

Speed cushions in Belfountain have returned for another year

There might not be a lot of enthusiasm, but there is acceptance that speed cushions are going to be a reality in the west part of town this year, including in Belfountain.

About 20 people were on hand for a meeting in Belfountain last week on the method to calm traffic. Speed cushions were the main item on the agenda, but the discussion gravitated to several other traffic-related issues, with officials from the Town, Peel Region and Caledon OPP on hand.

Joe Avsec, manager of traffic engineering with the Region, said they were interested in a 'frank discussion,' on the matter.

'We're here to listen,' he said. 'We won't make any final decisions yet.'

But Councillor Barb Shaughnessy called for a quick show-of-hands vote, and found most of the people at the meeting supported the cushions.

Mr. Avsec also stressed one of the nice things about speed cushions is they're not permanent. They're portable and inexpensive, as well as designed so emergency vehicles can get by them without slowing down.

'It's a single installation,' he said. 'We can do it in a morning.'

Mr. Avsec also observed they can easily be removed for winter, so they won't be damaged by snow plows.

Cushions are generally installed in rural areas with lower posted speed limits (50 km-h or lower) where there are concerns about excessive speeding. Mr. Avsec said historically, they result in an average 11 per cent reduction in speeds.

Speed cushions are currently used in five places in Caledon, with some of them already installed. They are used on Bush Street, near Belfountain Public School, three locations on Forks of the Credit Road and on Olde Base Line Road, near the Cheltenham Badlands.

They are also easier to drive over than the more traditional speed bumps.

'They are really smooth to go over,' Mr. Avsec said. 'They're a little less intrusive.'

Speed cushions are installed in three components, allowing for space for the wheels of emergency vehicles to get through. The installation is about seven feet long, six feet wide and roughly three inches in height. There are warning signs posted, as well as pavement markings warning drivers to slow down.

Mr. Avsec said they go in areas where there are documented issues with speeding, on the order of 25 km/h over the posted limit. Their positioning also requires adequate sightlines.

'We can't just put them anywhere,' he said, adding there has to be enough time for emergency vehicles to see them and steer through the gaps. 'We work with these guys. We don't want to cause them any grief.'

William Toy, supervisor of traffic safety with the Region, pointed out that locating the cushions is a little tricky because of the sight lines and the fact there aren't many straight-aways in the area.

He also stressed they are not hard to get over.

'We wanted something that was a little more forgiving,' he said, adding that since they're made of rubber, not much noise is made when cars go over them.

Not everyone was sold. One man argued the 11 per cent speed reduction was not good enough, arguing more enforcement is the way to go.

‘Every little bit helps,’ Inspector Tim Melanson, commander of Caledon OPP observed. ‘Hopefully, we’re going to hit this problem from all angles.’

‘Eleven per cent might not sound like a lot, but it can make the difference between life and death,’ one woman remarked.

Mr. Avsec said the main problem with the cushions involves noise, usually caused when a trailer is being pulled over them. There are also issues with cars braking hard when they come to them, then revving once they’re past them. Mr. Toy added the installation and maintenance is a little labour-intensive. There are also complications finding places to store them in the winter.

Other traffic issues were on the minds of several people at the meeting.

One woman mentioned Forks of the Credit Road, which had been closed for some time, recently re-opened, with lots of motorcycles speeding along the route.

‘It was like a speedway back and forth,’ she declared.

A man added the motorcycles are able to easily get through the gaps in the cushion.

Mr. Toy pointed out there’s not much that can be done to prevent them from using the gaps. ‘They’re another lawful vehicle on the road,’ he said, adding cushions are also easier for bicycles to get by.

There were complaints about the speed problems on Mississauga Road, south of the hamlet. One man called the situation ‘absolutely insane.’

But he was also opposed to the idea of the cushions.

‘I’m totally against speed bumps,’ he declared. ‘You have no right to inflict me. I’m not a speeder. There’s a better way of doing it.’

He suggested making the whole area, from Caledon Mountain Drive to the stretch of Mississauga Road north of the hamlet, as well as Bush Street, a community safety zone where speeding fines would be doubled.

Mr. Toy said that would be a bylaw issue, adding it’s important to make sure the speed limits that are set are also realistic. Enforcement is an important part of it too, since police can’t be in the problem areas all the time. That’s another advantage with the speed cushions, be they are there constantly.

‘They are a bit of a pain if you live in the neighbourhood, and they’re not pretty,’ he admitted, but he also pointed out the 11 per cent speed reduction is a benefit.

Inspector Melanson, said enforcement issues should soon be improving, as the detachment will be opening a community office in Belfountain early in July. There will be two officers, as well as a traffic officer assigned there, and he said the residents will be seeing them often. ‘The cruisers will be parked right out in front,’ he added.