



City of Port Moody

Report/Recommendation to Council

Date: March 7, 2023
Submitted by: Engineering and Operations Department – Infrastructure Engineering Services Division
Subject: St. George Street Slow Zones Results and Recommendations

Purpose

To summarize the results of the St. George Street Slow Zones project.

Recommended Resolution(s)

THAT the report dated March 7, 2023, from the Engineering and Operations Department – Infrastructure Engineering Services Division regarding St. George Street Slow Zones Results and Recommendations be received for information.

Background

As part of its COVID-19 pandemic response in Spring of 2020, Council identified a priority to examine temporary street closures to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists where feasible, which ultimately led to passage of the following resolution on July 28, 2020:

RC20/303

THAT the temporary slow zones on St. George Street between Buller Street and Albert Street be implemented until the end of summer 2021 unless conditions and monitoring indicate that temporary changes are no longer providing benefit as recommended in the report dated June 24, 2020 from the Engineering and Operations Department – Infrastructure Engineering Services Division regarding Potential COVID-19 Related Temporary Slow Zone and Road Reallocation Projects;

AND THAT staff continue to monitor traffic and active transportation activity in case it warrants further consideration of road reallocation projects or additional slow zones;

Implementation of the St. George Street temporary slow zones was delayed until Spring of 2021. The monitoring period was extended to November to ensure the changes were present for the intended period but removed before snow clearance operations for the winter.

At this time, the St. George Street temporary slow zone is fully removed, and traffic operations are returned to normal. This report provides an overview of the temporary slow zone results and recommendations for consideration in any future traffic initiatives for St. George Street.

Discussion

The sheltering in place measures during the initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for people to be able to spend time outside, while being able to observe social distancing rules as they were implemented at the time. St. George Street had been identified as a neighbourhood bikeway in the 2017 Master Transportation Plan but observed traffic volumes and speeds from 2019 suggested it would not be a comfortable facility for users without modification. Considering this background, Council direction to implement temporary slow zones on St. George Street was to:

- Encourage drivers to slow down
- Reduce traffic during peak travel times
- Support outdoor activity

Plastic delineators had previously been installed to restrict eastbound travel along St. George Street east of its intersection with Kyle Street. These were supplemented by temporary barricades to restrict travel at the following locations:

- No eastbound access to St. George Street at Albert Street and at Hugh Street;
- No westbound access to St. George Street at Elgin Street, at Grant Street, and at Buller Street

An additional barricade was later added to restrict westbound access to Hope Street from Douglas Street, in response to resident requests.

Prior to implementation of the barricades, staff considered how the restrictions might affect property access and use of the road network. While it is common to receive requests to limit access to particular streets to local traffic or residents only, there is no practical way for the City to enforce such a requirement, and the restrictions were designed to ensure access alternatives for residents always existed. However, solid waste collection vehicles are limited to picking up on the right side of the vehicles only, meaning that two-way operation for each street block had to be preserved at all times throughout the pilot. Signage was added to the barricades indicating service vehicles were exempt from the access restrictions.

Traffic Volume and Speed Data, and Neighbourhood Bikeway Guidance

In addition to periodic observations by staff of compliance with the barricades, traffic speed and volume data was collected in September-October 2021 and compared to the previous data collected in July 2019. Data was collected for seven-day periods at the same locations and summarized in **Attachment 1**. While observed traffic was generally less in both directions, there was significantly less traffic in the restricted directions, suggesting that compliance with the barricades was generally high. Measured speeds were also less than in 2019.

The BC Active Transportation Design Guide recommends a maximum daily traffic volume of 1,000 vehicles per day, operating at speeds no more than 30 km/h, to support an all ages and abilities neighbourhood bikeway without dedicated cycling facilities. Guidance from City of Vancouver recommends a lower daily traffic threshold of 500 vehicles per day, with a similar operating speed threshold. These volumes and speeds were generally observed during the slow zones project, suggesting that St. George Street was suitable as a neighbourhood bikeway during this time without requiring dedicated cycling facilities.

