

Supplemental Report on Neighbourhood Speed Limits and Vote on a Question

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council:

1. Give three readings to proposed Bylaw 1H2020, the City of Calgary Standard Speed Limit Bylaw, to change the unposted limit from 50 km/h to 40 km/h within the city limits, with an implementation date of March 1, 2022.
2. Direct Administration to post 50 km/h speed limit signs on existing Collector roadways unless or until a credible environment for a slower speed limit is provided.
3. Direct Administration to develop an implementation plan, including communications and the development of an evaluation process for Collector roadways as above, returning to Council as a briefing no later than Q4 2021.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Administration has reviewed options for a potential vote on a question in relation to the Neighbourhood Speed Limit Review and does not recommend using this tool on this specific issue.
- As a result, Administration recommends that Council adopt the two outstanding recommendations from the Neighbourhood Speed Limit Review report (TT2020-1036), with implementation dates updated.
- What does this mean to Calgarians? Council will choose whether or not to direct a vote on a question regarding neighbourhood speed limits as part of the October 18, 2021 General Election.
- Why does this matter? There are significant risks to putting this question to a vote of electors.
- Council has already given direction to improve design standards for roadways in neighbourhoods for both new construction and retrofit contexts (see **Attachment 1**). Changing the default speed limit supports these changes and allows a broader impact to be achieved more quickly in established communities.
- Four potential questions were reviewed. The potential questions were evaluated against clarity, directness, and relevance (see **Attachment 2**).
- Administration has completed technical safety analysis (**Attachment 3**) and recommends a change to speed limits to improve safety.
- Elections Calgary recommends a \$50K contingency be added to the election budget should Council wish to direct a question(s) for a vote of the electors.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A city of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods

DISCUSSION

Administration has reviewed potential questions for a vote on a question to support a Council decision on changing the unposted speed limit. As a vote on a question is non-binding, it can only serve to inform a future Council debate on this issue.

Attachment 2 provides four versions of a potential question. These options were evaluated for alignment with the *Municipal Government Act* and *Local Authorities Election Act*, clarity (can be

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understood), directness (asks voters a question about what council should do), and relevance (giving information that could be relied on to make a decision).

There are many risks associated with running a vote on a question on this issue, as outlined in the risk section below. The most significant risk is that Council has already endorsed revising design standards. Changing the unposted speed limit supports these updated standards and allows a broader impact to be achieved more quickly in established communities. Keeping the current unposted limit does not change The City's overall goal of reducing operating speeds in neighbourhoods to reduce the frequency and severity of collisions. Voters are likely to be confused about the impact of their vote.

If Council wishes to direct a vote on a question on this issue, a number of subsequent steps would be required:

- Identify the preferred question or identify a process to finalize the question;
- Direct a vote on a question as part of the upcoming General Election; and
- Refer the outstanding recommendations in TT2020-1036 to a future meeting of Council (Q1 2022).

Alternatively, the outstanding recommendations in TT2020-1036 are included in this report and can be considered for decision as part of today's meeting. The proposed bylaw is included as **Attachment 4** of this report.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder or customer dialogue/relations were undertaken

Social

A vote on a question requests guidance for Council from the electors. Some groups of Calgary residents who are exposed to the risks associated with the transportation system are not represented by the voting population (e.g., youth, employees/customers of Calgary businesses that reside outside the city limits) or are under-represented among voters (e.g., newcomer Canadians, people with physical or mental disabilities). Making a public safety decision on the basis of a vote on a question may diminish the value of some of these perspectives.

Environmental

Holding a vote of electors as part of the General Election has no significant environmental impacts.

Economic

Holding a vote of electors as part of the General Election has no significant economic impacts.

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Service and Financial Implications

Existing operating funding - One-time

Additional communications will be required to support voter information about the questions (including voter information guides, paid social media, signage/displays and advertisements). The cost of these communications are incidental and can be accommodated within the current, draft communications budget for the election. Additional staff time will be required to engage with “yes/no” scrutineers, which can be accommodated within existing resources, provided Council makes a decision on the question(s) by the end of the second quarter.

Should Council wish to include question(s) for a vote of the electors, the Returning Officer recommends \$50,000 as contingency within the election program budget to accommodate design and printing of a larger ballot and associated vote tabulator programming and testing support (currently unfunded).

In terms of opportunity costs associated with holding a vote on a question on this topic, subject matter expertise that would be required to support the election communications would otherwise be allocated to other safety and community liveability projects.

Should council ultimately decide to advance a change in the unposted speed limit, a vote on a question (or other deferral of decision on this issue) will extend the time where the current unposted speed limit is in effect. Relative to implementation, this delay has opportunity costs for The City (emergency response), other orders of government (health care costs), and the public (personal/societal effects of collisions).

RISK

The risks associated with holding a vote on a question on this subject include:

- **Under-informed voters:** Due to the technical and policy complexity of this issue, voters may need to do additional research to be able to make an informed choice. Administration would be required to remain neutral, and communications to electors to explain this issue would be limited.
- **Confusion:** Due to the evolving and dynamic nature of social media, it may be difficult for voters to discern accurate and factual information about this technically complex issue from that which is not. Misinformation may create public apprehension or resistance to implementing changes, should the result of a vote support that outcome.
- **Polarization:** Political action committees may form, without the transparency required from municipal election candidates, to influence the vote result on behalf of those that benefit from the status quo or who would expect to benefit from a change.
- **Precedent:** There may be a reduced willingness of future councils to make public health and safety decisions without undertaking a vote on a question.
- **Consistency:** Council has already given direction to improve design standards for roadways in neighbourhoods to reduce the frequency and severity of collisions. If a vote on this issue supports the status quo as far as speed limits in established communities are concerned, there may be a lack of consistency and coherence to speed limits across the City, and The City’s commitment to public safety for all citizens may be called into question.

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ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction
2. Potential Questions for a Vote on a Question
3. TT2020-1036
4. Proposed Bylaw 1H2020
5. Public Submission

Department Circulation

| General Manager | Department | Approve/Consult/Inform |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Doug Morgan | Transportation | Approve |
| | | |
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