



Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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REPORT #: OPS-25-021 **COMMITTEE DATE:** 2025-07-15
REPORT TO: COTW-General **DUE IN COUNCIL:** 2025-07-22
SUBJECT: Rural Road Speed Limit Reduction and Traffic By-Law Amendment

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council approve a policy of establishing 70 km/h as the highest possible speed limit on Town-owned roads, and the reduction of all posted speed limits of 80 km/h to 70 km/h for Town-owned roads;
- 1.2 The draft By-law attached as Appendix 1 be forwarded to Council for adoption; and
- 1.3 Council direct Staff to install the necessary signage to implement the above-noted speed limit changes and issue the necessary public notices at an estimated cost of \$33,000 to be charged to 320-3150-92984 (Vision Zero funds received from the Region).
- 1.4 Council direct the Clerk to provide a copy of this Report to the Region of Niagara, Parks Canada, Niagara Parks Commission and Niagara Regional Police; and
- 1.5 Council direct Staff to provide a report back to Council on the reduction of residential speed limits from 50km/hr to 40km/hr in Q4 2025.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has seen a steady population and tourist growth over the last 15 years, increasing the amount of traffic on our roadways and motor vehicle collisions.
- Roads with 80 km/h posted speed limits in Niagara-on-the-Lake are used by residents, cyclists, tourists, and farm vehicles.
- Research demonstrates a significant correlation between speed and the severity of traffic collisions. A reduction of 10% in average speed can result in a 40% decrease in fatal crashes.
- Niagara Region's Vision Zero aims to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities through measures like automated speed enforcement and community safety zones.
- While staff have traditionally focused on the Traffic Association of Canada (TAC) warrants to recommend speed limits, this report recommends setting a lower maximum speed limit to reduce risk to road users and better reflect the mix of user characteristics.
- Consistent speed limits improve safety for all, especially vulnerable road users, and align with Vision Zero principles to create safer road environments.
- As the community continues to grow and evolve, the holistic approach to lowering all of the Town's rural speed limits (and reviewing the lowering of residential speed limits) is in the best interest of all involved

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to establish a maximum 70km/h speed limit on Town-owned roads and to review further speed limit reductions in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

4. BACKGROUND

Speed limits are a key factor in road safety and environmental health. Studies have shown that a 10 km/h reduction in vehicle operating speed significantly lowers the likelihood and severity of collisions, reduces noise, and contributes to lower vehicle emissions.

The roads currently signed at 80 km/h in Niagara-on-the-Lake traverse both rural and semi-urban areas, many of which are frequented by a mix of local residents, cyclists, tourists, and farm vehicles.

Niagara Region has proactively adopted the Vision Zero philosophy, focusing on reducing and eventually eliminating serious injuries and fatalities on roadways. As part of this initiative, the Region has implemented measures such as automated speed enforcement, red light cameras, and the establishment of community safety zones. Notably, automated speed enforcement cameras have been deployed in various municipalities, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, with positive outcomes. For instance, a camera on York Road near St. Davids Public School has shown a significant reduction in speeding violations.

While automated enforcement is not proposed in the rural areas at this time, consistent speed limits throughout our municipality may assist in changing driver behaviour to ultimately reduce the risk to others that higher vehicle speeds create.

5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Research demonstrates a significant correlation between speed and the severity of traffic collisions. A reduction of 10% in average speed can result in a 40% decrease in fatal crashes. This relationship also applies to driver reaction time and braking distance concerning pedestrians and other obstacles near or potentially crossing the travel path.

The proposed reduction in speed limits aligns with the Vision Zero initiative by addressing speed as a critical risk factor in traffic collisions. By enforcing lower speed limits, the Town aims to create safer road environments, particularly in high-use areas.

Vision Zero is a strategic approach to road safety that accepts human error and aims to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on roadways. Key principles supporting this speed reduction include:

- **Safe Speeds:** The human body is vulnerable to impact forces; the probability of a fatal injury in a collision increases sharply at speeds above 70 km/h.
- **Safe Systems:** Lower speeds provide drivers with more time to react and avoid collisions, especially in areas with pedestrian or cyclist activity.
- **Equity in Safety:** Vulnerable Road users, such as children, older adults, and cyclists, are disproportionately affected by higher speeds.
- **Collision Records:** Data indicates a pattern of speed-related incidents on several stretches of 80 km/h roadways, particularly during the summer months.

- **Proximity Risks:** Higher vehicle speeds increase the risk to others in areas near schools, wineries, cycling trails, and zones with high pedestrian activity present.

6. STRATEGIC PLAN

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

Pillar

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

Priority

1.3 Strategies & Masterplans

Action

1.2 b) Community Partnership

7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 **Option 1:** That Council approve the lowering of all posted 80km/h speed limits to 70km/h on Town-owned roads and proceed with the updating of all relevant By-laws. **(Recommended)**
- 7.2 **Option 2:** That Council not approve the lowering of the speed limits and continue with the status quo. *(Not Recommended)*

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated cost to replace all associated signs is approximately \$33,000, which will be funded through the Vision Zero (320-3150) funds received under the Regional Vision Zero program.

The Town is expected to receive proceeds of \$134,484 in 2025 from the Regional Vision Zero Road Safety Program. The Town entered an intermunicipal agreement with the Region in late 2022, which stipulates that Vision Zero program revenues shall be used for road safety projects and initiatives.

These funds represent a new revenue source and will be further incorporated into the 2026 operating budget for road safety initiatives, with the funds placed into a new reserve for tracking and reporting purposes.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Lowering speed limits offers clear environmental benefits:

- Vehicles operating at 70 km/h emit considerably less CO₂, NO_x, and particulate matter compared to those at 80 km/h, especially during acceleration.
- A consistent speed reduction decreases idling and aggressive driving, which are significant factors in air pollution.
- Reduced speeds lead to quieter traffic, benefiting residents and wildlife in agricultural and conservation areas.
- Slower traffic promotes walking and cycling, thereby decreasing reliance on motor vehicles and enhancing community health.
- It has the potential to foster eco-tourism, supporting local wineries and agritourism venues.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Upon Council approval of the By-law:

- Staff will work with the Communications Division on a communications campaign, including website updates, social media posts, and newspaper ads, to inform of the changes that have been approved.
- Supporting speed limit signage will be erected as soon as practicable, advising motorists of the speed limit change, including “New” tabs for 90 days to highlight the change in speed.
- After the signs are posted, public notice of the changed speed limit will be provided for two weeks before enforcement commences.
- The **Region of Niagara, Parks Canada, Niagara Parks Commission and Niagara Regional Police (NRP)** will be provided with a copy of this report and of the amended By-law.
- NRP will be respectfully requested to begin enforcing the new speed limits within our municipality.

11. CONCLUSION

The implementation of a reduced posted speed limit from 80 km/h to 70 km/h on rural roads in Niagara-on-the-Lake is a strategic measure that aligns with the Vision Zero initiative's goal of eliminating traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. This will also address the concerns that have been raised by residents throughout the community with respect to speeds along our roadways.

While the Warrants of the TAC may not fully be met on all roadways at the present time, a proactive approach to reducing speeds as our community grows and our tourist population expands is the correct way to proceed.



12. PREVIOUS REPORTS

N/A

13. APPENDICES

- Appendix I – Draft By-law to Amend Parking and Traffic By-Law 4308AU-24

Respectfully submitted:

Prepared by:  Darren MacKenzie Director of Operations (A)	Submitted by:  Nick Ruller Chief Administrative Officer
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