

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: St Thomas Street at Winchester Road Signalization Consideration

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: June 3, 2024

Report Number: PDE 04-24

Department(s) Responsible:

Planning and Development Department
(Engineering Services)

Submitted by:

Roger Saunders, Commissioner,
Planning and Development

Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer

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1. Recommendation:

1. That Council provide direction regarding traffic signalization of St Thomas Street at Winchester Road, and as appropriate, direct staff to include \$250,000 in the property tax-funded 2025 capital budget, as a pre-approved budget item, considering the Region's requirements for unwarranted traffic control signals;
2. That the operating and maintenance costs related to the signal, in the annual amount of \$8,000, be included in the property tax-funded operating budget, beginning in 2026, as appropriate; and,
3. That Report PDE 04-24 be provided to the Regional Municipality of Durham.

2. Highlights:

- Winchester Road, between Baldwin Street and Anderson Street/Watford Street, is expected to be widened to a three (3) lane cross-section, with the majority of the road widening construction occurring in 2025.

- Winchester Road traffic volumes have increased significantly and turning movements are difficult for motorists accessing Winchester Road from Queen Street and St Thomas Street.
- Potential signalization of the St Thomas Street and Winchester Road intersection has been discussed with Region of Durham staff. In order to proceed with signalization, Council support and funding commitment is required.
- When traffic signals, requested by the Town, at Regional intersections, do not meet warrant thresholds, the Town is responsible for 50% of capital costs (\$250,000 each or 50% of \$500,000), as well as 100% of the annual maintenance and operation of the signals (\$8,000 per year) until the signals are warranted.
- Realignment of Queen Street and St Thomas Street to form a four-leg intersection is not feasible.
- Signalization of St Thomas Street/Winchester Road will result in Queen Street being restricted to right-in/right-out only through a raised centre median and the removal of the pedestrian signal at Simcoe Street.

3. Background:

3.1 Winchester Road Environmental Assessment

The Region of Durham undertook a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for Winchester Road, beginning in 2010, and completed in 2013. Given the changing traffic patterns following the opening of Highway 407, the Region completed a traffic analysis to confirm the ultimate design concept of the corridor.

3.2 Current Planned Road Design

The Regional Municipality of Durham has initiated the works needed to rehabilitate and widen Winchester Road (Regional Road 3) from Durham Street / Chelmsford Drive to east of Watford Street / Anderson Street. The current planned road works will include:

- Widening Winchester Road to include a centre two-way left turn lane in addition to the existing one eastbound lane and one westbound lane;
- Full urbanization with removal of the existing mountable curb and asphalt/gravel shoulders and replacement with barrier curb and grassed boulevards;
- Replacement of the concrete sidewalk on the north side of Winchester Road with a wider 1.8 meters(m) sidewalk;
- A 3.0m asphalt multi-use path on the south side of Winchester Road, replacing the existing concrete sidewalk and asphalt shoulders;
- Rehabilitation and widening of the Lynde Creek bridge;
- Restrictions to right-turn only for vehicles travelling southbound on Durham Street at Winchester Road;
- Installation of a traffic signal to facilitate pedestrian crossings at the Winchester Road and Durham Street / Chelmsford Drive intersection;
- Traffic signal accessibility improvements at the Simcoe Street pedestrian signal and the Watford Street / Anderson Street intersection; and
- Storm sewer and culvert replacements.

Advanced illumination and temporary traffic signal work has taken place. The main project including the widening of Winchester Road is anticipated to commence in Summer 2024 and be completed by late 2025.

3.3 Winchester Road and St Thomas Street/Queen Street Intersection

The intersections of St Thomas Street/Winchester Road and Queen Street/Winchester Road were considered through the EA, and through previous discussions between Region of Durham and Town of Whitby staff. There were numerous options considered including a realignment to remove the 24 metre offset, restriction/closure of Queen Street and a roundabout. The current Winchester Road design does not include modifications to the St Thomas or Queen Street intersections and each approach is under side street stop control. Refer to Attachment No. 1 for the location.

4. Discussion:

As notification of the upcoming construction of Winchester Road has been publicized, residents have inquired about signalization of the St Thomas Street intersection. A petition was initiated on Change.org with concerns that include high traffic volumes, difficulty making left turning movements and the uncontrolled pedestrian crossing being unsafe. At the time of writing this report there were almost 450 signatures.

Town of Whitby staff and Region of Durham staff have discussed the opportunity to signalize St Thomas Street. The Region is agreeable to consideration of signalization. However, as a result of signalizing St Thomas Street, the intersection of Queen Street will need to be restricted to right-in/right-out only through a raised median. In addition, signalization of St Thomas Street will require the removal of the Mid Block Pedestrian Signal (IPS) at Simcoe Street due to signal spacing requirements. Signals that are spaced too closely have a high probability of driver's not seeing the signal and running through the intersection.

Region staff have indicated that a decision now regarding signalization may allow for the full signalization, including curb changes and the raised median, to be part of the road widening contract. If a decision is not made in time, the Region would process with the underground infrastructure to support future signalization.

5. Financial Considerations:

Signalization costs (capital and ongoing operating costs) of Regional intersections are normally 100% funded by the Region of Durham if they meet Ontario Traffic Manual warrant thresholds. However, when traffic signals at Regional intersections requested by the Town do not meet the Ontario Traffic Manual warrant thresholds, the Region of Durham requires area municipalities to fund:

- 50% of the capital cost to install the traffic signal (estimated to be \$250,000); and,
- 100% of the operating costs (estimated to be \$8,000 per year).

Council direction to signalize the intersection of Winchester Road and St Thomas Street will allow the Town to provide the Region a commitment to fund the capital and

operating costs. A commitment from the Town is required for the Region to initiate the design work for the traffic signals.

Subject to Council direction, the estimated \$250,000 capital cost for new signalization will be included in the 2025 capital budget process, as a pre-approved project, funded from property taxes. The estimated annual operating costs of \$8,000 will be added to the (property tax-funded) base operating budget beginning 2026, when the new asset is projected to become operational.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

N/A

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

Financial Services staff have provided input to the financial considerations of Report PDE 04-24.

8. Strategic Priorities:

Report PDE 04-24 supports Pillar 1 and Pillar 4 priorities of the Community Strategic Plan. Specifically, the Pillar 1, Whitby's Neighbourhoods, focuses on community safety. Pillar 4, Whitby's Government, is premised on the best use of technology, transparent and open decision-making, meaningful engagement, and a commitment to continuous improvement. In addition, sustainable transportation such as supporting walkability is a key sustainability principle.

9. Attachments:

Attachment 1: Potential Intersection Signalization Location