

Jim Common Drive Traffic Calming Project

Community Consultation Results

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Results of the Online Survey and Workshops undertaken to understand resident priorities and concerns for this traffic calming project.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the results of the first public engagement event for the Jim Common Drive (JCD) North and South Traffic Calming Project. Feedback from the 74 residents who participated in the October 2016 workshops or online survey was collected to understand resident priorities and concerns.

Almost all residents who participated live near or frequently use the roads. The majority (2/3) of those who gave feedback indicated that they participated because of concerns with safety, traffic speeds/volume and/or noise. About 30% of those who participated indicated they did so to ensure flow of traffic was maintained, particularly with respect to JCD South.

On JCD South, residents with concerns cited speed, volumes and noise generally along the length of the road. Sightlines at the intersection of Cranford Drive were a major concern for many residents. Pedestrian concerns were noted at all intersections, but most often Crystal Lane due to the high percentage of vulnerable road users. Traffic management concerns were noted with the signals at Sherwood Drive. Many residents also felt the number of lanes on the road was often unclear.

A significant number of residents indicated that the road is fine and should not be changed. Some residents strongly believe stop signs are needed along JCD South; however, many residents were strongly against this option, valuing the flow of traffic on the road.

While some residents cited speed generally as a concern on JCD North, most concerns were concentrated at the playground and the Heritage Trail crossing south of Charleton Way. Speed, pedestrian safety and parking are common concerns at the park. Speed and darkness contribute to pedestrian concerns at the Heritage Trail crossing. As with JCD South, some residents did not feel that there were significant traffic concerns on JCD North.

When presented with the option of removing the playground zone on JCD North following the implementation of traffic calming, only 38% of residents supported this action. Many residents felt the 30 km/h speed limit was important because of the abundance of on-street parking and the unpredictability of children. Some residents felt that the playground zone should be extended rather than removed.

Feedback gathered through the workshops and online survey will be used to inform the development of preliminary traffic calming plans for JCD North and South. These plans will be presented to the community for their feedback early in 2017.

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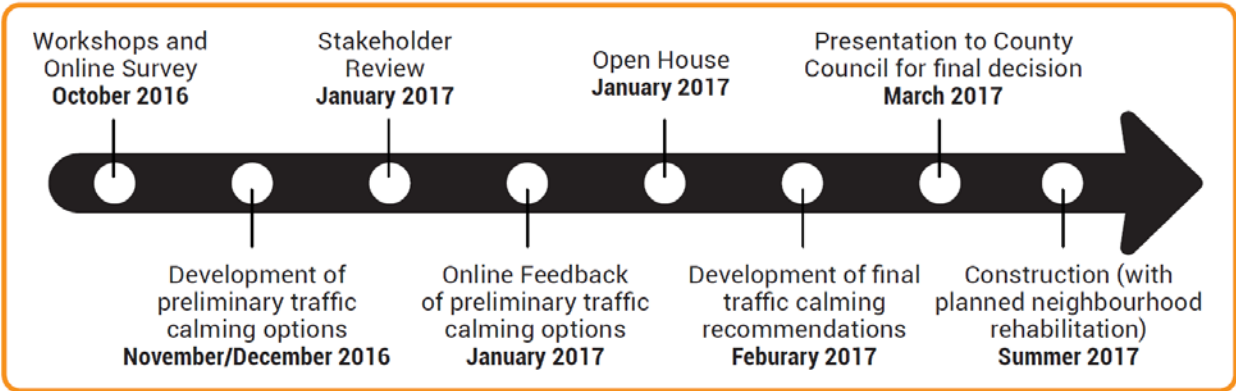
1.0 Introduction

1.1 About the Jim Common Drive Traffic Calming Project

Jim Common Drive (JCD) South and North are scheduled for rehabilitation in 2017. Residents have expressed concerns with traffic speed and pedestrian safety on both of these roads in the past. The Traffic Engineering and Safety branch of Transportation and Agriculture Services collected speed data that indicates traffic speeds in excess of the 50 km/h speed limit. For these reasons, an engineering-driven traffic calming project has been initiated for these roads.

Strathcona County is committed to working with residents and other stakeholders to develop a solution that is economically viable, technically feasible, environmentally compatible and publically acceptable. Public engagement for this initiative is being conducted at the “Listen and Learn” level. Figure One provides a summary of the process to be used for this traffic calming initiative.

