



The Corporation of the District of Saanich | Mayor's Office

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Sent via email: Minister.Transportation@gov.bc.ca

March 25, 2021

The Honourable Rob Fleming, M.L.A.
Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure
PO Box 9055 Prov Stn Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fleming:

Re: Update from Saanich Council on its application for a *Motor Vehicle Act* Pilot Project

On behalf of Saanich Council, we thank you and your staff for your support while we worked through the process to arrive at a multi-municipal framework to apply to the Province for a *Motor Vehicle Act* (MVA) pilot project study exploring speed reductions on residential streets without a continuous yellow centerline.

Together with Central Saanich, Esquimalt, Oak Bay, North Saanich, and Sidney it has been a remarkable 2.5 year preparation for a joint pilot project application set at 40 km/hr. Further to our recent correspondence this letter provides some updated information.

On March 22 Saanich Council voted unanimously in support of a report to amend our MVA pilot project application from 40 km/h to 30 km/h, resolving as follows:

1. *"That Council direct staff to amend Saanich's application to reduce the default speed limit on streets without a continuous directional dividing line to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for a pilot project under Part 13 of the Motor Vehicle Act, from the originally proposed speed reduction of 40 km/h to 30 km/h, and submit it when the application for Phase two opens.*
2. *That Council direct staff to bring back a formal resolution to participate in the pilot project at the appropriate time.*
3. *That the Mayor write on behalf of Council to CRD municipalities that have shown interest in speed reduction pilots, advising them of Saanich's change in direction and that there are opportunities to participate in pilots at 30 km/h and 40 km/h in the region."*

During the meeting and in advance, Council had the benefit of hearing from the Saanich community that they are keenly interested in exploring the improved livability experience on our residential roads that a 30 km/h pilot project would deliver over the current framework of a 40 km/h pilot

project. Given the strong public appreciation of the benefits demonstrated for livability, walking, cycling and the safety of residents when residential speeds are set at 30 km/h, this is the direction Saanich will now be taking for our application.

We believe that our region provides an ideal test-bed for a pilot project of this nature. Our municipalities include the characteristics realized across British Columbia, for example; rural, suburban, large and small urban areas, coastal towns, down town cores, wooded and coastal areas. This is in addition to the daily arrival into our municipalities of considerable road traffic from our ferry terminals and airport.

To rebuild a renewed regional municipal collective for the application at 30 km/h, we have reached out to the City of Victoria to explore their interest in participating in a joint application for a 30 km/h MVA pilot project. We are also asking those municipalities that previously agreed to join in the original 40 km/h regional pilot project (Central Saanich, Esquimalt, Oak Bay, North Saanich, and Sidney) if they would consider joining us in a 30 km/h pilot project.

Additionally, we have written to the municipalities of Colwood, Highlands, Langford, Metchosin, Sooke, and View Royal to advise them of this change from 40 km/h to 30 km/h and to request if their councils and communities will reconsider joining us in a 30 km/h pilot project.

As you can see, Saanich remains committed to working in partnership with all interested regional partners on speed limit reductions on our residential roads to improve the livability experience and the safety of our streets. We continue to see immense value in a regional approach and hope to see this initiative continue to be embraced across the region.

A copy of the recent correspondence dated March 4 and the report to Council are attached for further information. The minutes of the March 22 Council meeting are available on our website at: <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/mayor-council/schedule-agendas-minutes.html>.

We look forward to hearing from your office on the appropriate next steps to make this vision reality.

With appreciation,



Fred Haynes
Mayor

Enclosures

c.

Saanich Council
Sharon Hvozdzanski, Director of Planning
Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Council
From: Zac de Vries, Councillor; Rebecca Mersereau, Councillor; Ned Taylor, Councillor
Date: 3/13/21
Subject: Speed Reduction Pilot Project Application Amendment—Shifting to 30 km/hr for Road Safety and Livability

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council directs staff to amend Saanich's application to reduce the default speed limit on streets without a continuous directional dividing line to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for a pilot project under part 13 of the *Motor Vehicle Act*, from the originally proposed speed reduction of 40km/hr to 30 km/hr, and submit it when the application period for Phase two opens.
2. That Council directs staff to bring back a formal resolution to participate in the pilot project at the appropriate time.
3. That the Mayor write on behalf of Council to CRD municipalities that have shown interest in speed reduction pilots, advising them of Saanich's change in direction and that there are opportunities to participate in pilots at 30km/hr and 40km/hr in the region.

