

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

3. Revisiting and Refreshing Vancouver's Commitment to Safer Slower Streets

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver has a relatively small footprint, gentle topography, low pollution rates, a mild climate, and an extensive network (close to 80%) of local roads without a centre line. Vancouver also has a high cost of living that is further compounded by transportation expenses. These factors, combined with a healthy outdoor-loving population, a cultural imperative to embrace sustainability, and bolstered by government investments in supportive infrastructure and transportation demand management position Vancouver to be a global leader in intra-city active transportation;
2. Active transportation is human-powered mobility like walking, biking, or rolling. In recent years active transportation has been significantly enhanced by low-power personal (micro)mobility devices such as electric-assist e-bikes, e-scooters, and e-skateboards, share platforms, and multi-modal opportunities for first-and-last kilometre active transportation with transit;
3. Active transportation allows mobility choice and equity for youth, tourists, people with limited mobility, low income, or without a driver's licence. Active transportation can support lower absenteeism and decrease lost productivity due to traffic congestion;
4. *Transportation 2040*¹ (approved 2012) set strategies and targets to ensure that by 2040 at least two-thirds of all trips are by active transportation and transit, and there are zero traffic-related fatalities. To reach these goals, the City must:
 - a. Invest in constructing and maintaining public infrastructure like streets, sidewalks, bikeways and public spaces;
 - b. Encourage supportive infrastructure in private development through policies and guidelines;
 - c. Manage street use through rules and regulations; and
 - d. Empower residents to make sustainable transportation choices;
5. Evidence suggests that safety and perceptions of safety are determinants of increasing active transportation mode share. To meet that objective and *Transportation 2040*, in 2016 Vancouver developed a *Vision Zero Transportation Safety Action Plan* with a goal to have zero traffic related fatalities and serious injuries;²
6. *Vision Zero* highlights the probability of pedestrian survival is about 90% if struck by a motor vehicle travelling at 30 km/h, but survival is reduced to 20% if struck by a motor vehicle travelling at 50 km/h. Accordingly, lower speed limits are more compatible with active transportation, and healthier, equitable communities;

7. Unanimously approved by Vancouver City Council in 2019, the resolution *Safer Slower Streets: 30 km/h Residential Street Pilot*³ recognized the BC-based Road Safety Law Reform Group recommendation that, “A default provincial speed limit of 30 km/h for Local Streets (no centre line, less than 1,000 vehicles/day) should be included in the Motor Vehicle Act, with municipalities enabled to increase speed limits on local streets in a case by-case basis by by-law and posted signage.”; and the conventional understanding at the time that a blanket speed limit reduction for local streets would require significant signage costs for the City (notably, a sign on every block of every street). The motion resolved to:
 - a. Direct staff to identify a local street, area, or areas within the city to pilot a 30 kilometre per hour speed limit demonstration project; and
 - b. Submit a resolution, subsequently passed, at UBCM that called on the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) to consider an amendment to the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) that would allow incorporated municipalities to institute blanket speed zones in residential areas;
8. Following the City of Vancouver-led UBCM Resolution⁴ requesting blanket speed reductions, the MVA was amended in 2019 to allow speed reduction Pilot Projects. Notably, Part 13 (304-305)⁵ of the MVA prescribes a “Three-year time limit for regulations for pilot projects under this Part.” Additionally, the MoTI replied in the following Response Package 306334 - Municipal Speed Limits⁶:

“The MVA does not specify the frequency or placement of speed limit signage—it is not necessarily the case that a municipality establishing either a 30 or 40 km/h speed limit on roads within specific geographic areas in the community will need to post speed signs on every block.” (p16. #306334);
9. To facilitate the Pilot Projects under Part 13 and in response to changing transportation mode share and patterns resulting from COVID-19 the City introduced the *Slow Streets Program*⁷ to help reshape how we view and use local streets using barriers, signage, and placemaking, and the *Neighbourhood Traffic Management Program*⁸ to improve the comfort and safety of people walking, biking, or rolling on local streets, with neighbourhood pilots throughout the city;
10. Polling by Research Co. (June 2022)⁹ asked what Vancouverites thought of a speed reduction to 30 km/h on select residential streets in the City. 72% thought it was a “good” or “very good” idea (9% were “not sure”);
11. The City of Victoria, in March 2023 announced a reduction of speed limits on all local streets to 30 km/h, phased in by neighbourhood over two years, to affect residential areas, not major or arterial roads;¹⁰
12. City Council's *2023-2026 Strategic Priority: Vibrant Vancouver*¹¹ builds on safer slower street work and incorporates many active transportation fundamentals that are aligned with safer, slower streets including:
 - a. Expanding Vancouver’s greenways and AAA active-mobility lanes;

- b. Transforming 11% of neighbourhood streets for community use;
- c. Expanding the School Active Travel Program;
- d. Building out Vancouver’s micro-mobility network; and
- e. Incorporating zero traffic-related fatalities goal into all transportation planning/projects.

