



Thunder Bay
Chamber
of Commerce

stronger business together

Memo to: Mayor & Council
Prepared by: Charla Robinson, President
Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
Subject: Designated Truck Route
Date: January 3, 2019

The Designated Truck Route proposal is scheduled for Council discussion on January 14, 2019. I appreciate the opportunity to outline the Chamber's concerns with the proposal in advance of our deputation.

A significant number of our member companies are very concerned about the proposed changes to the movement of goods by both cross-country trucks and local trucks within city limits and the significant impacts that these new restrictions would have on their operation. Stakeholder consultations have been held by City Administration on this issue in May 2017, February 2018 and September 2018.

We completely agree with the statement in Corporate Report 103/2018 that "The delivery of service and goods is essential for the City and its residents as effective movements reduce delivery cost and time and are vital to the City's economy and economic development." We believe that effective and efficient movement of people and goods within the city and the region must be a priority consideration throughout this discussion. We also believe that the policy must respect the economic importance of the trucking industry to our community. The proposed designated truck route will increase both operating costs to the industry and increase negative environmental impacts through increased fuel burn.

Lack of evidence identifying problems with current policy

Policy decisions with economic impacts should always be undertaken through an evidence-based approach. We are disappointed in the lack of data provided by administration throughout this process relating to the issues that the designated truck route is proposing to address. The report identifies "resident complaints concerning safety, engine compression use, speeding, and complaints of noise and vibration of homes" as triggering factors for the changes proposed along Arthur Street and Dawson Road.

The Corporate Report does not provide any data related to the number of complaints received related to the above noted concerns, nor does it outline statistics relating to speeding infractions by trucks on the current routes.

We believe that safety is of paramount importance and must be top of mind in all traffic policy. Throughout the discussions over numerous years, administration has not yet provided any evidence that there is a significant safety issue related specifically to truck traffic on either Dawson Road or Arthur Street.

Corporate Report 130/2018 identifies that the five-year average number of collisions involving at fault heavy trucks on Arthur Street is 1.8 collisions per year and on Dawson Road is 3 collisions per year. Our own review of the collision data we have received from administration indicates that at-fault truck collisions represent a small portion of accidents along these two routes and that the majority of collisions have no truck involvement. In the absence of additional data, the available information suggests that truck usage of Dawson Road and Arthur Street is not a significant safety concern.

Safety implications of the proposed changes

As stated previously, safety is of paramount importance in the development of traffic policy. A key concern of our members throughout this discussion relates to the impact of these changes to safety along Hwy 11/17 by adding an estimated 500 – 750 trucks to this corridor each day.

The first area of safety concern is within City limits on Hwy 11/17 between Red River Road and the Harbour Expressway and how adding hundreds of trucks per day will impact traffic flow. We know that big trucks do not stop on a dime, nor do they have the capacity to quickly start-up from a stop light. Truckers have told us that driving this stretch is very challenging due to the short spans between intersections at Dawson/Red River Road, John Street and Oliver Road as well as the lack of advance-warning of traffic light changes. This stretch of highway is already congested with local commuter traffic during morning and afternoon peak travel times. We are aware of at least two pedestrian fatalities at these intersections in recent years. We believe that an increase in slow-moving truck traffic will only exacerbate the current congestion and increase the risk of collision.

It must also be noted that there is only one turning lane at the Harbour Expressway intersection when traveling from the West and proceeding East onto Hwy 11/17. A significant increase in the daily truck traffic utilizing this corridor is expected to intensify congestion and frustration for east-bound travelers.