Figure One: Jim Common Drive Traffic Calming Project Timeline



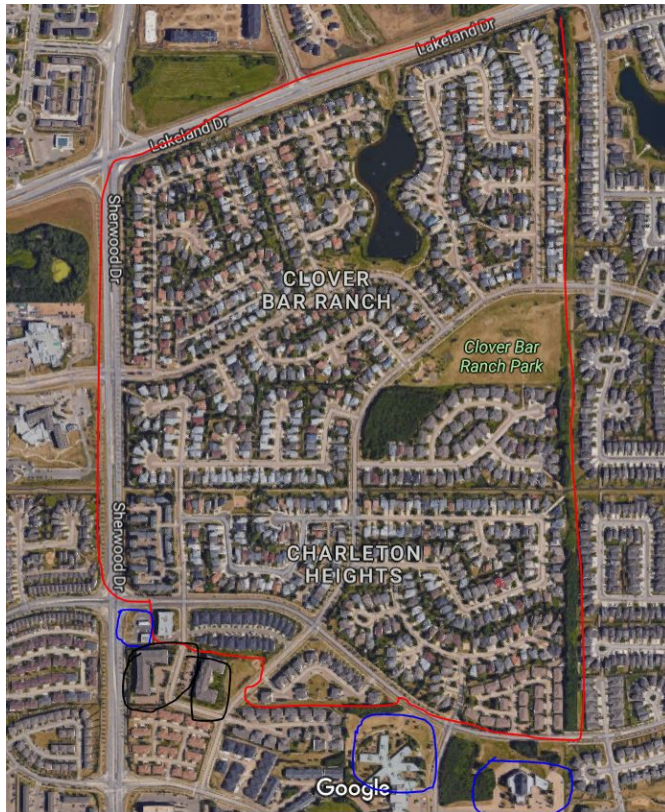
1.2 What this report provides

This report provides the results of the first step in the public engagement process for this project. In October 2016, two workshops were held and an online survey was conducted to understand resident priorities and concerns. This report summarizes the feedback from the workshops and survey to inform the development of preliminary traffic calming plans.

1.3 Recruitment and participation in the workshops and online survey

Residents of Strathcona County were all provided with an opportunity to participate in the workshops and online survey, although those in the neighbourhoods of Cloverbar Ranch and Charlton Heights, as well as nearby condominium complexes off JCD South were most aggressively recruited. Letters were mailed to all households as indicated in Figure Two.

Figure Two: Mailout area for JCD Traffic Calming Project



Letters were personally delivered to the Mac's Convenience Store, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church and Capital Care Strathcona informing them of the process and inviting them to participate.

In addition to the resident mail out, the workshops and survey were promoted through the Sherwood Park News, Facebook and Twitter. The event was also promoted through the County's Public Engagement e-newsletter and through the Community Living Advisory Committee.

In total, 74 residents gave their input into this process, representing 68 households. Thirty-five responses representing 34 residences were received through the online survey. Another 37 residents attended the two workshops, representing 34 households. Two more residents gave their input via the telephone.

1.4 Location of residence of participants

Over half of those who participated in the survey or workshops live on roads which front or back onto JCD North or South. All but 10 participants live in Charlton Heights, Cloverbar Ranch or Durham Town Square.

Six residents live in Lakeland Ridge. Another four live in more distant neighbourhoods of Strathcona County.

1.5 Why residents participated in the workshops and online survey

Residents taking the survey and participating in the workshops were asked “Why are you interested in the Jim Common Drive Traffic calming project?”

Almost all residents said they participated in the engagement because they live near the roads or they frequently use the roads. The majority (2/3) of those who gave feedback indicated that they participated because of concerns with safety, traffic speeds/volume and/or noise. These concerns were most prevalent with residents who live adjacent to the roads:

“Because the number of vehicles that travel past our home are away too high and the speed and noise is not acceptable.”

“I have a young family and I feel their safety is at risk.”

About 30% of those who participated indicated they did so to ensure flow of traffic was maintained, particularly with respect to JCD South. Some of these residents agreed there were some concerns on the roads (most commonly pedestrian safety), but felt that physical changes were not the answer and expressed concerns about the cost of construction:

“Because I use the road often (several times a day sometimes) and it does not require thousands of dollars in construction to calm traffic.”

About 20% of those who participated felt there were no issues and the project was unnecessary:

“No issues. Speed limit should be 60 km/h. No kids play here.”

“I drive these roads daily and see very few speeders. I see no need to effect any changes or calming measures.”