Public Engagement Process

In addition to receiving public feedback throughout the project on the City's website, the public was invited in October 2021 to visit Engage Port Moody, the City's online public engagement hub, to complete an online survey about their experiences during the project. In total, 110 responses to the survey were received, with most of the responses (90%) from residents of the area. Public engagement highlights from engage.portmoody.ca/slowzone:

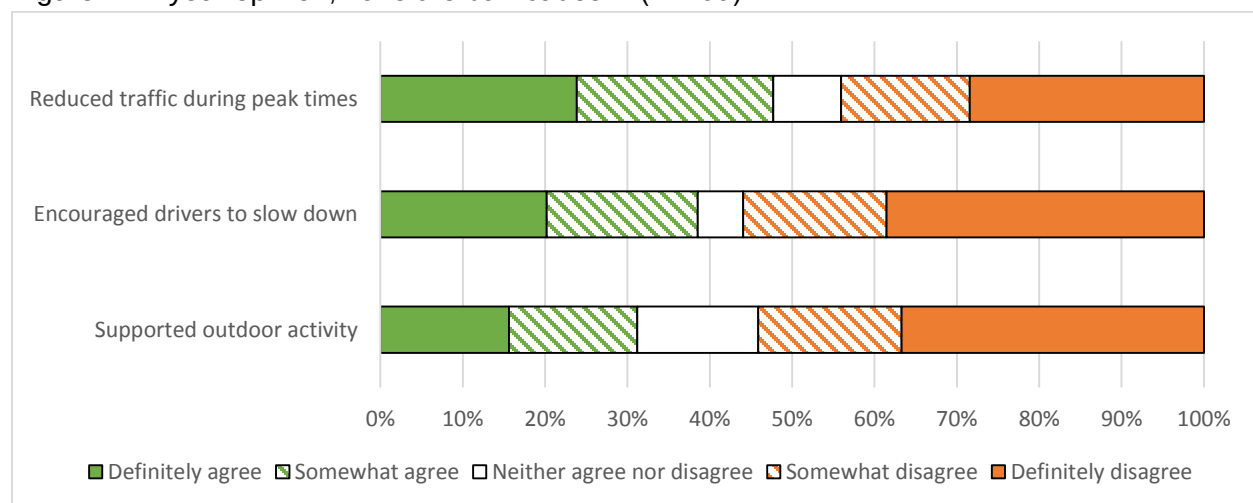
- **110 engaged participants** contributed to one of more feedback tools
- **123 informed participants** visited multiple project pages, contributed to a tool, or downloaded documents
- **172 aware visitors** viewed the project page

What We Heard

See **Attachment 2** for a full public engagement summary. The key findings were:

- Most respondents (83%) indicated they understood the purpose of the barricades.
- Almost half (48%) agreed the barricades reduced traffic during peak times (**Figure 1**).
- More than half disagreed the barricades encouraged drivers to slow down or supported outdoor activity (**Figure 1**).
- More than half (55%) reported the barricades made their travel in the area more challenging.
- Most respondents (62%) predicted they would return to their previous routes after the barricades were removed.

Figure 1: In your opinion, have the barricades... (n=109)



Respondents were also given the opportunity to elaborate on their opinions about the project, and the City received feedback with the following themes:

- The barricades were effective at traffic calming, and traffic calming is needed.
- The barricades were ineffective because:
 - They were not enforced (i.e. people drove around the barricades with impunity).
 - They were not maintained (i.e. people dismantled the barricades).
- The barricades made safety worse:
 - People drove the wrong way around the barricades and almost hit me.

- People did unsafe maneuvers (e.g. u-turns, etc.) to avoid the barricades.
- The barricades increased traffic on St. Andrews Street and Hope Street, which are not designed for traffic.

Observations

Based on the data collection and public engagement results, staff make the following observations about the project, along the following themes:

Measures were effective but unpopular	The data collected indicates the measures were effective at reducing traffic speeds and volume along St. George Street, towards speeds and volumes that would support a neighbourhood bikeway. Survey respondents also observationally reported that the measures did help to reduce traffic and, to a lesser extent, speeds. Some respondents who did not support the barricades nevertheless noted their effectiveness.
General support for traffic calming	While the survey was focused on the St. George Street Slow Zones project and the barricades specifically, respondents nevertheless expressed general support for traffic calming. This suggests a desire for traffic calming from the community, even if the specific measures that were employed may not have been supported.
Need to consider permanence, enforcement, safety	The most common complaints about the barricades were around a lack of enforcement, suggesting perceived unfairness, or that the barricades could be rendered ineffective through being dismantled. Respondents mentioned the barricades being ignored by delivery trucks or obstructing local traffic, which are also expressions of fairness. Respondents also noted unintended consequences from the project, with concerns about safety becoming worse because of the measures.

Conclusions

Staff make the following conclusions about the St. George Street Slow Zones pilot project, with additional detail below:

- Continued action will be needed to preserve conditions for a neighbourhood bikeway.
- Speed humps are simple speed reduction measures familiar to the community that could provide benefit.
- Semi-permanent, passively enforced measures that restrict traffic volume without restricting access, and that provide a community amenity, may be beneficial.