The Corporate Report does not provide any information on the current traffic numbers or the total number of collisions along Highway 11/17 between Red River Road and the Harbour Extension in either direction or at each of the major intersections. We believe that those details are vital evidence that should be available to all Councillors and the community as part of this discussion. In the absence of specific data in the Corporate Report, we have collected the following information from the Ministry of Transportation:

- On average, the number of collisions per year along Hwy 102 from Dog Lake Road to Sistonen's Corner is approximately 30
- On average over the last 5 years, the number of collisions per year along Hwy 11/17 from Red River Road/Dawson Road to the Harbour Extension/Hwy 61 intersection is approximately 47*
- On average over the last 5 years, the number of collisions per year along Hwy 11/17 from the Harbour Extension/Hwy 61 to Sistonen's Corners is approximately 72*

**revised from original memo release due to new info from MTO*

This information shows that there are significantly fewer collisions per year on Hwy 102 than along the proposed Designated Truck Route on Hwy 11/17. It can logically be expected that adding

another 500 – 750 trucks per day to Hwy 11/17 would further increase the number and frequency of accidents on Hwy 11/17 from Red River Road to Sistonen’s Corners.

The second area of safety concern is through the village of Kakabeka Falls, which would experience the brunt of the safety issues from this proposed change. The number of trucks travelling through this community will more than double and has been estimated at a rate of just under one truck per minute through the village centre. The Ministry of Transportation will not allow the installation of traffic lights along this section, despite the concerns raised with the movement of school buses in and out of Kakabeka Falls Public School and the 100,000 annual visitors to Kakabeka Falls Provincial Park, which includes hundreds of motor coaches, trailers and RV’s each year. Children, parents and teachers often walk to and from Kakabeka Falls Public School; however, they do not have a crossing guard to assist them in safely crossing from one side of the busy highway to the other. Diverting such a high volume of trucks through this community will greatly increase the risk of accidents and is detrimental to tourism growth.

Gaps in the Designated Truck Route report

Corporate Report R130/2018 indicates that “It has been determined that a more effective way of managing truck traffic on these routes and in the city would be through the implementation of a Designated Truck Route. This identifies safer corridors for trucks and reduces the number of heavy trucks using City streets unless necessary, improving safety and reducing damage and maintenance costs to the City’s infrastructure.”

Members have raised a number of questions regarding information that is not clearly outlined within the report relating to the Designated Truck Route proposal.

1. **Exceptions to Weight Restrictions:** The report indicates that trucks will be required to traverse as far as practical along the new Designated Truck Route during a trip and are required to use the shortest possible distance on undesignated City streets to reach their end destination while still adhering to the weight restricted streets.

The written report does not identify what, if any, exceptions will be applied to the weight restrictions for delivery purposes even though this issue was raised at the recent consultation meeting and the verbal indication was that exceptions would apply. Further clarity is needed relating to the list of exceptions.

2. **Shortest Possible Distance:** The terminology of “shortest possible distance on undesignated city streets” is not clear. A shorter total distance to a delivery point could be available but not be the shortest distance on an undesignated street. Further clarity is needed to ensure that increased travel time and distance is not required to comply with the DTR policy.
 - o Example: delivery of aggregate from MacKenzie to Marina Park construction site. The shortest total delivery route would be off Hwy 11-17 at Hodder and down Cumberland Street, however the shortest distance on an undesignated city street would require the use of the Harbour Expressway to access Water Street.

3. **Arthur Street Business Area:** The Corporate Report does not recognize the significant number of truck-dependent and trucking service businesses along Arthur Street West and adjacent roads that will be impacted by this change in traffic flow: Lakehead Ironworks, GFL Environmental, Hood Logging, Santorelli's Truck Centre, Waste Connections, Western Star Truck Sales, Miller Precast, A-1 Sewage, and Thunder Bay Feeds to name just a few. This change in traffic flow will reduce access to these businesses by their customers and has the potential to result in lower business revenues and/or job losses.
4. **Increased Costs to Business:** Access to the south core for deliveries originating west of the city will require the use of the Harbour Expressway, which is 5 km longer than utilizing Arthur Street. While this seems like a small difference, when you multiply it by thousands of deliveries per year, the labour and fuel costs rise exponentially.

