

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Community and Infrastructure Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: December 4, 2023

SUBMITTED BY: Barry Cronkite, Director, Transportation Services, 519-741-2200 ext. 7738

PREPARED BY: Aaron McCrimmon-Jones, Manager, Transportation Safety & Policy, 519-741-2200 ext. 7038

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward(s)

DATE OF REPORT: November 14, 2023

REPORT NO.: DSD-2023-512

SUBJECT: Speed Limits in School Zones

RECOMMENDATION:

That school zones located on streets designated Major Community Collector and City Arterial maintain a consistent and static speed limit of 40 km/h; and further,

That school zones located on streets designated Local and Minor Neighbourhood Collector maintain a consistent and static speed limit of 30 km/h.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to:
 - Review the appropriate speed limits in school zones for City of Kitchener street designations including Local, Minor Neighbourhood Collector, Major Neighbourhood Collector, and City Arterial designations; and,
 - Review the consistency of school zone speed limits with Region of Waterloo and other area municipalities;
- The key finding of this report is:
 - Given the community function of school properties and the presence of children and other vulnerable street users throughout the day and year, staff recommend maintaining a consistent and static speed limit of 40 km/h for all school zones on Major Community Collector and City Arterial streets (such as Westheights Drive and Franklin Boulevard) and maintaining a consistent and static speed limit of 30 km/h for all school zones on Local and Minor Neighbourhood Collector streets. This approach is generally aligned with other municipalities including Region of Waterloo, City of Cambridge, City of Guelph, City of Mississauga, and City of Waterloo;
- The financial implications are approximately \$5,000 to change existing 30km/h school zone speed limit signage to 40km/h on higher order streets;
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

BACKGROUND:

City Council approved a reduction in speed limits from 50 km/h to 40 km/h across neighbourhoods within the City of Kitchener (DSD-2021-189). Additionally, Council directed staff to reduce speed limits within school zones to 30 km/h within these neighborhoods. More information regarding the details of the Neighbourhood Speed Limit Project and results of the pilot project can be found in staff report DSD-2021-189.

Throughout 2022, the speed limit in the majority of school zones in Kitchener was reduced to 30km/h. Due to feedback received from residents, Council passed a motion in March 2023 directing staff to review appropriate speed limits in school zones as follows:

Whereas 30km/h school zones have been implemented across The City as per the Council approved Neighbourhood Speed Limit project;

Whereas safety concerns regarding speeding and street safety continue to be a top concern for Kitchener residents;

Whereas school zone bylaws on Region of Waterloo and City of Kitchener streets are not consistent in terms of the speed limit and time of day and time of year; and,

Whereas Automated Speed enforcement (ASE) has been installed on Westheights Drive and Franklin Street and residents find driving under the 30km/h hour posted speed limit extremely challenging;

Therefore be it resolved that staff be directed to investigate appropriate speed limits and time of day restrictions in school zones on City of Kitchener streets and report back to Council prior to the start of the 2023 school year;

Therefore be it resolved that staff be directed to review the appropriate speed limit in ASE zones for Westheights Drive and Franklin Street and report back on this matter prior to the fall 2023.

In August of 2023, Council received Staff Report DSD-2023-286 in response to the motion passed in March 2023 as summarized above. At that time Council noted the different approaches taken by the Region of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener with respect to speed limits in School Zones, specifically citing time of day restrictions. As a result, It was resolved that:

That staff be directed to report back with suggested “school hours” timing, where school zone speed limits may be restricted to 30 km/hr but outside school hours could be 40 km/hr, in tandem with the Region of Waterloo's discussions.

The above noted motion was passed the specific intent of allowing additional time for The Region of Waterloo to complete their review of a Regional pilot project for school zone speed limits, and for staff to report back on those findings and consider additional recommendations.

REPORT:

This report reviews and provides recommendations for appropriate speed limits in school zones located on City of Kitchener streets including Local, Minor Neighbourhood Collector, Major Neighbourhood Collector, and City Arterial designations.