Two residents indicated they participated simply out of interest in their community.

2.0 Jim Common Drive (JCD) South

2.1 Travel habits on the road

All but one respondent indicated that they travelled on JCD South in a passenger vehicle. Sixty-three percent of respondents also indicated they used the road as a pedestrian, 36% as a cyclist, and 3% as a bus passenger. One third of those participating indicated that they use the road to access the Bethel Transit Centre at least once per week.

When asked if the current traffic conditions on JCD South impact your decision on how to travel, just over half of residents indicated that it did. Three-quarters of these residents spoke to how the traffic impacted their route when driving. Most of these residents indicated that it was difficult to access JCD South from side streets at peak times and that they would avoid it.

“Avoid vehicle travel at Jim Common Drive South and Cranford Drive during busy times due to sightlines.”

About one-quarter of residents spoke to how traffic affected their travel choice as a pedestrian. These residents indicated that they either avoided walking on JCD South or had difficulty crossing the streets at times due to traffic speeds and/or volumes.

“I don't feel safe walking across the street with people speeding down the road.”

2.2 General comments about JCD South

Many residents expressed concerns generally with the traffic speed and volumes on JCD South. These concerns translate into pedestrian and intersection safety concerns. A few residents also feel quite strongly that traffic noise is a major concern on the road.

“Feel this initiative must go hand-in-hand with noise bylaw - I can't believe how many people that travel Jim Common have outrageously loud mufflers! And it's not just motorcycles - half ton trucks are worst offenders.”

Some residents feel that the high volumes on JCD South are the result of poor signal timing and/or drivers trying to avoid the signals on Baseline Road.

“This street is used as a short cut to avoid lights at Baseline and Sherwood Drive.”

Several residents feel quite strongly that stop signs are the solution at one or more intersections along the road to calm traffic and make the road safer for pedestrians and vehicles accessing from side streets.

“We would like to see four-way stop signs on Cranford Drive and Jim Common Drive and also at the next corner, Jim Common Drive and Brower Drive.”

While some residents believe speed humps are necessary along the road to calm traffic, more residents suggest traffic calming can be achieved through the addition of stop signs, traffic signals or through the use of enforcement.

“Rather than spending thousands on circles and curbs, bring back photo radar - enforce it and make money to improve the roads!”

Another common concern raised on JCD South is the need for better understanding of the number of lanes on the road. Several residents commented on how this lack of clarity leads to safety issues, particularly where pedestrians are crossing.

“All of Jim Common South appears wide enough for two lanes but there are no dividing lines/markers”.

Some condo residents specifically noted that traffic calming on JCD South needs to be done carefully to ensure that traffic is not diverted to their private condo road:

“Protect Private Road - calming on JCD South should not divert traffic to this private road [in condos running between Crystal Lane and Cranford Drive].”

A significant number of residents indicated that the road is fine and should not be changed.

“I don't think traffic calming is at all necessary. The County does not need to spend money on this project.”

“It has no parks, no houses fronting it and no residential driveways. It's a perfect example of a collector.”

2.3 Location specific concerns on JCD South

2.3.1 Intersection with Cranford Drive

The intersection of Cranford Drive and JCD South was the most frequently noted location of concern at the workshop and in the online survey. Many residents said visibility at this intersection is compromised due to the fence on the southwest corner of the intersection and by the curve in the road:

“When driving north on Cranford Drive and stopping at the corner to turn left onto Jim Common, the sightline is poor due to the curve of the street. The cars travelling east seem to be travelling fast and are often not visible until we have begun the turn. When walking and wanting to cross the road at this same corner, the same safety issues occur.”

Pedestrian safety concerns at this intersection are compounded by the lack of clarity of the number of lanes on the road. Several residents noted that the width of the road allows drivers to pass vehicles stopped for a pedestrian or to turn left, compromising safety.

This was the most requested location for an all-stop sign, as many residents saw this as a solution to these concerns and general speeding concerns on the road.

2.3.2 Intersection with Crystal Lane

The intersection at Crystal Lane was the second most commonly noted area of concern. Concerns at this intersection were mainly pedestrian focused. The speeds of drivers coming off of Sherwood Drive, the lack of a marked crosswalk and the lack of clarity over lane markings were all identified as factors which compromised pedestrian safety.

In addition, the presence of particularly vulnerable road users in the area was noted by several residents:

“There are approximately 75 youths living in Brittany Lane and Robin Hood clients that cross Jim Common to either get to the bus stop or the convenience store as well as families in the neighbourhood.”

