Minutes – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – January 8, 2019

REPORTS

Item No. 17 Traffic Calming Measures (Sunday Night Cruise) – Portage Avenue (Daniel McIntyre Ward)

STANDING COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and received the report as information.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works directed the Winnipeg Public Service to conduct a more thorough traffic study along Portage Avenue, to include the following methods of evaluation:

1. A sound study for effective measurement of noise levels;

2. Increasing the length of the study to include multiple weekends, concentrated in the summer season;

3. Traffic light synchronization;

4. Photo noise enforcement;

and report back to its October 29, 2019 meeting.
Minutes – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – January 8, 2019

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Browaty,
That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in.

Moved by Councillor Browaty,
That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to conduct a more thorough traffic study along Portage Avenue, to include the following methods of evaluation:

1. A sound study for effective measurement of noise levels;
2. Increasing the length of the study to include multiple weekends, concentrated in the summer season;
3. Traffic light synchronization;
4. Photo noise enforcement;

and report back to the October 29, 2019 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On September 7, 2018, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works granted an extension of time to the January 2019 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works be granted for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter.

On November 21, 2017, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the City Centre Community Committee and directed the Winnipeg Public Service to report back to the September 2018 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works.

On October 31, 2017, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works laid over the matter to its meeting on November 21, 2017 to allow the Winnipeg Public Service time to consult with the Ward Councillor.
COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On October 10, 2017, the City Centre Community Committee passed the following motion:

AND WHEREAS communities and neighborhoods adjacent to Portage Avenue often experience adverse effects due to the noise and increased amount of traffic;

AND WHEREAS attempts to address these issues have traditionally been dealt with through policing enforcement measures;

AND WHEREAS increased police presence has not resolved the issues;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works direct the Winnipeg Public Service to:

1. Investigate methods to control traffic flow and reduce speed and excessive noise along Portage Avenue, between Arlington Street and Strathcona Street, specifically for Sunday Night Cruise, including, but not limited to:
   
   A. Traffic Signal Synchronization

   B. Lane closures.

2. Identify any costs associated.
Title: Traffic Calming Measures (Sunday Night Cruise) – Portage Avenue

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Transportation Division of the Public Works Department conducted site visits on Portage Avenue between Arlington Street and Strathcona Street, to assess Sunday night car cruise activity/operations during the summer.

“Muscle cars” and other modified/custom vehicles are brought out by their owners to cruise along Portage Avenue, informally exhibiting their vehicles and showing off their vehicles’ capabilities; the owners of these vehicles and car buffs in the community enjoy seeing these vehicles operate and perform, but this is an unofficial / unsponsored activity with no organizing body.

While there are additional vehicles on the road when these informal cruise nights are occurring, with occasional instances of vehicles accelerating quickly, the volume and speed do not appear to pose a serious public safety concern. Generally the operators of the vehicles respect the rules of the road and do not wish to damage their collector vehicles or cause undue problems with the WPS or other motorists.

The collision rate is not more than average.

Some local residents are concerned with noise and people littering while watching the cruise night activity. This is understandable but cannot be corrected through traffic remediation; potentially formalizing the event (through co-ordination by car clubs or other parties) could address this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On November 21, 2017; the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the City Centre Community Committee and directed
the Winnipeg Public Service to report back to the September 2018 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works.

On September 7, 2018; the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works granted an extension of time to its January 2019 meeting for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the following:

1. Investigate methods to control traffic flow and reduce speed and excessive noise along Portage Avenue, between Arlington Street and Strathcona Street, specifically for Sunday Night Cruise, including, but not limited to:
   A. Traffic Signal Synchronization
   B. Lane closures.

2. Identify any costs associated.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are no implications to receiving this report as information.

**HISTORY/DISCUSSION**

**CURRENT TRAFFIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Portage Avenue, in the vicinity of Strathcona Street to Arlington Street, is an eight-lane divided roadway, a regional street, a full-time truck route, and a Transit route; with an average weekday daily traffic (AWDT) volume of approximately 62,000-67,000 vehicles, and a speed limit of 60 km/h. The road width in this area is approximately 30 metres.

Sunday volumes are generally much lower than weekday volumes on corridors such as Portage Avenue in Winnipeg.

The traffic control signals are interconnected along this section of Portage Avenue, and a 80, 110, or 120-second cycle (the length of time required to complete all phases of a signal) length (time-of-day dependent) at all intersections allows signal coordination along the corridor.

There are “no stopping” parking restrictions and “right turn only lane” (exceptions are made for certain types of traffic) turning restrictions along each block of this section of Portage Avenue, both of which are in effect during the peak traffic periods.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On April 21, 2004; Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and adopted the following (with respect to Enhanced Traffic Management and/or Enforcement to Control Vehicle Cruising, Congregating and Street Racing, in Kildonan Park and Various Other Locations in the City of Winnipeg):

1. That the administrative report dated March 23, 2004, be received as information.
2. That no additional parking restrictions be implemented within Kildonan Park for 2004.
On July 21, 2004; Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and adopted the following (Investigation into the possibilities for the development of a Motor Sport Park in Winnipeg):

1. That the City of Winnipeg not enter directly into the motor sport park business (no direct development and/or operation) and that the portion of the June 23, 2003 Council Motion pertaining to the possibility for the development of a motor sport park in Winnipeg be filed.
2. That the Administration continue to monitor related developments and assess opportunities to address cruising and street racing issues.
3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

**SUNDAY NIGHT CRUISE**

There is an irregular traffic pattern on Sunday nights in Winnipeg commonly referred to as the “Sunday Night Cruise”. There does not appear to be a single formal organization behind the Sunday Night Cruise but it is a historically understood time for drivers of muscle cars, street rods, and other custom cars to meet, and show off their vehicles as they drive down the street. Members of the public who are car enthusiasts come to sit by the road and enjoy the spectacle and observing their favorite types of custom cars. As such, it cannot be considered a “parade” and is not subject to applicable by-law provisions.

