work included a review of Community Safety Zone practices in other municipalities around the province, and the development of a data-driven warrant that would be applicable for regional roads in Waterloo.

The Community Safety Zone warrant developed for the Region is a two-step warrant process as follows:

Step 1: Eligibility Assessment

A section of roadway would pass the Community Safety Zone eligibility screening if the following criteria are satisfied:

- I. There is at least one primary community feature (e.g. elementary or secondary school, medium or large park, community centre, or hospital) and/or at least two secondary community features (e.g. daycare centre, seniors centre, small park, or playground) in close proximity to the roadway segment;
- II. The posted speed limit is 60 km/h or less;
- III. There is poor observed driver speed compliance;
- IV. The posted speed limit is appropriate for the roadway characteristics;
- V. There are no plans for other traffic calming measures; and
- VI. The roadway segment is physically suitable for the deployment of a Municipal Speed Camera.

If the roadway segment passes the Eligibility Assessment, then it would advance to the second step of the Community Safety Zone Warrant assessment.

Step 2: Points-Based Risk Factor Assessment

The second step is to assess risk factors that would formally identify if a Community Safety Zone is warranted. This is a points-based assessment that quantifies the risks associated with:

- I. Average daily traffic volumes (more traffic = higher risk);
- II. Pedestrian volumes (more pedestrian volumes = higher risk);
- III. Presence of pedestrian-generating facilities, such as schools, community centres, parks or hospitals (more community facilities = higher risk);
- IV. Presence of heavy trucks along the roadway (higher truck percentage = higher risk);
- V. Observed traffic speed (higher speeds = higher risk);
- VI. Collision history (higher history of collisions = higher risk);
- VII. Frequency of intersections & accesses (more intersections = higher risk); and

VIII. Presence of sidewalks (no sidewalks = higher risk).

Each of these risk factors is assessed on the subject roadway segment and, if that segment receives a score that is equivalent to at least 70% of the maximum risk score, the segment would be eligible for Community Safety Zone designation.

Staff also recommends the inclusion of an option for further detailed engineering study to look closer at sensitive locations in the community that do not pass the Community Safety Zone warrant outlined above.

In terms of length: it is generally recommended that Community Safety Zones are limited to 250 meters on either side of the critical land use(s) contained within the Community Safety Zone. For roadways with two eligible Community Safety Zones within 500 meters of each other, it is recommended to combine these into one single longer Community Safety Zone.

Full details of the recommended Community Safety Zone Warrant are provided in the Consultant Summary Report in Appendix A.

Community Safety Zones and Municipal Speed Cameras

To ensure that each Community Safety Zone designation is effective at achieving the associated road safety goals, staff recommends that new Community Safety Zone designations are only implemented in parallel with (and at the same time as) the deployment of a Municipal Speed Camera. This recommendation will serve to uphold the overall effectiveness of the Community Safety Zone tool and will help to improve the effectiveness of each Community Safety Zone designation.

School Zones versus Community Safety Zones

Within the Highway Traffic Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. H.8), the province has delegated the authority to any municipality to designate a School Zone along a roadway under the jurisdiction of that municipality. Per Section 128 (5) (a), the *“Council of a municipality may by by-law, designate a portion of a highway under its jurisdiction that adjoins the entrance to or exit from a school and that is within 150 metres along the highway in either direction beyond the limits of the land used for the purposes of the school.”*

To support the initial kick-off of the Municipal Speed Camera program, a number of School Zones were designated along Regional Roadways, as documented in Traffic and Parking By-law 16-023, Schedule 23 (School Zones).

From the development of the Community Safety Zone warrant and associated background research, staff recommends layering on a Community Safety Zone designation at any School Zone along a Regional roadway where a Municipal Speed Camera is in use for the following reasons:

