To: Chair and Members
Public Works, Infrastructure & Environment Committee
Outstanding Business Item No. O and Issue: Highway 52 Speed Limit Change
PW05146

From: Scott Stewart, C.E.T.
General Manager
Public Works Department

Telephone: (905) 546-2313
Facsimile: (905) 546-4481
E-mail: sstewart@hamilton.ca

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Re: Highway 52 Speed Limit (PW05146)

Council Direction:
Staff was directed to report back with the effects of a speed limit reduction to 70km/h and the implementation of straw bales and snow fencing for drifting snow conditions on Highway 52.

Information:

Speed Limit
In late 2004 a Council directive initiated a speed limit reduction on Highway 52 between Wilson Street and Highway 5, from 80 km/h to 70 km/h.

Staff have reviewed the effects of the lower speed limit and confirm that the lower speed limit has had little effect on lowering the operating speed on Highway 52. The average operating speed for Highway 52 was 92 km/h. The percentage of vehicles driving over the posted speed limit has increased to 92% from 89% of drivers as expected. This has also resulted in a higher variance in driving speeds. The Hamilton Police Service has been diligent in their speed enforcement on Highway 52, however this presence only has an effect on drivers' speed in the area and time of enforcement. Staff have received comments of inconsistent driver speeds and tailgating from residents in the area. In conclusion, changing of the speed limit on Highway 52 in January 2005 has had little impact on reducing the operating speed of vehicles and Council may wish to reconsider the reinstatement of the previous speed limit.

Snow Fencing
Regarding the snow drifting issue, in the fall of 2004 (November) Road Operations confirmed an agreement with the land owner immediately west of 52 Highway between the 2nd concession and Peters corners to proceed with a pilot project of involving the installation of a modified hybrid of winter control snow fence design. The snow fence was successfully installed and performed very well in terms of controlling blowing and drifting snow minimizing snow accumulation on and/or across the highway during storm events and days when prevailing winds existed above normal. In the previous 2 seasons this section of roadway was closed during snow storms and blowing snow
conditions by police on several occasions primarily due to white out conditions. During the 2004/2005 winter season blowing and drifting snow causing whiteout conditions was significantly reduced in the area immediately adjacent to the pilot snow fence trial location. In the fall of 2005 an expanded version of the hybrid snow fence design is planned for the same location with the anticipation of continued success in reducing blowing and drifting snow.

In regards to snow related collisions, our records indicate fewer vehicle related incidents during the winter months than previous years along this section of road also including abandon vehicles during winter storms.

Safety Improvements

In the spring and early summer of 2004, safety improvements were also implemented on Highway 52. These initiatives included the painting of edge lines and the installation of oversized delineators from south of Jerseyville Road to Highway 5, no passing zone implemented from Wilson Street to Governor’s Road, over sized deer crossing signs, and increased Police enforcement.

Reported collisions for the period of August 2004 to July 2005 on Highway 52 between Wilson Street and Highway 5 (not including these two intersections) have decreased by 28 percent from the previous 12-month period. This reduction in the number of collisions is an indication that these improvements may be improving safety on Highway 52. In order to confirm that these initiatives are working to improve the safety on Highway 52, a period of at least three years collision data is required.

Summary

The reduction in the speed limit on Highway 52 also reduced the minimum maintenance standards required by changing the designated class of highway through the Municipal Act regulations.

The safety initiatives implemented by staff have created an optimistic improvement for reducing collisions on Highway 52. The lower speed limit however has had little impact to change the operating speed of vehicles.

Scott Stewart, C.E.T.
General Manager
Public Works Department