

Councillor's request to province will delay Maple Avenue roadwork by six months

Improvements to Maple Ave. are on hold while Halton Region awaits a response from the Ministry of the Environment, which is reviewing the project at a local councillor's request.

Councillor Mike Davis wrote to the ministry back in May requesting a Part II order to an individual environmental assessment requesting it consider the design for the Maple Ave. roadwork that included a bike path. That design was not supported by regional council.

Since then, Davis, a cyclist, has met with staff from Halton Region (which has jurisdiction over the road) in an attempt to resolve the issue and is awaiting a meeting next month between Town staff and the Town's Trails committee (of which he is a member) to discuss alternatives to a Maple Ave. bike path.

Edward Soldo, manager of transportation services and infrastructure planning with Halton Region, said they were hoping to begin the roadwork early next year, but as a result of the request by Davis the project has been delayed by at least six months.

Davis is firm about having a bike path on Maple Ave. or an alternative path in place.

"If you kick the bikes off Maple Ave. you don't have any place for them to go," said Davis.

In April, Halton Region council approved the final design for the \$1.58 million roadwork to include extensions and improvements to the sidewalk, and the installation of islands, medians, a centre turn lane and grassy boulevard, but no bike path. Council also approved a recommendation that the Town of Halton Hills be requested to consider establishing alternative cycling

routes or enhancing signage throughout the community to promote alternatives along local streets adjacent to Maple Ave.

'We have to look at bike paths and trails anywhere we can. But at what price?'



CLARK SOMERVILLE

Davis wants to ensure that if a bike path can't be accommodated on Maple Ave. that an alternative route be designated before the improvements are made.

He believes excluding bikes from Maple Ave. is a mistake, and while public opinion currently might not support a bike path on that road, in 10 years that could change.

Councillor Jane Fogal agrees with Davis that there should be a cycle path on Maple Ave.

Fogal, a member of Halton's Cycling Committee, said everyone on that committee, which includes cyclists from Halton Hills, is "very upset that the design would come forward eliminating cycling."

"I am worried about life and limb of people," said Fogal. "When I think about it, it makes me shudder."

"We have to look at bike paths and trails anywhere we can," said Trails Committee member Clark Somerville. "But at what price?"

Due to constraints, Somerville doesn't believe a bike path can be accommodated on Maple, and if it was it would require expropriation and property purchase.

"Who is going to pay for it?" asked Somerville.

Requesting the Part II order "makes them (the region and the Town) come to the table," said Davis.

"Maybe we can get a compromise that will make everybody happy," said Davis.

Consultants on the Maple Ave. project did come up with a plan that included a bike path earlier this year.

That path, which was estimated to cost between \$200,000 and \$300,000 and was to be split between the north and south side of Maple Ave. due to space constraints, wasn't supported by the majority of the residents at a public meeting, so it was eliminated from the final recommended design. The residents were more concerned about pedestrian safety.

At a council meeting in April, Councillor Moya Johnson said the cost for the path would be much higher than suggested because there would be property acquisition and retaining walls and trees that would have to come down.

Fogal said that she doesn't advocate spending money to buy property or remove retaining walls; she would like to see the road width remain the same, and the elimination of the grassy strip being proposed between the sidewalk and road, so cyclists will still have the same room on the road as they do now.

The Region is now awaiting a response from the Ministry— either giving the Region the green light to proceed with the approved design, or provide conditions to address cycling.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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