School Zones Speed Limits

The reduction of posted speed limits was informed by a pilot project in three residential neighbourhoods in the areas of Doon South, Huron and Idlewood. This pilot project demonstrated the effectiveness of reducing neighbourhood speed limits to 40km/h and school zones speed limits to 30km/h. Data collected in school zones during the pilot showed a 12% (from 41.2 to 36.4 km/h) reduction in the average operating speed, and a 13% (49 to 42.4 km/h) reduction in the 85th percentile speed.

School properties serve as important community hubs offering a diverse range of amenities such as school activities, daycares, after-school programming, public meeting spaces, summer schools and camps, and rental areas for recreational leagues. Furthermore, school properties provide outdoor sports facilities such as basketball courts, soccer fields, and parks. Given the role schools play within the neighbourhoods they serve, and the variety of services they offer residents at all times of the day and year, they attract children and vulnerable street users who rely on active transportation methods for accessing school properties.

Staff conducted a comparison of speed limits and time restrictions in school zones across other municipalities. Other neighbouring municipalities have adopted a similar approach to the City of Kitchener regarding speed limits in school zones. These municipalities, which share similar road networks, and characteristics with Kitchener, have recognized the importance of implementing static 30 km/h speed limits in residential school zones. The consensus among these municipalities is that school zones attract children and vulnerable street users at all times of the day and serve as community hubs for programming and outdoor activities throughout the year. The following municipalities have implemented consistent and static speed limits in school zones: City of Cambridge, City of Guelph, City of Mississauga, and City of Waterloo.

Transportation Services recommends a static and consistent speed limit in neighbourhood area school zones in an effort to develop consistent driver behaviours and prioritize the safety of residents of all ages who utilize school properties throughout the year and outside of regular school hours. Posted speed limits in school zones should be applicable at all times for consistency and enhanced safety. Studies indicate a direct correlation between vehicle speeds and the probability of a collision resulting in serious injury or fatality. Specifically, the likelihood of survival in a vehicle-pedestrian collision is approximately 15% when a vehicle is traveling at 50km/h. However, the likelihood of survival can increase to 70% when the vehicle is traveling at 40km/h, and to 90% when the vehicle is traveling at 30km/h. Currently, staff have implemented the 30 km/h speed limits in approximately 90% of school zones across The City with the remaining 10% underway and to be converted by end of 2023.

Region of Waterloo & Local Consistency

In an effort to achieve greater consistency with The Region of Waterloo and to address challenges with 30km/h speed limits on higher order streets that typically have a higher design speed, Transportation Services recommends a consistent and static speed limit of 40 km/h for all school zones located on Major Community Collector and City Arterial streets.

This would include examples such as the school zones on Westheights Drive and Franklin Boulevard which currently have Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE). Generally, setting the speed limit at a consistent 30km/h on streets that have a much higher design speed can lead to inconsistent driver behaviour, frustration, and a lack of public acceptance.

The above noted recommendations will also address the validity concerns of ASE as a traffic safety initiative on higher order streets. Speed limits on Kitchener's higher order streets would then also be aligned with school zone speed limits on Region of Waterloo roads, leading to a more consistent approach throughout the city. Transportation Services continues to recommend a static and consistent speed limit of 30 km/h for school zones located on lower order streets to encourage appropriate driving behaviour on streets with lower volumes and added neighbourhood context. This approach maintains overall consistency with area municipalities such as Cambridge, Guelph, Mississauga, and Waterloo.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – These recommendations have financial implications of approximately \$5,000 to change existing 30km/h school zone speed limit signage to 40km/h on higher order streets.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- Report DSD-19-159 – Neighbourhood Speed Limit Review
- Report DSD-2021-189 – Neighbourhood Speed limit Review
- Report DSD-2023-286 – Speed Limit Review – School Zones and Bingemans Centre Drive

APPROVED BY:

Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services Department

ATTACHMENTS:

None