The use of wide roads as a place for unofficial street racing, cruising and generally “showing off” of custom cars by young adults is a common occurrence throughout North America; other cities have had this type of activity since the late 1950s.

The activity in Winnipeg dates back to the 1980s, and is spread out throughout the city. Some restaurants also encourage these cars to be parked in their parking lots where car enthusiasts can walk among them and look at them in more detail.¹ Even the Manitoba Heritage Transit Association participates in these events, with their vintage bus collection sometimes showing up at the restaurant events.

The Transportation Division made observations, undertaken during the summer of 2018, and some of the issues identified include both cruising (resulting in additional traffic and noise) and congregating of vehicles (either parked “en masse” in the curb lane or in area parking lots).

Speed studies undertaken did not produce an 85th percentile speed in excess of the posted 60km/h speed limit, although there are a small number of drivers who choose to operate their vehicles in an imprudent manner.

Excessive noise is associated with spinning tires (burnouts), rapid engine acceleration/revving, and modified exhaust systems or stereo systems.

The issues associated with the cruise such, as speed and noise, are intermittent and not readily quantifiable. The observations did not capture a consistent pattern, such as aggressive acceleration by all traffic from each red light, although this was observed by individual vehicles on a limited basis.

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Traffic data for the applicable length of Portage Avenue was compiled and reviewed; the Public Service concluded that there are no increased incidents of pedestrian collisions, fatalities or collisions associated with speed during the Sunday night cruise.

**Jurisdictional Comparison**

The Winnipeg Public Service sought advice from other Canadian jurisdictions in conjunction with the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Traffic Operations and Management Standing Committee (TOMSC) in September/October 2018, to determine if similar types of issues exist in other jurisdictions and what is being done about them. TOMSC has more than 30 members representing the provinces, territories and urban centres from across Canada.

Of the approximately 40 representatives at the Fall 2018 meeting of TOMSC, no jurisdiction had implemented traffic calming or other traffic remediation measures to counteract similar behaviors. Feedback indicated that enforcement of speed, imprudent driving and reckless driving are the only means of recourse taken.

One U.S. example, the Woodward Dream Cruise, in Detroit MI, holds an annual sanctioned event once-a-year through several separate suburbs along the Woodward Avenue corridor. This event has grown from a grassroots effort in 1994 to a multi-sponsored event (including local businesses, car clubs, and auto manufacturers) that now attracts approximately a million spectators and 40,000 vehicles for the annual one-day event. The communities where the event takes place co-ordinate on law enforcement, crowd control, parking enforcement, and ensuring a safe, family-friendly event. In general, participants respect the rules of the road and the community generally supports the annual event.

**Potential Countermeasures**

The disposition listed several potential countermeasures to explore for this study. These, plus other strategies, are discussed here:

**Traffic signal synchronization or desynchronization is not a recommended solution.**

Synchronization, which allows uninterrupted vehicular progression, can lend itself to speeding due to higher running speeds and the ability to drive unencumbered. Desynchronization results in reduced signal progression and creates additional opportunities for aggressive acceleration from stops and additional noise. Desynchronization of the signals along Portage Avenue would provide additional “starting lines” for drag racing and louder than average acceleration.

Lane closures effectively occur as a result of congregation of the cruising vehicles in the curb lanes. If the “no stopping” parking restrictions were extended to Sunday evenings, it could create additional traffic capacity and higher speeds (reducing traffic lanes/widths is a traffic calming technique). **Permanent lane closures are not recommended** as a mitigation measure due to the negative effect to Transit and general traffic operations for overall weekday and weekend daytime flows. To prevent congregation on private property of cruising vehicles, local business owners would need to collectively implement this on private property. However, preventing the activity may be the wrong approach; where sponsorship (car clubs or other businesses such as restaurants) are involved, this can have a positive effect on family-friendliness, reduced littering, etc.

Some type of organizational body, perhaps made up of a loose co-ordination of existing car clubs and supporting businesses could have a mitigating effect on some of the negative aspects
of Cruise Night similar to what has been observed with the Woodward Dream Cruise, but the current informal nature of Winnipeg's Sunday Night Cruises might make this challenging to initially implement and regulate, and it is likely not all participants in the current informal cruises would “take to” imposed rules by such a body. However, it is possible that, over time, the event would become less of a nuisance through such measures and would become self-regulating/self-disciplining.

Other countermeasures, such as police enforcement (Highway Traffic Act and vehicular regulations), are contingent upon available resources and are often interrupted by emergency situations. Education initiatives would generally be spearheaded by Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI). It should be noted that in the past, police enforcement has resulted in charges to some participants, not just for speeding and reckless driving, but for modifications to the vehicles that pose safety hazards (such as racing tires).^{2}

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: November 16, 2018

Project Name:
TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES (SUNDAY NIGHT CRUISE) – PORTAGE AVENUE

COMMENTS:
There is no financial impact associated with the recommendation of this report

"Original signed by J. Ruby, CPA, CA"
J. Ruby CPA, CA
Manager of Finance & Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with: n/a

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

The recommendation of this report is aligned with the key strategic goal of a safe, efficient and equitable transportation system for people, goods and services in the Sustainable Transportation Direction Strategy that supports OurWinnipeg.

SUBMITTED BY

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Date: November 13, 2018