Residents also mentioned that drivers are having a difficult time turning left off of Crystal Lane during morning peak hours due to traffic backed-up to the intersection.

2.3.3 Intersection with Brower Drive

The intersection of Brower Drive with JCD South was also a common area of concern, mainly for pedestrians. Residents mainly noted high vehicle speeds at this location made it difficult to cross and that drivers did not always yield to pedestrians:

“Walking my dog, people speed and will not stop when I try and cross the road.”

A couple of residents spoke to sightline issues at this location, created by shrubs on the north side of the road and by the curve of the road approaching the intersection. Speed concerns compound the sightline problem.

As a result of these concerns, a few residents felt the intersection needs a “solar lighted crosswalk” and/or a 4-way stop.

2.3.4 Intersection at Sherwood Drive

Some residents spoke to their concerns at the intersection of JCD South and Sherwood Drive. Speed of right turning drivers and congestion were the issues identified at this location:

“Drivers turn right off Sherwood Drive at high speeds to beat the merge lane.”

“This light is too short. Traffic on JCD South does not clear.”

“light not long enough for westbound traffic to cross the intersection”

One resident noted how she found that the speed and volume of traffic on JCD South had increased significantly with the introduction of the advanced green turning light from Sherwood Drive southbound onto JCD to head east. This in turn decreased pedestrian safety at the Crystal Lane crossing.

2.3.5 Segment between Crystal Lane and Sherwood Drive

Residents identified traffic management and speed as concerns at this location:

“Traffic turning west out of the Mac’s when the traffic is backed up from the light has created some near misses as people get impatient trying to turn out of the Mac’s.”

“Two lanes encourages speeding.”

2.3.6 Segment between Crystal Lane and Cranford Drive

Traffic management was identified as the biggest concern at this location:

“One lane but people treat as two by going around left turning vehicles to the right.”

“More driver awareness where the road goes from two marked lanes to one wide lane. Drivers often try to continue with two lanes even though only one is marked.”

Speed, volume and noise were also identified as issues on this segment.

2.3.7 Segment between Cranford and Brower Drive

Speed, volume and noise were also identified as issues on this segment. One resident indicated that he “can't park because of speeding traffic” at this location. Another noted that the width of the road encourages some drivers to use it as a two lane road.

2.3.8 Other locations

A few other locations were mentioned less frequently in the engagement.

One resident noted that the bus stop on north side of the road between Brower Drive and Crimson Drive is in total darkness and needs lighting.

Another resident expressed that it is difficult to see when exiting Charlotte Way to access JCD South due to the median plantings and parking.

Two residents felt that pedestrian safety at the intersection of JCD South and Crimson Drive should be addressed through the addition of a crosswalk.

2.4 What residents like best about JCD South as it is today

When residents were asked what features they most liked about JCD South today, residents indicated that they liked the boulevard that separated the sidewalk from the road and the trees in the area. Generally, residents also expressed that they genuinely liked living in the area and liked the easy access to the city and the rest of Sherwood Park.

While several people reported the width of the road as a concern (encourages speeding), many people also told us they liked the wide, open road and that allows for good traffic flow and easy snow removal.

“Wide street with room for cars to park on the sides and busses to stop w/o slowing traffic, I like it that there are NO speed bumps, roundabouts or narrowings.”

3.0 Jim Common Drive (JCD) North

3.1 Travel habits on the road

Only online respondents were asked about their travel habits on JCD North. Of the online participants, 81% indicated that they accessed the road in a passenger vehicle, 56% use the road as pedestrian, 31% use the road as a cyclist, 3% access the road in a bus, and 13% reported they do not use the road at all.

About one-third residents agreed that current traffic affects their decision on how to travel on JCD North.

“I try and get off Jim common as soon as possible with the kids. Traffic excessively speeds.”

3.2 General comments about the road

In general, residents with concerns about JCD North felt speeds were too fast and traffic volumes were too high on the road. Traffic concerns were most concentrated near the playground and near the Heritage Trail crossing south of Charleton Way.

3.3 Location specific concerns

3.3.1 At Cloverbar Ranch Park

By far the most common area of concern on JCD North is in the playground zone at Cloverbar Ranch Park. Almost all residents expressed concerns with speeding in the playground zone, and these concerns were closely related to pedestrian concerns.

“There are often people speeding in the area of Cloverbar Ranch Park. It's really unsafe for kids.”

