



WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Normandy Road North & Eugene Avenue

August 2024

1. Introduction

The City of Whitehorse identified a strong community desire to enhance safety within residential areas of the transportation network. The City wants to develop permanent solutions to address safety issues by validating concerns, applying engineering best practices, and incorporating knowledge from the experiences of citizens, institutions, and agencies to address the issues.

The City has embarked on two projects happening in parallel: 1) neighbourhood speed reduction and 2) traffic calming, as part of the 2024 Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Plan, address speeding and shortcutting motor vehicle traffic and poor driver behaviour along two segments in a new residential neighbourhood – Eugene Avenue in Whistle Bend – and in an established neighbourhood – Normandy Road North in Takhini. Approached in unison, these two projects combine the high-level (speed reduction city-wide) and targeted (location-specific traffic calming) approaches of effective speed reduction strategies. This report highlights public engagement results of the Traffic Calming project.

2. Purpose of Engagement

The objective of the public engagement is to ensure the perspectives of residents inform the use of traffic calming to help achieve improvements in road safety for two street segments.

Using communications and public engagement, the City designed an engagement process that included education, advocacy, and sought feedback on implementation.

Engagement was intended to foster meaningful discussion, so stakeholders and the community feel their views were considered and incorporated into technical analysis. The resulting technical recommendations will be checked to see how well they meet the input from stakeholders and community members. Finally, the What We Heard report will identify how stakeholder input will be used, if it was used, and why / why not.

2.1. ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

The engagement for Traffic Calming had two elements: a Champions Collaborative group and Public Engagement. While the traffic calming project focused specifically on Eugene Avenue and Normandy Road North, traffic calming measures in other parts of the city were also discussed.

Champions Collaborative

The City believes that when introducing potential change to a community, people who will be impacted by the change should be involved with its development. The engagement methodology was formed around creating a group of dedicated community members, committed to creating safe communities through innovative traffic safety measures. This group, known as the Champions Collaborative, while not a decision-making body, played a leadership role in championing road safety in Whitehorse. The group of 18 citizens had two meetings. Their involvement in the planning increases the likelihood of acceptance of the proposed solutions. The group, with members specifically recruited from the Whistle Bend and Takhini neighbourhoods, discussed both Traffic Calming and Speed Limit Reduction and felt that the process has the potential to create a movement dedicated to traffic safety, fulfilling the desire to enhance safety within residential areas of the city. This report deals with the discussions surrounding traffic calming.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
Margaret Mead

Public Engagement

The City also wanted to connect with the public and gauge their reaction to traffic calming. "Go to where the people are" was used to attract participation through a public event held at the Fireweed Community Market. Displays, activities, and prizes for children attracted crowds of citizens who offered their perspectives and shared their preferences for traffic calming initiatives in Whitehorse.

3. Engagement Results

3.1. CHAMPIONS COLLABORATIVE ON ROAD SAFETY

During the first meeting, Collaborative members expressed their strong belief that traffic calming measures need to be incorporated in initial road network design. There was strong interest in engineering solutions such as traffic calming built into roadway design that reinforces lower speeds. People acknowledge that traffic calming may be more effective than law enforcement, which was seen to be lacking. Members expressed feeling unsafe traveling on streets throughout Whitehorse and suggested that a mix of approaches was important to improve safety, for example, traffic calming, signage, consistency, roadway engineering, and education.

"So, one thing, is speed limit reduction, but that typically doesn't result in meaningful reduction in the 85th percentile. That's where the traffic calming comes into play, where we change the design of the street, including make it narrower. Relying on parked cars isn't a measure I want to rely on, sometimes they aren't there. I prefer permanent traffic calming."

Participants were also invited to create a set of principles that could be applied to decisions aimed at increasing road safety. At the second meeting participants supported principles that could be applied when determining speed limit reduction actions:

- **Safety as a Right:** Citizens and visitors have a right to safe travel with no fatalities or serious injuries. Everyone deserves the chance to survive or experience a better outcome in the event of a vehicle collision.
- **Streets are Community Places:** Streets are not only about movement, they are also places for people to use. Safety must be prioritized over traffic flow and speed.
- **Consistency and Equity:** Reduced speed limits should be consistent across all Whitehorse communities rather than only used in select communities.
- **Simple and Intuitive:** Design of streets and pathways should make sense and be easy to understand for all users.
- **Options for Travel:** All neighbourhoods should have safe travel options for all people regardless of if they walk, ride a bike, ride transit, or drive.

The Champions Collaborative also guided the planning of the public event, suggesting dates, times, venues and approach.

