

Re – Widening of Williams Parkway - Agenda item 10.2.1

Committee of Council Meeting – November 18th, 2020

Mayor and Councillors,

As we progress as a city, we must evolve our thinking from the old ideas of automobile-based development, to a new outlook of a more progressive, self sustainable city. To me, this is what the 2040 vision is all about. We can still decide together what type of city we want to live in.

The widening of Williams Parkway was long ago seen as an inevitable price to pay for the development and population growth of our city. Things have changed since this project was originally considered. More people may be working from home, fewer younger citizens are buying cars, and some may not even get their licence. Projected demand may not even materialize.

To prove that road widening is not inevitable in suburban planning. I ask you to look to the south, to Mississauga, a city that is nearing the end of its development cycle. Specifically, I am referring to The Queensway, a major east/west arterial road through most of Mississauga, that remains a four-lane road. There is more than enough room to expand this road but right now that space is taken up by greenery, trees, berms, and a meandering multi-use path. My impression of it is as a linear park. This would be something to aspire to with Williams Parkway. Using available boulevard to increase park space and provide tree planting area, to be able to reach Brampton's tree planting goals.

Some citizens were already upset about the removal of mature trees to facilitate the construction of sound walls for this project, so I know there are people who care about a green, livable city.

Which brings up another aspect of road widening. Generally, it decreases rain fall absorption, by subtracting grass and trees. More importantly, the proposed option one would increase the hard surface, direct storm water run off by approximately 35,000 square metres as proposed. This in a time when we are all being asked to finance the renovation and improvement of our storm water management system.

I would urge you not to be swayed in your decision by the finance numbers. The widening proposal relies on development charges for its main source of funding. Nothing is free. As we hopefully emerge from the economic downturn that this pandemic has caused, it is worth considering that the development charge route is not a bottomless well and it is money we may need later.

As you may have noticed or heard during the time of COVID19, wide open roads, like a widened Williams Parkway, lend themselves to high speed and reckless driving styles. Most of us saw the home surveillance video of a car flying off Williams Parkway, further west, barrel rolling into a neighbouring street on Canada Day. This coupled with the fact that, believe it or not, adding lanes to a road, rather

than increase traffic flow, may increase traffic volume. This is commonly referred to as “induced demand”.

The city of Brampton has recently committed to Vision Zero (a strategy to reduce and eliminate road deaths). Although cited as a consideration of certain proposals for Williams Parkway, this application is limited, as there is no plan to include roundabouts at intersect roads. Besides increasing traffic flow and reducing green house gases, roundabouts would have reduced the instances of T-bone crashes. Unfortunately, the residents of Brampton are all too familiar with the effect of T-bone crashes which have decimated families.

Green space and increased tree planting are a priority for the 2040 Vision which Brampton is committed to. Cities are for people. Select an option which will increase the green space of your city, while creating a linear park feel on your boulevards.

Sincerely,

Stephen Laidlaw