Subject: "Slow Moving Vehicles" Caution Signs PW06044

Council Direction:

At the September 12, 2005, Public Works, Infrastructure and Environment Committee meeting, staff were requested to confirm guidelines pertaining to the installation of signs indicating “Caution, Slow Moving Vehicles” in rural areas of the City.

Information:

In recent years, many municipalities throughout Ontario have been approached by members of their farming communities to install “Caution, Slow Moving Vehicles” signs on rural roads to address safety concerns. The use of these signs is governed by Section 76 of the Highway Traffic Act (HTA). The HTA requires the attachment of a slow moving vehicle (SMV) sign when a slow moving vehicle is being operated on a highway (see Figure #1). A slow moving vehicle sign warns other road users that the vehicle displaying the sign is travelling at 40 km/hr or less.

Figure #1

The HTA prohibits the placement of this sign on or near a fixed object where it is readily visible from the roadway. Property owners or tenants displaying the SMV sign on fixed objects may be subject to a fine. However, municipalities can include the orange
triangle symbol on caution signs to warn motorists that slow moving vehicles often travel on their roads. These types of signs are meant for informational purposes only and are not enforceable under the HTA.

While there is no provincially approved standard, the Ministry of Transportation, in consultation with the Farm Safety Association, has developed a caution sign for SMV to be implemented on Ontario roadways (see Figure #2). The orange triangle symbol was incorporated into the sign to help motorists associate slow moving vehicles with the symbol. Several jurisdictions are currently using this sign on their rural roads including Elgin County, Essex County, Temiskaming and Halton Region.

**Figure #2**

![Caution Sign](image)

Halton Region and Durham Region have both implemented policies regarding the installation of SMV signs within the last 3 years. The signs used, as well as sign locations, are different in both regions.

Halton Region uses the Ministry of Transportation approved sign but altered it slightly by adding an “active farming area” tab (see Figure #3).

**Figure #3**

![Caution Sign](image)

In terms of sign location, Halton Region will install SMV signs at locations with physical deficiencies such as narrow road and shoulder widths. Amount and type of farm vehicle and equipment movements, traffic volumes, operating speeds, and potential for vehicle conflicts and/or collisions are also considered. If the roads identified as being deficient cannot be corrected through minor capital works, consideration is given to the installation of the SMV signs.
Durham Region has also implemented a policy concerning SMV signs and has installed the United States version of the sign in various locations throughout the Region. This sign was taken from the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices – US Version (see Figure #4). Durham Region did not use the Ministry of Transportation developed sign as they felt the US version was more visible and understandable to the motorist. In conjunction with the installation of the new warning signs, the Durham Regional Police launched an initiative entitled “Operation Haywagon”. During the week long campaign, the Regional Police and the OPP patrolled Durham’s rural community targeting aggressive driving and unfit vehicles. They also targeted slow moving farm vehicles not displaying the required, provincially regulated, slow moving caution sign. Posters in support of the signage program were also developed by the Slow Moving Farm Vehicles Working Group and were displayed in government buildings, libraries, police offices, private businesses and local fairs.

Figure #4

In terms of sign location, Durham Region’s policy is to install signs at their boundary points on rural roads entering the Region and at locations where there is a defined change from urban to rural conditions. They did not use any site-specific warrants such as volumes, road width or any other physical characteristics of the road.

To date, neither Halton Region nor Durham Region has reviewed the use of SMV signs in terms of their effectiveness on road safety improvement.

Guidelines

Staff has contacted the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) for their position concerning the use of SMV signs on municipal roads and provincial highways. The MTO encourages municipalities who use the MTO developed sign to limit their use to areas with a high volume of slow moving vehicles. Historically, these signs have not been used on provincial highways because the SMV symbol mounted on the back of vehicles gives motorists all the information they require and limits the information to only when SMV’s are present. However, given the number of requests municipalities have received to have these signs installed, the MTO is currently reviewing its policy regarding the placement of these signs on provincial highways.

Because the MTO is reviewing their policy regarding the use of the SMV signs on provincial highways, and the fact that several municipalities have already installed SMV signs on their roadways, staff are supportive of the installation of similar signs on rural roads in the City.
Staff has been in contact with Risk Management and Legal Services regarding the use of SMV signs. Legal Services do not have any concerns regarding our position. Risk Management has advised we fully comply with the requirements of the HTA as any deviation could lead to the City being liable, and further suggested we consider using words rather than the orange triangle symbol since the symbol is designed to identify the hazard when it exists, not to simply indicate the potential to exist. Notwithstanding, it is staff’s position that a motorist is less likely to absorb the message when it is written because it requires significantly more time to read. Staff suggests the use of a yellow and black diamond shaped sign similar to the sign used by Durham Region (see Figure # 4).

**Slow Moving Vehicle Caution Sign Installation - Guideline**

Staff will review locations on a case by case or request basis and signs will be installed if:

- It is a farm equipment dealership
- Defined change from urban to rural

In addition, staff will also take into consideration speed limits and traffic volumes when determining appropriate location. Staff are in the process of gathering a list of locations which will require signs. It is estimated that roughly 30 signs will initially be installed. Any additional signs will be installed by request and only if they meet the criteria described above.

Cost estimates for installation is approximately $150 per sign. If the estimated 30 signs are installed this will cost a total of $4500. Future costs will depend on the number of requests staff receive. This can be accommodated within the existing budget.

Over the coming months staff will work with City Councillors and members of the farming community in choosing the appropriate sign and sign locations. Staff anticipates the first signs to be installed by Summer 2006.

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