PURPOSE

This report provides a rationale for changing direction on the speed limit reduction pilot project.

BACKGROUND

On October 18, 2020, Council approved a recommendation to direct staff to "submit an application to reduce the default speed limit to 40km/hr on streets without a continuous directional dividing line to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for a pilot project under Part 13 of the *Motor Vehicle Act* when the application period for Phase 2 opens."

This directive from Council has not been implemented because the Province has not yet opened the intake for Phase 2 applications.

Subsequent to Saanich Council's deliberations and on January 7, 2021, City of Victoria Council approved a [staff recommendation](#) to proceed with an application for a pilot project that would apply a 30km/hr speed limit to streets without a continuous directional dividing line.

Consequently, since Saanich's Council's decision in October, it's become clear that a) there will not be a single default speed limit reduction pilot project in the region, and b) it is possible to pursue a 30km/hr pilot in Saanich and still achieve consistency with some neighbouring municipalities. Pending a successful application, a change from 40km/hr in Saanich would mean that 52% of the CRD's population resides in a municipality participating in a 30km/hr speed reduction pilot project.

DISCUSSION

As was documented in the [comprehensive Saanich staff report](#) dated October 8, 2020, reducing default speed limits has many benefits, including improving road safety and neighbourhood liveability. Three main reasons why 30km/hr on the roads in question appears to be preferable to 40km/hr for our municipality are described below.

1. 30km/hr speed limits have been proven to be safer for vulnerable road users than 40km/hr speed limits

While a reduction from 50km/hr to 40km/hr is associated with safety benefits in terms of the quantity of incidents, as well as the severity at which they occur and how fatal they are, there is considerable and growing evidence that these public safety benefits are much greater when speed limits are further reduced to 30km/hr.

For example, citing a 2016 peer-reviewed study, the report from the Saanich Director of Engineering dated October 8, 2020 states that for cyclists and pedestrians hit by someone driving a motor vehicle: "collisions at 30km/hr or less correlate with a lower probability of death (10%), compared to a 40% probability of death in a collision at 40 km/hr".¹ More recently, a peer-reviewed article documenting the outcomes of a study in the City of Toronto that was designed specifically to compare the impacts of 30km/hr and 40km/hr speed limits on the frequency and severity of pedestrian motor vehicle collisions reported a 28% decrease in accident frequency on the roads with 30km/hr speed limits and a 67% decrease in major and fatal injuries.²

A 2020 report of the US-based National Association of City Transportation Officials titled *City Limits: Setting Safe Speed Limits on Urban Streets* notes the following: "maximum recommended speed limit for any minor street is 20 mph. The maximum recommended speed limits are based primarily on speeds that minimize risks to pedestrians and cyclists."³ Accordingly, speed limit reductions are becoming increasingly common in North American cities and are supported through infrastructure changes and traffic calming interventions.

¹ Jurewicz et al., 2016. Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/reader/82551790>

² Fridman et al., 2020. Retrieved from <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12889-019-8139-5.pdf>

³ NACTO, 2020. Retrieved from https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NACTO_CityLimits_Spreads.pdf

The bottom line is that a speed reduction to 30 km/hr it is more likely to save more lives and reduce injury than a speed reduction to 40 km/hr. It is notable that the majority of the examples of speed reduction initiatives with quantified, positive outcomes for public safety that cited in the October 10 report by Saanich staff concerned speed limit reductions on local/residential roads to 30 km/hr, not 40km/hr.

