

Roundabout at Sandhill will facilitate truck traffic on widened road

By Bill Rea

Two roundabouts instead of one are now being proposed for Airport Road.

That was one of the facts that came out at an open house session held last Thursday at Caledon Community Complex in Caledon East.

Peel Region is working on a municipal class environmental assessment study on improvements to the stretch of road between King Street and Mayfield Road.

Project Manager Sally Rook said the plan is to widen the road to 45 metres, creating five lanes (two northbound, two southbound and a left-turn lane).

One of the roundabouts is planned as a way to align the intersections with Healey Road and Old School Road. The other one is being eyed for the intersection with King Street.

Roundabouts, in general, are safer, Rook commented.

She also pointed out there are a number of trucking operations on the east side of the road at Sandhill, and there are plans to restrict them to right-in-right-out access. A roundabout at King will make it easy to turn trucks around so they can head south.

That's totally fine, she said, adding it's another benefit of a roundabout.

The widening will require taking land from property owners on the road, and in some cases, whole properties will be taken. Rook explained these are cases in which the house is too close to the road and the widening will not allow for sufficient setbacks.

Rook couldn't give a definite timeline for the work, but there are efforts to have it done by 2021. She couldn't say at this point if work will start at the north or south end, or if it will be phased.

There is another environmental assessment planned for Airport Road between King and Olde Base Line Road to the north, but Rook said that's not likely to start until 2016.

The issue is of concern to some Caledon East area residents.

Peter Paterson expressed concerns which he's had for some time over the impacts additional widening will have on the village.

Airport Road is used a lot on the weekends for Collingwood cottagers, and seems to be under pressure from gravel truck traffic, he stated in a letter from July 2013 addressed to Regional Chair and CEO Emil Kolb (he provided a copy to the Citizen). By widening Airport Road south of King, all that is being encouraged is more and more truck traffic. The thing that really concerns me is that there still is no study of widening north of King Road and when that happens, it will be a huge, huge impact on Caledon East. In fact, it will destroy the village.

Mayor Allan Thompson said most of this work has been anticipated for some time.

He did say he was surprised at the number of properties that will have to be bought out. I was really blown away, he said, also pointing out two churches and the Sandhill Pipe Band stand to be impacted too.

Thompson pointed out there is some future development coming, and this is the time for planning for it.

I do believe the Region's doing what it needs to be doing, he said.

Councillor Johanna Downey expressed her confidence in Regional staff, adding the roundabouts will increase safety at the Healey Road intersection and drastically improve the overall function and aesthetic of Sandhill.

Downey added there will still be challenges with the multiple expropriations to accommodate the widening of the road.

Residents are concerned about the length of construction time, but also realize it is necessary for the flow of traffic, she added. I will work closely with our business and residents to determine and the best timing to mitigate the impact on everyone involved.