

Residential Speed Limit Review – School Zones, Playground Zones, Senior Zones, and Effective Hours

ISSUE

This report provides recommendations to address speed limits for school zones, adjacent to playgrounds and in areas with a high concentration of seniors.

BACKGROUND

History

Since 2013, the Administration has been working closely with local residents, community associations, and area Councillors to complete 73 Neighbourhood Traffic Reviews (NTRs), with another two currently underway. The most common concern raised by residents is speed of vehicles on neighbourhood streets.

At its Regular Business Meeting held on October 22, 2018, City Council considered the Posted Speed Limit Review report, and resolved:

1. That the Administration develop a detailed framework for revising posted speed limits on neighbourhood streets;
2. That the Administration develop a detailed framework for revising posted speed limits in school and playground zones; and
3. That the Administration report on options for addressing speeding and safety in areas of high concentration of seniors.”

At its meeting held on June 7, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received an information report regarding the Residential Speed Limit Review – Background Information and Feedback Summary. This report included a summary of two surveys that were completed to obtain opinions on revising speed limits in residential areas of Saskatoon. Excerpts of the surveys relevant to school, playground, and senior zones are included as Appendix 1.

At its meeting held on September 7, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received a decision report for the Residential Speed Limit Review – Speed Limit and Eligible Streets. The result of the meeting was no changes to the posted speed limits on neighbourhood streets.

Additional Council and Committee referrals related to this issue are included in Appendix 2.

Current Status

Council Policy C07-015, Reduced Speed Zones for Schools guides the City’s current practice for the creation of school zones (Appendix 3). Highlights of the policy include:

- The speed limit of 30 km/h is posted at all elementary and high schools,
- The speed restriction is in effect from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday from September 1 to June 30, and
- The end of school zone is marked with a sign indicating maximum speed.

Playground area signs (i.e., awareness only) are installed on a by-request basis following an engineering review of the conditions for the playground; however, the posted speed limit is not reduced.

Saskatoon has not established reduced speed limits for areas with a high concentration of seniors.

City of Saskatoon's Current Approach

Saskatoon's current approach to install school zones at all elementary and high schools and no playground zones differs from the national guidelines established by the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) in the School and Playground Areas and Zones: Guidelines for Application and Implementation (Guidelines). The Guidelines were published after the City implemented school zones and offer guidance on the type of area or zone for a school or playground site dependent on the risk factors involved for each individual site.

There is no national guidance for implementing reduced speed areas or zones for streets with a higher concentration of seniors.

Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

The Residential Speed Limit Review – Background Information and Feedback Summary received as information by the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation at its meeting held on June 7, 2021 included a jurisdictional scan.

OPTIONS

Options for School Zones

Option 1 - No Changes: This option provides no changes to school zones.

Option 2 - Revise the school zone policy to align with TAC guidance: This option will direct the Administration to revise the existing Council Policy C07-015, Reduced Speed Zones for Schools. The existing policy will be revised to align with the national TAC Guidelines. Key features of the TAC Guidelines for school zones are shown in Appendix 4. As a result, the following changes are proposed:

- Elementary school zones will remain with some adjustments to school zone limits in some circumstances (for example, excluding signalized intersections from the zone, distance from school, etc.).
- High school zones will be changed to school areas only (without a reduced speed limit). Pedestrians of high school age are typically better able to understand traffic and to control their own movements. Implementing school areas, accompanied with appropriate wording in the bylaw, will facilitate continuing the practice of not permitting U-turns near high schools. Also, it provides clarity to road operations such as snow clearing adjacent to schools which has a specific level of service.

- School zones established for existing pre-schools will not be removed (pre-schools do not qualify for a reduced speed zone but all pre-schools are currently in a school zone due to adjacent high schools or elementary schools).
- Zone limits will be minimized where possible.
- For local streets in residential areas only, an “End School Zone” sign will replace the maximum speed sign reinstating the original speed limit (i.e., 40 km/h signs in Montgomery Place and 50 km/h signs in the other neighbourhoods).

Appendix 5 shows the proposed school zone limits in each neighbourhood. The precise limits will be subject to change when preparing installation plans, depending on site conditions.

Options for Playground Zones

Option 1 - No Changes: This option provides no changes to the current approach at playgrounds.