Data collected in 2019 for St. George Street indicated that traffic speed and volume were inconsistent with the community direction to establish a neighbourhood bikeway. However, traffic speed and volume measured during the project indicated that supportive conditions had been realized. Traffic speeds and volume may start to increase again unless continued attention is paid to St. George Street.

Speed humps are inexpensive and effective measures used to reduce traffic speed around Port Moody. The City can implement speed humps along local and collector roads without requiring comprehensive public engagement because residents are familiar with the devices, and indeed they are already present at some locations along St. George Street. Staff will examine other locations along St. George Street for consideration of speed humps through the Speed Hump Program.

While speed humps are effective at reducing traffic speed, they are less effective at reducing traffic volume. As noted above, the access restrictions, while unpopular, appeared effective at

reducing traffic volume, but raised other concerns about fairness, enforcement, and safety. To address public concerns with the barricades, new measures would need to have the following attributes:

- Semi-permanent: The measures should be difficult or impossible to be removed by the general public.
- Passively enforced: Port Moody Police are already busy conducting other enforcement throughout the City, and traffic calming measures are unlikely to be able to be enforced actively. Pilot measures would enforce the desired behaviour automatically.
- Restrict volume but not access: Many respondents noted the barricades made travel more complicated and sometimes encouraged improper or unsafe driver behaviour. Access is also needed to be maintained for Solid Waste Service vehicles. However, allowing access for some vehicles but not others (e.g. service vehicles, local traffic) is difficult to understand and enforce, and encourages non-compliance. Rather than restrict access, pilot measures should render the driving experience less comfortable, which will slow traffic and deter non-local traffic, while preserving necessary access.
- Provide a community amenity: The barricades were effective and inexpensive measures that could be quickly deployed but provided no community amenity. Ideally, new measures may become more than just traffic calming devices.

An example of a measure that could combine the above features might be large planters placed on either side of the road at midblock locations to reduce the road to a single travel lane in width. While such planters would not be permanent, they would be too large to move or dismantle without special equipment and would deter traffic through their size and bulk. All vehicles would be permitted to access the road but would have to yield to oncoming traffic, slowing traffic and reducing the effective capacity of the road. Large planters might also provide vegetation for the community to enjoy.

However, consideration of any traffic calming measures other than speed humps currently requires completion of a comprehensive public engagement and study process as detailed in the Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Policy. The existing policy dates from 2001 and the 2017 Master Transportation Plan recommended that it be updated. In addition, the recent Moray Street Traffic Calming Study and Pilot Project was implemented with a different engagement process as directed by Council. The experience with the overall Moray Street project would be informative for the update of the Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Policy.

Other Option(s)

If Council wishes to initiate an update to the Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Policy immediately, a potential alternative resolution might be:

THAT Council direct staff to report back on a plan to update the Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Policy.

The update would be initiated prior to staff reporting back on the results of the Moray Street Traffic Calming Study and Pilot Project.

Financial Implications

There are no immediate financial implications from the recommendations in this report.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

Public engagement for the St. George Street Temporary Slow Zones was facilitated through engage.portmoody.ca, an online platform where participants register to learn about plans and projects, share ideas, and provide feedback. Participants could take a survey about their experiences through the pilot project.

Opportunities for public engagement were promoted to area residents through:

- A postcard mailed to all properties from the south side of St. Johns Street to Hope Street, between Albert Street and Buller Street;
- Signage installed along St. George Street at the locations of the barricades; and
- A news item posted on the City's website, with email alert to those registered.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

The public engagement for this project aligned with Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan objective of providing the public with transparent and open government, and opportunities to provide input on City issues. The proposed traffic calming pilot design aligns with the objective of providing people with a variety of options to move through and around Port Moody safely and efficiently.

Attachment

1. Traffic speed and volume data for St. George Street (July 2019 and September 2021)
2. Public Engagement Summary – St. George Street Temporary Slow Zones

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	St. George Street Slow Zones Results and Recommendations.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 - Traffic speed and volume data for St. George Street .pdf - Attachment 2 - Public Engagement Summary - St. George Street Temporary Slow Zones.PDF
Final Approval Date:	Apr 4, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Stephen Judd, Manager of Infrastructure Engineering - Mar 27, 2023 - 3:39 PM

Jeff Moi, General Manager of Engineering and Operations - Mar 30, 2023 - 4:17 PM

Stephanie Lam, City Clerk and Manager of Legislative Services - Mar 30, 2023 - 4:25 PM

Lindsay Todd, Manager of Communications and Engagement - Mar 30, 2023 - 4:44 PM

Paul Rockwood, General Manager of Finance and Technology - Mar 30, 2023 - 4:48 PM

Tim Savoie, City Manager - Apr 4, 2023 - 10:56 AM