2. Saanich has limited physical infrastructure to protect vulnerable road users and encourage mode shift to active transportation, and no near-term plans to change this

Due to historical development servicing approaches, Saanich has limited coverage of sidewalks in residential areas relative to many municipalities. This, in combination with limited curb and gutter infrastructure, narrow road widths in some cases, and the proliferation of unregulated on-street parking, has resulted in informal and haphazard streetscapes in many Saanich neighbourhoods. Due to a lack of dedicated space for vulnerable road users and currently permitted vehicular speeds, these streetscapes are not welcoming to pedestrians, cyclists, people who roll, and those with mobility challenges and devices.

Aside from the public safety risks this presents to those who are willing and able to brave these conditions, they deter other residents from transitioning to more active modes of transportation. This will impede Saanich from successfully achieving goals approved by Council in the 2020 Climate Plan and contributes to the high cost of living in our region by making it difficult for residents to forgo the expense of personal vehicles.

The proposed amendment to the Default Speed Reduction Pilot Project is not intended to take focus away from improving road safety on our major roads and intersections, nor is it meant to take the emphasis away from our Active Transportation Plan. It is about creating conditions where our neighbourhood streets are safer and more livable. Slower streets provide opportunities for walking, cycling, and rolling and make it easier for people to exercise and access businesses in their neighbourhoods.

Saanich's 2018 [Active Transportation Plan](#) (ATP) sets out an excellent vision for increasing Saanich's active transportation throughout the municipality. Consistent with [Vision Zero](#) principles, target # 2 from Saanich's ATP strives to "Work Towards Zero Traffic-Related Fatalities or Serious Injuries". Unfortunately, even with Council's recent decision to increase funding levels for ATP implementation by approximately \$2 million/year, it will still take decades for the ATP to be implemented. The need to improve road safety in order to protect vulnerable road users and to give Saanich residents more affordable and environmentally sustainable transportation options requires a far more urgent response.

A more ambitious pilot at 30km/hr that is more likely to result in demonstrable changes in automobile speeds offers a much greater opportunity for Saanich to leverage a low-cost policy tool on offer by the Province, to help compensate for the financial limitations Saanich continues to experience in building active transportation infrastructure. Our own community safety priorities and the historical and present-day land-use circumstances in Saanich warrant consideration of the approach that is best suited to our particular needs, over and above what other municipalities in the region are doing.

3. Pilot projects should be ambitious, for good reason

Pilot projects are intended to test the viability of concepts or policy approaches for a limited time, or at a limited scale, in order to reduce risks if outcomes are not desirable. Inherent in the process is an evaluation of outcomes, to inform a decision about how or if to apply the results on a permanent basis. The merits of testing a fairly modest reduction in speed limits, and one that is already commonly used in the region, are debatable. It is highly unlikely that an outcome of a 40km/hr pilot would be to permanently implement a 30km/hr default speed limit, since the scale and scope of implications will not have been tested. However, it is quite possible that an acceptable outcome of a 30km/hr pilot would be to permanently reduce default speed limits to 40km/hr in an attempt to retain some demonstrated benefits of the pilot, while mitigating unforeseen negative impacts that could arise.

CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The significant investment of time and political capital invested by the Mayor and Saanich staff in 2020 to encourage other municipalities in the region to participate in a 40km/hr default speed reduction pilot is not lost on the report authors. However, in light of the clear and growing body of scientific evidence in support of 30km/hr speed limits in residential areas, and in light of preference for a 30km/hr speed limit voiced by most members of our community who have weighed in on this issue, it is regrettable that there was not an opportunity for Council to consider the merits of a 30km/hr vs 40km/hr pilot before this external consultation began.

The vision of a regionally consistent approach to a default speed limit reduction was and still remains laudable. However, in combination with the ongoing delays by the Province to announce application deadlines, the City of Victoria's decision to pursue a second pilot at 30km/hr provides our municipality with an opportunity to more thoughtfully consider the approach that best serves our needs. For the reasons discussed above, we strongly feel a 30km/hr rather than a 40km/hr pilot on the selected residential roads in question is in the best interests of Saanich.