Option 2 - Develop a playground zone policy to align with TAC guidance: This option will direct the Administration to develop a playground zone policy. The policy will be developed to align with the national TAC Guidelines. Key features of the TAC Guidelines for playground zones are shown in Appendix 6.

Based on the eligibility points, 69 out of 222 parks would be eligible for a playground zone. Playground zones are to be marked with:

- A new sign denoting a reduced 30 km/h speed limit and the effective times and applicable days; and
- A sign denoting the end of the zone.

Appendix 5 shows the playground zone limits in each neighbourhood. The precise limits will be subject to change when preparing installation plans, depending on site conditions.

Options for Senior Zones

Option 1 - No Reduced Speed Limit: There will be no reduced speed limit for areas with a high concentration of seniors. Rather than a reduced speed limit, the potential countermeasures such as increasing pedestrian crossing times at signalized intersections, pedestrian devices, traffic calming, enhanced pavement markings, and improved street lighting will continue to be considered where appropriate.

Option 2 - Develop a Senior Zone Policy: This option will direct the Administration to develop a senior zone policy. The factors to be considered in the establishment of a reduced speed limit in areas with a high concentration of seniors are:

- Senior facility type (i.e., Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) special care and long-term care facilities)
- Road classification

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- Fencing characteristics
- Property line separation
- Location of facility entrance
- Location of sidewalks
- Location of traffic control devices

Appendix 5 shows the senior zone limits in each neighbourhood. The limits are subject to change when preparing installation plans, depending on site conditions.

Options for Zone Operation

Option 1 - No Changes: Zones will continue to be in effect from September 1 to June 30, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for school zones and the same hours would be implemented for playground zones, if adopted.

Option 2 - Revise existing hours for school zones and implement hours for playground zones to be in effect: September 1 to June 30, Monday to Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. This option provides coverage over a longer period of the day during the school season as children may be present in school and playground zones.

Option 3 - Revise existing hours for school zones and implement hours for playground zones to be in effect: All months of the year, 7 days a week, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. This option provides coverage over a longer period of the day, as well as on non-school days as children may be present in school and playground zones throughout the year.

Option 4 - Revise existing hours for school zones and implement hours for playground zones to be in effect: All months of the year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. This option provides coverage over the entire day as well as on non-school days as children may be present in school and playground zones throughout the year.

Option 5 - Implement hours for seniors’ zones to be in effect: All months of the year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. This option provides coverage over the entire day as seniors may be present at any time during the day throughout the year.

Cost estimates of the options are as follows.

School Zone Option	Costs if Effective Hours Remain	Costs if changes to effective hours are made
Option 1 - No Changes to School Zones	\$0	n/a
Option 2 - Align School Zone Policy with TAC	Signs: \$100,000 Devices: \$380,000*	Signs: \$200,000 Devices: \$380,000*

*These devices are warranted under Council Policy C07-017 – Traffic Control at Pedestrian Crossings and are on the list of devices awaiting funding.

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Playground Zone Option	Cost Estimate
Option 1 - No Changes (No Playground Zones)	\$0
Option 2 - Develop Playground Zone Policy	Signs: \$200,000

Seniors Zone Option	Cost Estimate
Option 1 – Do Nothing	\$0
Option 2 – Develop Senior Zone Policy	Signs: \$25,000

Options Implementation

Option 1 – Implement playground zones in 2022 and school zones revisions in 2023. Removal of the school zones from high schools is dependent on having appropriate pedestrian devices in place.

Option 2 – Implement all changes in 2022. Again, removal of school zones from high schools is dependent on having appropriate pedestrian devices in place.

Appendix 7 shows the new school zone, school area and playground zone signs.

RECOMMENDATION
<p>That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Zones – Direct the Administration to revise the reduced speed school zone policy to align with TAC guidance and maintain a reduced speed limit of 30 km/h (Option 2); 2. Playground Zones – Direct the Administration to develop a reduced speed playground zone policy to align with TAC guidance and include a reduced speed limit of 30 km/h (Option 2); 3. Senior Zones – Continue to consider potential countermeasures such as increasing pedestrian crossing times at signalized intersections, pedestrian devices, traffic calming, enhanced pavement markings, and improved street lighting where appropriate (Option 1); 4. Zone Operation – Direct the Administration to revise existing hours for school zones and implement hours for playground zones to be in effect all months of the year, 7 days a week, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.: (Option 3); 5. Implementation – That the changes are all made in 2022; 6. That this report be forwarded to the 2022-2023 Multi-Year Budget Review meeting for addition to the Capital Budget Options for potential Reserve for Capital Expenditures (RCE) funding; and 7. That the City Solicitor be requested to prepare the appropriate bylaw amendments to Bylaw No. 7200, The Traffic Bylaw.