The two locations for traffic calming, Eugene Avenue and Normandy Road North, generated discussion among Collaborative members living in the vicinity, as well as others who traveled through the two communities. Members created and recommended the following principles are applied when developing and selecting traffic calming features for specific locations:

- **Role and function of streets:** Decisions should consider the role and function of streets in terms of movement and place when determining appropriate speed limits and supporting traffic calming devices.
- **Community well-being and culture:** Create spaces where people feel safe, welcome, and respect one another to create a culture of safety.
- **Effective tools:** Focus on design and supplement with supporting education, awareness, and targeted enforcement.
- **Connectivity:** Connectivity of walking and cycling must be retained or improved when considering traffic calming or speed reduction measures.
- **Future proofing:** Select traffic calming devices that work in fast-changing and rapidly growing communities.

Eugene Avenue

A small group of Whistle Bend citizens engaged with City administration and Council, highlighting their concerns and requesting traffic calming measures be applied. Foremost was the view that Eugene Avenue had become a shortcutting route with speeds and volumes that were unsafe and not anticipated by residents when they purchased homes in the community. This was especially true for heavy vehicle traffic, such as construction vehicles shortcutting along Eugene Avenue.

"We know that safety is huge, that's valuable and our first consideration. But it's not just safety on the street, it's enjoying our homes. There's just too much noise, it's hard to enjoy our homes."

"The expectation was that I would be in a quiet residential street. I've done so much work, it's dismaying. Someone designed this system. It's painful. It's years living with it."

The City was interested in discovering why the shortcutting, particularly by construction traffic, was taking place. Many thought that it was the way the road network in the community was designed, and that the design inadvertently made Eugene Avenue the most convenient route in and out of the community. More suitable roads for construction traffic were likely seen as out of the way for drivers of construction vehicles or, as construction is still underway, alternate routes not yet built that are intended by the Whistle Bend neighbourhood plan. Upon review, access via Eugene Avenue seemed more intuitive compared to other options.

"We live on Witch Hazel and Eugene. The traffic and speed on Eugene—it's the fastest way out of Whistle Bend, so everyone takes it. Speed is the biggest concern. And the intersection is dangerous. Lots of near misses. Lots of people think it's a 4-way stop, but it's not, but it seems like it should be."

There were concerns with Eugene Avenue being used as the main exit from the neighbourhood and suggestions the intersection and approach to Eugene Avenue by Leota Street be reconfigured.

"It seems like the most official way of leaving Whistle Bend area. When you turn onto Leota, you have the roundabout. But down Witch Hazel it's a 90-degree bend and you're plonked out in a large intersection. The Leota roundabout makes it seem like it's the way you're supposed to go."

"Is it feasible, that the end of Eugene by Leota get cut off? Is that something that can be considered? I think the issue remains that it's not just speed, its volume. I think traffic will get worse, since it's just construction traffic now. With how many vehicles per residence, and multi dwelling units, and we are already averaging more than what was expected for our street."

There was a suggestion to redesign the connection of Eugene Avenue with Leota Street and Witch Hazel Drive, particularly because there are plans to build an additional new school on the east side of Rampart Street in addition to a park on the west side of Rampart Street near Leota Street.

"One thing behind Eugene by Witch Hazel, there's two big developments. One is supposed to be for a school. But if it's a high school, there'll be an increase in traffic on Eugene to get there. And the City has started engagement there. That'll bring in traffic since they can't access areas off of Leota. So maybe bringing traffic off Eugene to connect that where the school is going to be, connect there, maybe that'll relieve traffic."

"The school – that's a concern, and transit isn't great. And the potential connection, from an artery where the dirt piles are from Witch Hazel, maybe that'll take some pressure off, maybe that's the new fastest route?"

There were concerns that construction vehicles were not using the new connection to the area from Leota Street at Keno Way. The suggestion was made for the City to share this concern with the developer and general contractor and encourage them to go on the more appropriate route.

"I wanted to bring up that construction vehicles shouldn't go down Keno Way"

"Can the City work with the developer and enforcement on that? There could be ways to do that. Even just a sign, construction vehicles this way, could be helpful."

Residents were surprised to learn there was a multi-unit residential complex being constructed in the area off Eugene Avenue. Residents expressed concern that traffic volumes were already too high, and that the new homes and apartments being built would significantly add to it.

"Who would expect this street to have over 1000 vehicles a day? And how will you divert traffic, with the new complex, 91 units, how will they use the road? What's the intent to make traffic flow in a reasonable manner?"

While many communities install speedbumps to manage speed, residents of Whistle Bend, particularly Eugene Avenue, were equally concerned with volume of traffic as well as speed of traffic. There were concerns that speed bumps would not address the traffic volume issue.

"Speed bumps may slow traffic down, but how do we reduce the volume?"