- There are some critical corridors near schools that cannot be designated as a School Zone under the limitations within the Highway Traffic Act definition.
 - Using a Community Safety Zone designation will allow the Region to use a Municipal Speed Camera along roadways near schools which have high pedestrian volume activity, but which do not meet the Highway Traffic Act definition.
- The Community Safety Zone designation allows for more flexibility in their exact placement.
 - For example, while the Highway Traffic Act School Zone definition allows designation only within 150 meters from the edge of the school property boundary, Community Safety Zones do not have this same limitation and could be designated with more logical endpoints, and could more effectively capture the locations where pedestrian volumes are the highest.
 - In some cases, it could be suitable to combine two School Zones into one Community Safety Zone.
- Most (or all) other municipalities in Ontario who operate a Municipal Speed Camera program use Community Safety Zone designations at and around their schools. In this regard, staff recommends a consistent best practice approach with how others are administering the program around the province.
- Per the legislative requirements of the Highway Traffic Act, with the adoption of an Administrative Penalties program, the speeding fines for Municipal Speed Cameras will be the doubled fine amounts regardless of whether the infraction occurred in a Community Safety Zone or School Zone.
 - Since standard Community Safety Zone signage includes the “Fines Increased” notice, then the Community Safety Zone signage would provide clear communication to the public around the expectations for traffic infractions.
- While the Council-approved plan involves the deployment of Municipal Speed Cameras at and around schools, if (and when) the program expands beyond school areas in the future, then it would be prudent to ensure that all Municipal Speed Camera sites look the same so that the program operates as effectively as possible.

Consistent with staff recommendations for all Community Safety Zones, staff recommend that the Community Safety Zone designation only be added at or around the time that a Municipal Speed Camera is implemented in a given School Zone. For the existing School Zones along regional roads that are already equipped with a Municipal Speed Camera, staff recommends making the change at the time when the Region’s Municipal Speed Camera program undergoes significant changes (including

in-house processing and the adoption of administrative penalties) in late 2024.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities:

Regional staff have met with staff from each of the seven area municipalities on several occasions to discuss an approach to Community Safety Zones in the region. From those discussions, the consensus was that the Region would take a leadership role on establishing a Community Safety Zone warrant which would be applicable along regional roads. Following this, the area municipalities would consider adopting the warrant (or a modified version of the warrant) for their own municipal roadways. To that end, Regional staff have shared the final consulting recommendations and associated staff recommendations with Area Municipal counterparts and will pass along the final recommendations of Regional Council.

Public:

If Regional Council approves the recommendations of this report, then staff will look for opportunities to provide more information around Community Safety Zones to members of the public. One option would be to build on the established Regional SafeRoads website and include more information around both Community Safety Zones and Municipal Speed Cameras. Staff will use available communication channels to help educate the public about where Community Safety Zones are located and how they are justified, and to provide an opportunity for the public to speak with staff about the Community Safety Zone program.

7. Financial Implications:

Staff anticipate that the data assembly required to facilitate the identification of potential Regional Community Safety zones would not have a significant impact on the Region's operating or capital budgets. If additional data collection is required (which would be determined through the Community Safety Zone warrant screening process), then this can likely be funded through the Traffic Count Program project within the Region's Transportation Capital Program.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Should Council approve the recommended two-step Community Safety Zone warrant and all associated recommendations of this report, the following would be the steps to action the roll-out of Community Safety Zones around the Region:

1. At the launch of the new Municipal Speed Camera program in late 2024, add Community Safety Zone designations to the existing School Zones along Regional Roads which are currently equipped with a Municipal Speed Camera;

2. Concurrently with the future roll-out of Municipal Speed Cameras in more School Zones along Regional Roads, add Community Safety Zone designations to those new sites at or around the time they are equipped with a Municipal Speed Camera;
3. Conduct a region-wide exercise to identify road segments which are suitable for Community Safety Zone designations, including a review of the suitability of the existing legacy Regional Community Safety Zones listed in Traffic and Parking By-law 16-023, Schedule 21 (Community Safety Zones); and
4. Report back to Council with a list of candidate Community Safety Zone locations along with the associated implications for the Municipal Speed Camera program, including resource impacts to the Region's Processing Centre and Administrative Penalty teams.

Due to the extensive data collection requirements to facilitate this task, it is anticipated that it will take 6 to 9 months to identify a comprehensive list of candidate Community Safety Zone locations along Regional Roads. Staff would aim to have this report back to Council in 2025 Q2.

Regional staff will also work with Area Municipal partners on the applicability of Community Safety Zones on City and Township roadways.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Community Safety Zone Warrant – Region of Waterloo (Summary Report)

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