SUBJECT: Drive-Thru (Tim Horton’s at Spartan Mall) and Synchronization of Traffic Signals - (PW09067) - (City Wide)

Public Works Outstanding Business List

RECOMMENDATION:
That the item referring to the Drive Thru at the Tim Horton’s at Spartan Mall and the Synchronization of Traffic Signals be removed from the Public Works Outstanding Business List.

Gerry Davis, CMA
General Manager
Public Works Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
City Council, at its meeting of October 15, 2008, directed staff to respond to several issues that Mr. Frans Brinkman brought to the attention of the Public Works Committee. This report is to provide an update and response to two of those issues. Mr. Brinkman commented specifically about the operation of the Tim Horton’s restaurant located in the Spartan Plaza, 438 Highway 8 Stoney Creek and also commented about the synchronization of traffic signals in the east end of Hamilton.

Staff agree with Mr. Brinkman’s assessment of the operation of the Tim Horton’s in that at peak times, queuing extends onto the street or causes delays to vehicles attempting to enter such that there is a congestion problem. This has also resulted in several motor vehicle collisions. Staff have been working with designers from Tim Horton’s in an attempt to either re-configure travel patterns or alter signing and other elements to improve the operation. With regard to the traffic signal operation in the east end, staff
are also in agreement with Mr. Brinkman's assessment. The operation of the traffic signals system is not optimized and there are some actions which can be taken to improve operations. The signal improvements would be part of the initiatives under the Infrastructure Stimulus Package which has been approved by Council and which is presently being considered for provincial and federal funding.

**BACKGROUND:**

The information/recommendations contained within this report have City Wide implications.

On October 6, 2008 Mr. Frans Brinkman appeared before the Public Works Committee. He presented three concerns. The question of a leash free park has already been dealt with separately. Mr. Brinkman’s other two concerns related to the operation of the Tim Horton’s located in the Spartan Plaza, 438 Highway 8 Stoney Creek and the flow of traffic in the east end of Hamilton.

Mr. Brinkman noted that the drive through at the Tim Horton’s was experiencing backups such that traffic turning left or right trying to enter the plaza was delayed and in some cases visibility was obstructed. This has resulted in several motor vehicle collisions.

Mr. Brinkman also noted that lack of synchronization of traffic signals between Fruitland Road and the Queenston traffic circle may have been a contributing factor to road rage, environmental concerns or potential red light running.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

Staff agree with Mr. Brinkman’s assessment of the operation of the Tim Horton’s located in the Spartan Plaza. Prior to Mr. Brinkman’s presentation, staff had already been engaged in conversations with Tim Horton’s in an attempt to try to improve operations. These discussions have been ongoing and Tim Horton’s staff recently presented a revised plan for the operation of this plaza. At this point, City staff are not satisfied with the plan presented by Tim Horton’s as it creates new difficulties while solving some of the known problems. The discussions will continue and staff are hopeful that we can find a compromise which will improve the operation of this particular drive through restaurant.

The operation of the traffic signals in the east end of Hamilton is not optimal. There are a number of reasons for this, some of which can be improved upon, while others are basic to the geography of the street system and the placement of the traffic signals. The basic reasons for the current state of the operations are as follows. First, it is only possible to have perfect synchronization of traffic signals in a two-way street system if the signals are spaced ideally. The ideal spacing is between 400 and 600 metres. With the geometry in the east end of Hamilton, this is not the case between every pair of signals. Second, the traffic signal system has not been fully re-timed in a number of years. In that interval, new traffic signals have been installed and the flow of traffic has increased and changed in its pattern. While local timing changes have been made, a comprehensive re-timing of the traffic signals at an overall system level is in order. Third, there are, as Mr. Brinkman noted, several intersection pedestrian signals located in the east end. Since the purpose of an intersection pedestrian signal is to primarily
serve pedestrians, there are generally not synchronized but allowed to change immediately upon pressing of the button by the pedestrian. This means that it is entirely possible that the pedestrian signals can change at exactly the wrong time in terms of the flow of vehicular traffic. From a philosophical point of view staff feel that, with a few exceptions, this is the appropriate way to operate intersection pedestrian signals and have no plans to change this mode of operation. Finally, there are a number of issues which relate to the reliability of the operation of the traffic signals in the east end. Some signals are connected through the use of electronic cable while others are timed using time clock basis. In either case, while the systems operate reasonably well, the reliability could be improved by significant investment in replacement infrastructure and in monitoring capabilities.

The proposed Infrastructure Stimulus Package which was approved by City Council contains elements of both the timing of the signals and the reliability and infrastructure improvements required. Thus implementation of the Stimulus Package would result in a direct improvement of the type of concerns expressed by Mr. Brinkman.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Staff could discontinue negotiations with Tim Horton’s and wait for the outcome of the Planning initiatives with regard to drive through facilities. However, any changes in philosophy with regard to drive throughs would only impact on future applications so it is recommended that staff continue to try and resolve the issues at the Spartan Plaza.

Staff could choose not to continue to attempt to improve signal operations but this would have negative environmental and safety effects.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The discussions with Tim Horton’s and the implementation of traffic signal improvements, including the Infrastructure Stimulus Package initiative will be undertaken with existing staff.

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

Improving roadway operations is consistent with Vision 2020, the Corporate Strategic Plan and the priorities established within Innovative Now. The improvement to traffic signal timings and to the operation of the roadway in front of Spartan plaza would result in improved traffic safety and improved air quality.

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION:**

City staff have consulted with Design staff from Tim Horton’s in regard to the operation of the Spartan Plaza.

**CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:**

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Improved roadway and traffic signal operations expedite transportation and improve safety.
Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.  ☑ Yes  ☐ No
Smother traffic flow leads to reduced motor vehicle emissions.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced.  ☑ Yes  ☐ No
Reducing the occurrence of motor vehicle collisions saves real and societal costs.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?  ☑ Yes  ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?  ☑ Yes  ☐ No
TIM HORTONS AT SPARTAN PLAZA

CITY OF HAMILTON
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

LEGEND

SUBJECT LAND

SCALE
NOT TO SCALE

DATE
2009-06-10