

Airport Road improvements eyed by Council, driven by growth

By Rob Paul

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Region of Peel Project Manager Sonya Bubas presented Council with an environmental assessment study this week regarding Airport Road from King Street to Huntsmill Drive in Ward 3.

The presentation was focused on improvements that can be made to Airport Road as the Caledon area continues to grow.

The main reasons for improvement to Airport Road are to address planned future growth, enhance corridor safety, promote walking and cycling, address increased truck traffic, and support economic viability and downtown vibrancy in Caledon East.

After consulting with the public through multiple avenues, Bubas noted there were concerns about the increasing truck traffic, high speed drivers, increased traffic on local roads, and safety.

The corridor improvements are aimed at adding a multi-use path on both sides south of Cranston Drive to south of Hilltop Drive; a signed bike route through the east neighbourhood south of Hilltop Drive to Caledon Trailway; a multi-use path on the west side and improved sidewalks on the east side and lay-by parking; streetscaping and rest areas from Caledon Trailway to Walker Road; and paved shoulders with rumble strips from King Street to South of Cranston Drive and Leamster Trail to Huntsmill Drive.

With the improvements, there are two new roundabouts planned: a one-lane roundabout at Boston Mills Road and Castlederg Side Road to allow for alignment of the offset intersections and a two-lane flared roundabout at Cranston Drive by 2041.

The intersection at Old Church Road is subject to a separate Urban Design Study for the broader area to inform the intersection configuration, after having the preliminary preferred solution of extending the west leg through to Ivan Avenue updated to not include that option based on feedback from the public and the Town of Caledon's Heritage Advisory Committee.

Other major intersections that would receive enhancements are Airport Road at Olde Base Line Road and Airport Road at Walker Road.

The upgrades would be towards the northbound left turn lane on Airport Road and eastbound left turn lane on Olde Base Line Road, southbound right turn lane on Airport Road, crossride for cyclists and improved crosswalks, northbound and southbound left turn lanes on Airport Road, and controlled pedestrian crossing (pushbutton).

Additional measures would include reduced lane widths to reduce speeds throughout the Airport Road study corridor, raised centre medians north of Walker Road and at Huntsmill Drive with opportunities for a gateway feature at Huntsmill Drive, improved cycling and pedestrian crossings at all intersections with multi-use paths, and active transportation facilities upgraded throughout study corridor (combination of multi-use paths, sidewalks and paved shoulders in rural areas).

Mayor Allan Thompson said he was pleased with the report but had some concerns about larger vehicles moving through the roundabout and recommended a design specific design that will not interfere with their hauling.

?I wanted to ask about the roundabouts because we have a lot of farm equipment that passes through these intersections,? said Thompson. ?If you look at Old Base, it works extremely well for moving farm equipment through there, as well as emergency vehicles. I'm asking if we can do the roundabout the same way that it's done there because it works extremely well for moving loads of hay through. There's a lot of movement of agricultural products through here and it would be extremely helpful if we use that same roundabout design as at Dixie and Old Base.?

In response to the Mayor's concerns, Bubas said the roundabouts are designed to take into account farm equipment and that she would share Thompson's thoughts with the design team.

Councillor Nick deBoer shared his thoughts on the potential style for the controlled pedestrian crossing.

?With regards to the pedestrian controlled crosswalk, I've got one style in Palgrave at the trailway, and I've got the other style in Caledon East at the trailway and I find it's a lot better look/view when you use the style that's at Caledon East with the actual traffic lights as opposed to the ones in Palgrave,? he said. ?So, if there's a choice, I'd rather have the traditional traffic lights for those pedestrian crossings. I find the Caledon East design is a better set up.?

Bubas said there are a couple options for the controlled pedestrian crosswalks and that it will be evaluated further going forward to see what will be the best fit.

Bubas is taking the questions and comments made by Council back to her staff for consideration as they continue the process towards improving Airport Road.

The next steps include filling an Environmental Study Report (ESR) for a minimum 30-day public review period, work with the Town of Caledon through their Urban Design Study to inform the ultimate intersection configuration at Old Church Road, and implement improvements on Airport Road in two phases (phase 1 from Castlederg/Boston Mills Side Road to Huntmill Drive by 2024, phase 2 for the remainder of the study corridor by 2026).