Part of the challenge facing the project team and the residents of Whistle Bend is that the area is still under development, with the Government of the Yukon acting as the developer. Roads and other infrastructure have been built ahead of residential units and that has led to over-reliance on certain roads, confusion about the purpose of other roads, and lack of awareness of the plans for future roads.

"Engineering solutions, certainly for spot calming should have been planned while the community was being built. Update the City design manual and get traffic calming practices entrenched so we aren't building those problems into the future. It's very disappointing talking about traffic calming in Whistle Bend when it's a brand-new neighborhood. That should have been built into the design of the neighbourhood."

"So, following those maps you drew, there's a design aspect that was neglected when the community was built. Some of these roads make no sense."

Although several ideas and potential solutions were presented to the residents on Eugene Avenue and Whistle Bend, it became apparent that discussions with the developer—the Government of the Yukon—were required before any changes could be considered. The project team will develop a Technical Brief which will serve as a discussion document between City of Whitehorse and Government of the Yukon.

"This is why the technical brief needs to be written, it's a very complex issue. Has this meeting given you lots of good information for the technical brief? Then we can look for changes to help resolve the design problems."

Normandy Road North

Normandy Road North, in the established community of Takhini, was a much more straightforward traffic calming project as compared to Eugene Avenue. Central to the commitment to install traffic calming measures was the proximity of a school with sports fields and play areas as well as a major mid-block trail crossing. Although the school is governed by a 30km/h school zone speed limit, it is often ignored. In addition, families in the area frequently walk or bike children to school and feel that the current street configuration is not safe for pedestrians.

Traffic calming measures such as speedbumps and curb extensions were suggested by participants and supported by the community. Participants also stressed the importance of structural changes to discourage speeding and enhance safety, especially for children. Suggestions included incentivizing cycling, adding crosswalks and sidewalks, and making it easier for people to walk in the area.

"Playing the safety card heavily is a way to sell this. A cliché example is highlighting how dangerous cars are for small children. I think that's a key card to sell it."

Poor sightlines and visibility cause dangerous situations for drivers and pedestrians. Normandy Road North has on-street parking, as well as road curvature, which makes visibility even poorer.

Currently, there are curb extensions on Normandy Rd N. If we have a raised crosswalk or extended curbs to prevent on-street parking at low visibility points it can improve sightlines on the road.

Around Takhini Elementary School many children ride their bikes to school during the school year and the crosswalks are very busy. Collaborative members urged the project team to consider extending the project area to include the adjacent Rhine Way, reduce the speed limit, improve the trail crossing, and install permanent physical barriers.

The project team developed traffic calming options for Normandy Road North and Rhine Way. Community members were positive about the suggestions.

"I really like these suggestions. Curb extensions, and more narrowing of the street where the trail is, and where the active transportation trail crosses"

"Really like the speed humps, also helps for ride ability for cyclists. Curb cuts are uncomfortable, especially with a carriage, so these raised crossings are much more enjoyable. So nice to have that."

Participants offered thoughtful comments when asked: What would you change? What have we missed? What would you add? For example, there were concerns that cyclists may be forced into vehicle traffic if there wasn't an opening for cyclists in the curb extensions on Range Road.

"I have question on Range Road curb extensions, and making sure cyclists using the side of the road aren't forced into the road. There's confusion about whether it's a parking lane. It's not marked as a cycling lane, but that's where they ride. And the plan developed for Range Road in the future, there's a 2-way cycle track on the school side. So, something temporary makes a lot of sense so you don't need to rebuild it in the future"

There was support for adding speedbumps to other locations where trails or pathways intersect roads, as there are safety concerns in those areas. There was also a suggestion to add a small chicane to Normandy Road North where it crosses the shared use path to further slow vehicles and protect pedestrians.

"I think the speed humps could be incorporated throughout town; we have many walking trails that connect to roadways that aren't safe to cross. So, want to see that implemented in other areas of the town"

"I'm wondering if additional tools could be used there, if the trail crossing could have a chicane, put a twist into the road"

Although Normandy Road North is heavily used by pedestrians, there is a missing sidewalk link on the south side of the street.

"The south side of Normandy, on Google maps indicates there's no sidewalk. Is there an opportunity for a sidewalk on both sides?"

There were concerns that the shared use path intersecting Rhine Way is too close to driveways, which could create a visibility challenge for pedestrians.

"On the Rhine Way trail crossing, is that worth a realignment with how close that crossing is to peoples' driveways? It always seems like a problem, someone parked there so you can't see the trail."

A crosswalk near the bus stop on Range Road near Rhine Way was another suggestion from participants.

"Rhine Way and Range Road, a potential crosswalk near the bus stop on the other side, that's the main bus stop on Range Road. I remember it in the capital budget request for this year, so maybe remind the City about that."