RATIONALE

School Zones and Playground Zones

School zones or playground zones reduce the risk of conflicts between vehicles and children by providing a warning and requiring drivers to slow down to a defined maximum speed. A lower speed limit improves safety by reducing the distance travelled

before a driver can react, increasing the driver's field of vision, and reducing stopping sight distance.

Revision to Council Policy C07-015, Reduced Speed Zones for Schools and development of a playground zone policy are recommended to align with national guidance as established by TAC Guidelines.

According to TAC, there is a need for a set of uniform guidelines towards the establishment of school and playground areas and zones to:

- Provide direction for practitioners to objectively assess the need for school and playground areas and zones using sound principles and a transparent, repeatable process; and,
- Provide direction on the proper implementation of school and playground areas and zones, including the selection and location of the signs and pavement markings relative to school and playground properties, as well as for various road classifications.

TAC notes the following:

- Children of elementary school age, when without parental supervision, are typically considered to be the most vulnerable due to their limited abilities to understand and anticipate vehicular traffic movements and their tendency to accidentally enter the roadway. Children of middle age and high school age are typically better able to understand traffic and to control their own movements. School zones or areas are unnecessary at post-secondary institutions.
- It is strongly discouraged to continue a school or playground zone through a signalized intersection. If a zone is provided through any intersection, signs should be installed with particular caution to avoid distracting drivers from the intersection traffic control and causing visual obstructions to pedestrian and vehicular traffic at the intersection.
- For local roads in residential areas only, an End School Zone may be provided, in place of a maximum speed limit sign to resume normal speed. While this deviates from the current Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada (MUTCDC) guidelines, it can be considered where there is deemed to be a greater risk of vehicles accelerating to an unsafe speed at the end of the zone.

Areas with High Concentration of Seniors

No changes are recommended in areas with high concentration of seniors. Rather than a reduced speed limit, potential countermeasures such as increasing pedestrian crossing times at signalized intersections, pedestrian devices, traffic calming, enhanced pavement markings and improved street lighting will continue to be considered where appropriate.

The City of Toronto is the only known municipality that has established a reduced speed zone for seniors (posted at 20 km/h less than the adjacent sections of the street). The

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creation of new senior zones in Toronto is currently on hold while staff review and evaluate the existing senior zones.

Other municipalities use a variety of countermeasures rather than a speed reduction to improve safety for senior pedestrians.

Zone Operation

The recommendation for zone operation provides additional coverage by including non-school days, and extending existing operating times as children may be present in school and playground zones during these times.

Regular operation for elementary schools is roughly 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with some schools varying hours to serve their community and students. Extracurricular and before and after school activities may extend the hours of use of the school both earlier and later in the day.

Many school sites have playground equipment. Children access playground equipment at schools and parks throughout the year; there is no set schedule for play on these structures. Peak use of playgrounds is throughout the week all day for the warmest months of the year as well as after and before school throughout the year.

In recognition that there are some playgrounds not adjacent to schools and that not all parks have playgrounds, it would be beneficial to sign playgrounds so that drivers can be aware in advance that play equipment is present so they can adjust their driving behaviour accordingly.

With the current time of day restrictions, driver habits during non-effective hours can lead to complacency in the zone during non-effective hours when children may still be present.

The simplest, easiest to comprehend, and objective approach is to sign school zones and playground zones in effect year-round, all day, every day. However, this may lead to some non-compliance in the late evening and throughout the night and early morning. Thus, the recommendation extends the current protection of lower speeds for longer periods, but not in effect all the time.

This recommendation is consistent with other municipalities, as summarized below.

Municipality	Posted Speed Limit in School Zones and Playground Zones	Zone Operation
Calgary	30 km/h in playground zones (schools included in playground zones)	All months of the year, 7 days a week, 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Edmonton		
Hamilton	30 km/h or 40 km/h in school zones and playground zones (choice of speed limit used depends on posted speed limit for the street outside the zone)	All months of the year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
Regina	30 km/h in school zones and playground zones	All months of the year, 7 days a week, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

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Zone Speed Limits

The recommendation of a reduced speed limit of 30 km/h for both school and playground zones is consistent with practice elsewhere in Canada, and also maintains consistency with the existing 30 km/h school zones in Saskatoon. This approach will assist in meeting driver expectations, thus improving the level of safety in these zones.