Several residents also feel parking at the park is a concern, related to pedestrian and visibility concerns:

“Parking on crosswalk creates a hidden crosswalk.”

Some residents feel quite strongly that the County should be providing parking off the street for the playground/sports fields:

“Parking lot should be created for playground. Parking causes visibility concerns.”

Several residents suggested that the addition of speed humps or stop signs were necessary to slow traffic.

“Add speed bumps or make the intersections All-Way stops to encourage drivers to slow down.”

Although almost all residents agreed that there was poor compliance with the speed limit in the playground zone, a few residents did not support changes to the road environment.

“Please don't add in obstacles, speed bumps or narrowing on JC North. It would be a pity to reduce the efficiency of this road. The park area is already playground zoned, if speed is an issue use enforcement and public awareness, not expensive alterations.”

Other residents felt that a simple solution, such as the addition of crosswalks, was all that was necessary. The absence of a marked crosswalk at the intersection with Cimmaron Drive was noted.

“Need more signs and a crosswalk on the other end of the park. No circles, speed bumps or curbs which impair vision of drivers when large vehicles are parked.”

3.3.2 Near the Heritage Trail crossing south of Charleton Way

Pedestrian safety concerns were also expressed by many residents at the Heritage Trail crossing south of Charleton Way. Residents noted that speed at this location tended to be high, particularly with traffic headed northbound, as the road slopes downhill at this location.

One resident felt that this crossing was also dangerous due to poor lighting at the crossing.

Another resident felt the segment of road south of the crossing was a concern. This resident noted that this segment of road gets icy in the winter and can be hard for northbound traffic to make it up the hill.

3.3.3 Near the north east end of JCD North near Crimson Drive

A few residents who live near the northeast end of JCD North and its intersection with Crimson Drive attended the workshop to express their concerns in that area. These residents feel traffic is moving too fast as it comes off of Crimson Drive, causing safety concerns from that intersection through to Cloverbar Park.

These residents also expressed concern about using their cul-de-sacs to do U-turns and driving too fast around the plantings. The residents were also concerned that the plantings caused sightline issues, both within the cul-de-sac and for accessing JCD North. These residents are in strong support of raising the crosswalk at the crossing south of their homes, as well as adding speed humps at the park.

Only one other resident expressed concerns at the northeast end of JCD North. This resident noted that he finds the area too narrow and that he can't get his RV through.

3.4 What residents like best about JCD North as it is today

When residents were asked what features they most liked about JCD North today, residents indicated they like all of the family friendly amenities, including the spray park, paths and community garden. As one resident summarized, it's "well utilized- toddlers to teens". Residents also value the trees and boulevards and available parking.

Resident views varied widely on the current design of the road:

"None. The road is dangerous. The road is too wide which causes people to drive faster."

"Wide, unobstructed street with comfortable room on both sides of the street for parking."

3.5 Removal of the playground zone

According to Transportation Association of Canada Best Practice Guidelines, the playground zone on Jim Common Drive North is unwarranted. At the workshop, residents were presented with this information, as well as speed data which showed that speeds at the playground are essentially unchanged whether or not the playground zone was in effect. Residents were asked if they would agree with the removal of the playground zone if it were replaced with improvements at the crosswalks. Thirty-eight percent of those who attended the workshop supported the removal of the playground zone; forty-three percent of participants did not support its removal. Many of these residents were very strongly opposed to this action, with some residents suggesting the playground zone should be extended rather than removed. These residents felt the 30 km/h speed limit was important because of the abundance of on-street parking and the unpredictability of children.

"There are hundreds of parents/children loading/unloading out of vehicles at the playground, soccer field, spray park, every day! It is not just a crosswalk issue!"

The remainder of residents (19%) were undecided as to whether or not they agreed with the removal of the playground zone after the addition of traffic calming. Most of these residents wanted to see what traffic calming features were used before giving their opinion.

4.0 Other Roads of Mention

4.1 Cranford Drive

While the workshops and survey concentrated on JCD North and South, some residents also wanted to express their concern about Cranford Drive. These residents, mainly those who reside in the condos which have access on to this road, feel that the traffic speeds and volumes are excessive, particularly in the playground zone.

“Please look at playground on Cranford Drive. This is used as an expressway with excessive speeding during playground hours.”

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Next Steps

Feedback gathered through the workshops and online survey will be used to inform the development of preliminary traffic calming plans for JCD North and South. These plans will be presented to the community for their feedback early in 2017.