Zac de Vries
Councillor



Rebecca Mersereau
Councillor



Ned Taylor
Councillor

cc: Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering; Sharon Hvozdzanski, Director of Planning



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March 4, 2021

The Honourable Rob Fleming, M.L.A.
Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure
PO Box 9055 Prov Stn Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fleming:

Re: Modernizing the Motor Vehicle Act

I write to you today to ask for your leadership in advancing Motor Vehicle Act pilot projects for road safety improvements across the Province of British Columbia. In late 2019 I wrote to Premier Horgan to ask for action to update and modernize the BC Motor Vehicle Act. This ask was multi-faceted, but had a specific focus on lowering the default speed limit on residential roads. Reducing speed limits has many benefits, including reducing vehicle operating speeds, improving road safety, and improving neighbourhood livability. It can have significant safety benefits in terms of fewer collisions as well as less severe collisions when they do occur. Speeding is a significant contributing factor to collisions and traffic-related injuries and fatalities. In British Columbia, speeding has been a contributing factor in nearly 30% of traffic-related fatalities over the past 10 years.

Minister Trevena responded at that time with the excellent suggestion that Saanich pursue a pilot project for speed limit reductions under the Motor Vehicle Act pilot project program. As a result, the District of Saanich is leading the development of a regional application for reducing the speed limits on roads without a continuous yellow centerline to 40km/h. Recognizing the regional importance of the issue and to maintain consistency across the region, Saanich has requested partnership from all other municipalities throughout the Capital Region to have them join this proposal and pilot project. To date Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney, Oak Bay, and Esquimalt have elected to participate in the regional pilot. The District of Saanich undertook stakeholder consultation with over 30 regional stakeholders such as BC Transit, ICBC, regional police, and school districts. Many of which indicated support for the pilot. In addition, the CRD's Traffic Safety Commission recently expressed its support for the 40km/h default speed pilot project. It's evident there is significant interest in the region to apply for a speed limit reduction pilot.

We came to understand after conversations with Ministry staff that the appropriate avenue for speed limit reductions under the Motor Vehicle Act pilot project program, would be as part of the Phase 2 intake which was expected in the fall of 2020 prior to the Provincial Election.

Understandably the election has caused some delay in launching the Phase 2 pilot project, but we hope with your leadership it can be prioritized within your Ministry to allow these important projects to proceed.

Speed limit reductions are relatively new to Canada although many cities across Canada have reduced posted speed limits on local and/or residential roads (e.g. Ottawa, Montreal, Mississauga, and Hamilton) and many others are actively pursuing these initiatives (such as Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, and Calgary). Data on Canadian outcomes is limited. However, international results demonstrate that reducing residential area speed limits is an important tool in an overall program to enhance road safety. As an example in Seattle, speed limits were lowered to 40 km/h in 2016 without extensive traffic calming measures. As a result collisions were reduced by 22%, injuries by 18%, and high-end speeders by 52%.

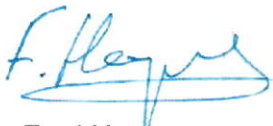
From 2015 – 2019 in the District of Saanich alone there were on average 254 reported collisions per year on local roads (approximately 11.5% of all reported collisions). Of these collisions occurring on local roads, approximately 28% (or 70 collisions) resulted in injury or fatality. Based on the average cost per collision information published by your Ministry, collisions on local roads in Saanich alone represents a total societal cost of approximately \$24 million per year.

The regional interest in collaborating on a speed limit reduction pilot program and the potential for these types of projects being acceptable applications to the Motor Vehicle Act pilot project program provides a unique opportunity for local governments in the Capital Region to reduce speed limits through a consistent, coordinated, and consultative approach.

Saanich Council and our staff are ready to proceed with this work and I would be grateful if you could ensure that the Phase 2 Motor Vehicle Act pilot project program advances this spring and that Ministry staff reach out to our staff here at Saanich to connect on the appropriate next steps.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With hope,



Fred Haynes
Mayor
Enclosures

cc: Saanich Council
Paul Thorkelsson, CAO, District of Saanich
Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering, District of Saanich