For cross-country trucks, the use of Hwy 11/17 instead of Hwy102/Dawson Road will add 22 km and approximately 15 minutes to their trip. Figuring the low estimation of 500 trucks per day, totals an increase of 11,000 km travelled, over 125 hours and estimated \$2,580 in added labour costs every day for an additional annual cost of over \$941,000.00 ¹. Additional fuel usage is estimated at 2.33 gallons per truck or 1,165 gallons per day. At recent prices of \$1.33/litre for diesel, the added cost per day for cross-country trucks travelling through our city is nearly \$6,200 for an annual additional cost of over \$2.2 million! Transportation is a significant economic driver of our community and we are concerned that Thunder Bay will have a national reputation of being uncompetitive to business.

5. **Aggregate Movement:** Aggregate refers to the sand, gravel, and various grades of fill that are used in road construction and maintenance as well as building construction around the city. The businesses who supply these products are quite literally the foundation of our city, providing a strong base for the construction of roads and buildings and employing thousands of workers in the process.

It is estimated that between 700,000 and 1,000,000 tonnes of aggregate are produced and transported throughout the city each year – one 22 tonne truck load at a time! That represents between 32,000 and 45,000 truck loads during the peak times between April and November each year of which a large percentage comes from aggregate pits off Dawson Road. These hundreds of trucks per day MUST be permitted to travel along Dawson Road and must have the ability to utilize the shortest route to their delivery destination.

Any additions to travel time and transportation costs will have a significantly negative impact on construction costs across the city and the economic spin-offs of those construction projects. In addition, the city must continue to maintain Dawson Road between Hwy11/17 and Dog Lake Road to a standard that will support the movement of these heavy goods.

¹ Calculated at \$20.63 per hour

The Corporate Report identifies that many of the above concerns were raised during the community consultation process in addition to concerns about by-law enforcement and fairness; however, the report does not identify in what way these concerns have been addressed by the proposed Designated Truck Route. It is our view that simply listing the concerns raised without addressing them does not provide sufficient information to ensure that Council has the full picture of this issue to make an appropriate decision.

Conclusion

As per the previous Council's direction, administration has spent the past 4 years, hundreds of hours, and unknown thousands of dollars in the pursuit of a solution to a problem that is not clearly defined, and which traffic statistics show is not a significant safety problem. Impacted businesses have spent significant time reviewing various proposals attending consultation sessions and corresponding with administration and Council to outline their questions and concerns. The police have also been engaged in this review at a time when their resources are already stretched. It is clear to us that the current approach, which allows the movement of heavy trucks along multiple routes including Dawson Road and Arthur Street is the most safe, effective and efficient manner to facilitate the movement of goods and people around the city.

Based on the significant questions that we have raised in this memo, we believe that the Corporate Report does not fully address the concerns of either the business community or the community at large. As identified previously, the data shows that the number of truck-at-fault accidents along both Arthur Street and Dawson Road are minimal whereas diverting all truck traffic to a single route through Kakabeka Falls adds significant risk for increased collisions.

We are concerned with the addition of weight restrictions on Dawson Road and Arthur Street. As was outlined very clearly during all consultation sessions, there are many local businesses situated along these routes that provide services to or with heavy trucks as well as numerous other local businesses who use these routes to conduct their operations.

We believe that safety could be further increased through the reduction of speed limits and increased police enforcement or the installation of photo radar along Dawson Road and Arthur Street. In addition, we would like to work with the City of Thunder Bay and the surrounding municipalities to advocate to the Ontario Provincial Police and the Ministry of Transportation to take additional steps to address problem areas along Hwy 102 and Hwy 11/17 through reduced speed limits, increased signage, and increased enforcement, while we await the construction of truck appropriate off-ramps along Hwy 11/17 through the city and a by-pass around Kakabeka Falls.

We believe the time has come to end this discussion and focus our joint efforts on other priorities. We ask you to vote against the proposed Designated Truck Route.