Implementation

It is recommended to complete the changes to the school zones, and implement the playground zones in 2022 in consideration of:

- Requires a shorter time to communicate the changes to the public.
- Easier to understand for the public if the changes throughout the City are made in one season.
- Increases safety as the changes, if made over a shorter duration, requires less driver awareness and reduces driver uncertainty as to the rules of the road specific to that street.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The capital project financial implications of the recommendations are:

		2022	
Costs	School Zones - Signage	\$200,000	
	School Zones – Pedestrian Crossing Devices	\$380,000	
	Playground Zones - Signage	\$200,000	
	Education / Communications	\$50,000	
	TOTAL COSTS		\$830,000
Anticipated Funding Through MYBP ¹	School / Playground Zones Implementation	\$100,000	
	One Pedestrian Device	\$20,000	
	TOTAL ANTICIPATED FUNDING		\$120,000
		FUNDING SHORTFALL	\$710,000

1 Multi-Year Budget Process

If City Council preference is to implement over two years, the financial implications change:

		2022		2023	
Costs	School Zones - Signage			\$200,000	
	School Zones – Pedestrian Crossing Devices			\$380,000	
	Playground Zones - Signage	\$200,000			
	Education / Communications	\$25,000		\$25,000	
	TOTAL COSTS		\$225,000		\$605,000
Anticipated Funding Through MYBP	School / Playground Zones Implementation ¹	\$100,000		\$100,000	
	Pedestrian Devices ²	\$20,000		\$340,000	
	TOTAL ANTICIPATED FUNDING		\$120,000		\$440,000
		FUNDING SHORTFALL	\$105,000		\$165,000

1 Funded from Capital Project #2288 – Transportation Safety

2 Funded from Capital Project #2290 – Traffic Control Systems

To address the capital funding shortfall identified in either the one-year, or two-year, implementation two options are:

1. Provide RCE funding through the 2022-2023 Multi-Year Budget Process, or,
2. The Administration report back in January 2022 with a re-prioritization of transportation projects that will propose deferring other projects to enable completion of this project.

This capital project was not included as part of the Capital Budget Options which City Council has prioritized and will be presented to the 2022/2023 Multi-Year Budget Review meeting at the end of November. If the recommendation is approved, to be forwarded to the 2022/2023 Multi-Year Budget Review meeting, this project can be added by City Council to the consideration list for RCE funding.

Finally, irrelevant of how funding is provided in 2022, if the direction is to implement the changes within 2022, this approach would 'free up' \$440,000 in capital funding for 2023. The Administration would report back in later 2022 with a recommendation on funding other priority transportation projects such as other pedestrian crossing devices, missing sidewalks, pedestrian accessible ramps, etc.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations require revisions to Council Policy C07-015, Reduced Speed Zones for Schools and Bylaw No. 7200, The Traffic Bylaw. Development of a reduced speed playground zone policy is also required.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

There are no privacy, social, or environmental implications identified with this report.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

The following stakeholder meetings have occurred since June:

1. External on July 6, 2021 - Representatives from Medavie Health Services West, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Saskatoon Council on Aging, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, and Saskatoon Public Schools. Regrets received from Saskatoon Safety Council representative and Saskatchewan Government Insurance.
2. Internal on July 13, 2021 - Representatives from Sustainability, Roadways, Fleet and Support, Planning and Development, Community Standards, Saskatoon Transit, Saskatoon Fire Department, Parks, Saskatoon Police Service and Transportation.

In addition to the meetings, ongoing correspondence has been provided to the stakeholders throughout the project.

NEXT STEPS

1. Prepare approval report for a revised Council Policy C07-015, Reduced Speed Zones for Schools.
2. Prepare approval report for a new reduced speed playground zone policy.
3. Prepare a communications strategy and implementation plan.

The planned project schedule is included as Appendix 7.

APPENDICES

1. Survey information
2. Council History
3. Current Council Policy C07-015, Reduced Speed Zones
4. Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) School Zone Guidelines
5. Neighbourhood Maps
6. Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Playground Zone Guidelines
7. School and Playground Zone Signs
8. Anticipated Residential Speed Limit Review Project Schedule

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