Additionally, 2022 Vancouver election campaign commitments aligned with safer, slower streets include making Vancouver the most accessible city in the world, neighbourhood traffic planning to enhance safety, and neighbourhood designs to ensure delivery of a “15-minute city” where services and amenities can be accessed by walking, reducing reliance on motorized vehicles;¹²

- 13. Recent Council-approved expansion of electric kick scooter use and sharing¹³ is expected to add significantly more active transportation road users, and increase demand for safer roadways, streets, and infrastructure. While the by-law and policy changes allow micromobility devices to travel on major roadways (instead of adjacent sidewalks) at posted speeds of 50 km/h it should be noted that the International Transport Forum (ITF) defines micromobility as speeds less than 45 km/h. In reality most e-scooter drivers travel at speeds typically between 20-30 km/h.

The International Transport Forum further notes that “motor vehicles are involved in about 80% of crashes that result in the death of bicycle or e-scooter riders” suggesting cities “Reallocate road and parking space to micromobility users, cyclists and pedestrians” and advocating “Speed limits for all motor vehicles should be no higher than 30 km/h where motorised vehicles and vulnerable road users share the same space.”

“30 km/h is the maximum limit recommended for cars in city streets to reduce the risk of death or serious injury from a collision of cars with pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. Limiting cars, motorised two-wheelers and micromobility to the same low speeds on streets with mixed motorised and non-motorised traffic is a logical approach.”¹⁴ and

- 14. Vancouver is faced with projected and actual growth in active mobility, driven by a desire for less expensive and more sustainable transportation, reduced parking requirements in new construction, planning for complete communities, pandemic recovery, generational changes in attitudes around driving and automobile ownership, and the rapid growth in inexpensive micromobility devices and regulations to support their safe and accessible use. The imperative to support safe, sustainable, resilient and inclusive active transportation through reduced speed limits on the vast network of local streets is crucial to meeting the City’s climate, sustainable development, and transportation goals.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to report back with analysis of benefits to slower, safer streets –specifically, 30 km/h maximum speed limits in residential areas on local

streets without a centre line—as a means to enhance safety, support mixed mode use, including micromobility and active transportation, in order to foster healthier, equitable communities.

- B. THAT Council direct staff to provide clarity on interpretation of the *Motor Vehicle Act* speed limit reduction sign-frequency requirements versus previous assumptions of a per block necessity, considering the recent Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure response package, and analysis of Victoria's 30 km/h local street speed limit initiative and roll out, and as potentially pertains to local implementation;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report back with phasing options to:

- a. Initiate a blanket city-wide 30km/h speed reduction, with speed limit signs on expressways, arterial and collector roads; or
- b. Scale the number and frequency of Neighbourhood Slow Zones, with a proposed target and timeline for implementing 30km/h limits on local streets city-wide;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report back with funding options for consideration and potential partnerships including but not limited to Translink, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI), and BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Program, Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and Canada's Active Transportation Fund.

- C. THAT Council direct staff to bring forward for consideration a strategy to reduce motor vehicle traffic on designated Local Street Bikeways – designated non-AAA streets with mixed motorised and non-motorised traffic- by implementing filters to further enhance safe multi modal routes, improve feelings of safety, and reduce opportunities for collisions between active transport users and motorists, including but not limited to:
- a. Physical interventions like barriers, bollards, chicanes, roundabouts, and speed humps;
 - b. Traffic interventions like one ways for motor vehicles, reallocating street parking, and prohibiting motorists turning onto Local Street Bikeways from arterial and collector roads;
 - c. Placemaking interventions like signage, intersection repair, landscaping, and public realms for people; and
 - d. Where and if applicable, consider and present opportunities to upgrade intersections on non-AAA Local Street Bikeways with highest levels of serious injuries or conflict.

¹ City of Vancouver | Transportation 2040
<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/transportation-2040-plan.pdf>

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- ² City of Vancouver | Vision Zero Transportation Safety Action Plan
<https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/transportation-safety.aspx>
- ³ City of Vancouver | Council Meeting Minutes May 14, 2019 (p.11)
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20190514/documents/regu20190514min.pdf>
- ⁴ UBCM Resolutions Database | B7 Safer Slower Streets: 30 kmh Residential Street Pilot
<https://www.ubcm.ca/convention-resolutions/resolutions/resolutions-database/safer-slower-streets-30-kmh-residential>
- ⁵ Province of BC | Motor Vehicle Act, Part 13
https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96318_14
- ⁶ Province of BC | Response Package TRA-2023-31570 - Municipal Speed Limits
http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/Response_Package_TRA-2023-31570.pdf
- ⁷ City of Vancouver | Slow Streets
<https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/slow-streets.aspx>
- ⁸ City of Vancouver | Neighbourhood Traffic Management Program
<https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/neighbourhood-traffic-management-program.aspx>
- ⁹ Research Co. | Speed Limits in British Columbia, June 2022
https://researchco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Tables_Limits_BC_10Jun2022.pdf
- ¹⁰ City of Victoria | Lower Speed Limits
<https://www.victoria.ca/getting-around/driving/lower-speed-limits>
- ¹¹ City of Vancouver | Vibrant Vancouver, Strategic Priorities 2023-2026
<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/strategic-priorities-2023-2026.pdf>
- ¹² ABC Vancouver | The ABC Plan for A Better City
<https://abcvancouver.ca/platform/>
- ¹³ City of Vancouver | Shared Electric Kick Scooter Pilot By-Law Amendments – RTS 16171
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20240312/documents/phea4RR.pdf>
- ¹⁴ International Transport Forum | Micromobility, Equity and Sustainability
<https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/micromobility-equity-sustainability.pdf>