There were concerns that there was speeding through the roundabout on Normandy Road North, and that additional traffic calming measures should be examined there.

"Speed of people around the roundabout, like the Normandy and Carpiquet one is worrisome; maybe think about a raised crossing there. But seems like people carry speed there since it's straight, and that's the crosswalk from the park and school. So maybe some temporary curb extensions there."

The Champions Collaborative members for Normandy Road North also provided useful advice on what to consider when engaging with Takhini residents on the forthcoming changes. Participants believed

that engagement with the public would be positive, the proposed changes welcomed, and that additional messaging should center around safety, especially for children.

"I think it's all good. I have talked with neighbours about this, and I think it'll be welcomed. I'm also talking to the school and the Takhini neighbourhood association. And just build this about safety to children, and the big school bus drop off on Normandy. And same message with the trails and crossings, it's how to get from Porter Creek and in."

The Champions Collaborative developed the principles for speed limit reduction and set the stage for bold and meaningful discussions on road safety in Whitehorse. Their participation was invaluable.

3.2. PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE AT FIREWEED COMMUNITY MARKET

Several hundred people attended the very popular Fireweed Community Market on June 6. The City of Whitehorse had an info tent featuring Speed Limit Reduction and Traffic Calming information, with the predominant focus on speed limit reduction. People felt strongly that traffic calming was an essential tool in road safety and offered their thoughts as to locations that would benefit from traffic calming measures. People expressed their frustration with the lack of enforcement of existing speed limits and questioned the effectiveness of speed limit reduction measures given the behaviour of drivers who speed. They thought that traffic calming may be a more effective approach than reducing the speed limit.

I think speed bumps are going to be more important than changing the speed limit. You just put up a sign, you think that will do anything?

People shared their concerns with the amount of speeding in Whitehorse and were willing to consider lowering speed limits as well as implementing traffic calming measures in communities. People identified speeding 'hot spots' on a large map of Whitehorse. There were repeated concerns about Falcon Drive, Alsek Road, Nisutlin Drive, Wilson Drive, and 2 Mile Hill Road.

People took the time to offer specific suggestions on the map and in conversation with team members.

I used to live on Falcon Drive, people would speed and lose control there, especially in the winter, and hit parked cars. It's dangerous to walk around downtown too. Reducing speed limits doesn't do much though unless you change the road design. I like the speed bump crosswalks, the at grade crossings, do more of that.

On Falcon Ridge, someone is going to die. People are racing there. We need speed bumps, or a traffic circle. Anything to slow people down. And the school there is a concern too. At Falcon Ridge and North Star, my neighbor's dog got run over. I don't necessarily believe that we need a speed limit change though, what we need is more traffic calming, enforcement, traffic cameras, check stops. The signage for speed reduction would

be too complex anyway.

I live in Granger, we moved there a few years ago, and I'm ready to move and just take a loss on the house. We put a ton of money into it, but there's too much speeding. On Wilson Drive people are going 80km/h. I have 2 young kids; I don't want them getting hit. I'm all in favor of traffic calming and anything else you can do. We need more roundabouts too, especially in Granger, I think that would help slow people down. And we should close neighborhoods to through traffic, and what we really need, is to change the design to the roads. People will always speed on a wide straight road. We need something that will force them to slow down.

On Pine Street by the park, nobody is ever in it, but it has all these blocks up and the speed bumps and everything, we should move all that to school zones.

And you need to make sure the street design matches what you want the speed limit to be, otherwise people are just going to speed.

Traffic calming measures such as speed humps and road design changes were widely supported to enhance safety including the designs that had been developed for Normandy Road North. The designs for Normandy Road North were felt to be good examples of designs that could be used elsewhere in the city where there are similar traffic safety concerns related to traffic volumes and speeds.

There were dozens of comments on specific areas that would benefit from traffic calming. These locations have been passed on to the technical team as information. A summary of some of the locations are as follows, which include both residential streets and busier roads:

- Major corridors within residential areas, for example Alsek Road, Falcon Drive, Thompson Road, and Wann Road
- Airport area; Section of highway in front of the Airport Chalet Hotel
- Copper Ridge
- Hamilton Boulevard at Elijah Smith Elementary School
- Wilson Drive and Williams Road
- Crestview
- Klukshu Avenue between Rainbow Road & Azure Road
- Downtown
- Many daycares downtown (particularly on or near 2nd Avenue)
- McLean Lake
- Riverdale
- Nisutlin Drive and Alsek Road south
- Lock gates at Green Crescent
- Takhini
- Range Road
- Whistle Bend

4. Next Steps

The project team will review the feedback from the Champions Collaborative and public engagement and factor those considerations into their recommendations to City Council.