
Subject: Email - Request to Speak - Louise Jones - Northeast Swale Watchers - Speed Limits through the Swale - CK 6320-1
Attachments: speed_limits_may_25_without_attachment.doc

From: Louise Jones [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 1:32 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Request to Speak - Louise Jones - Northeast Swale Watchers - Speed Limits through the Swale - CK 6320-1

Submitted on Thursday, May 21, 2020 - 13:31

Submitted by anonymous user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

Date Thursday, May 21, 2020
To His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council
First Name Louise
Last Name Jones
Phone Number (306) [REDACTED]
Email [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED] 111th Street
City Saskatoon
Province Saskatchewan
Postal Code [REDACTED]
Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable) Northeast Swale Watchers
Subject Speed limits through the Swale
Meeting (if known) Council regular meeting May 25, 9.4.1
Comments
I am requesting to speak to Council on the matter of 9.4.1
I tried to attach a PDF of an annotated drawing showing wildlife fatalities on the NCP but I received an error message. How could I submit this as it is important to the package.
Attachments
[speed_limits_may_25_without_attachment.doc](#)

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May 21, 2020

A letter from the Northeast Swale Watchers to Council pertaining to Regular Business Meeting Agenda Item 9.4.1 Chief Mistawasis Bridge Traffic Impact Assessment

Re: Speed studies and potential increases in the NCP, UH3 and Swale areas

Your Worship and Council members,

The Northeast Swale Watchers strongly recommend against any changes to the speed limits on either the west (Central Avenue) or east (McOrmond Drive) crossing of the Northeast Swale conservation zone. The distribution of documented animal kills indicates that the current speed limits have met these objectives. The Northeast Swale Working Group recently considered the issue and came to the same conclusion (as discussed below).

There is some very important background to the issue of speed limits through the Northeast Swale. This issue was fully discussed back in 2012 when the City and Meewasin adopted the Northeast Swale Guidelines to guide the development of infrastructure through the Swale. These speed limits were mandated on the advice of experts and after intensive consideration as a means to prevent wildlife collisions and safeguard the ecological integrity of this important conservation area.

The design included narrowing, animal crossings, more focussed dark sky lighting and reduced speed limits. All of this to enhance pedestrian and vehicular safety.

Unfortunately, Council in the fall of 2018, before the roadways were opened, decided to increase speeds in some portions to 70 kph, thereby causing the inconsistency about which Councillor Jeffries and a few other councillors are complaining. They overruled their own expert traffic engineers on this issue. To say that it is simply an issue of engineering feasibility is to misrepresent the issue and mislead the public.

Like speed reductions for crosswalks and school zones (which could be considered impediments to drivers wishing to go as fast as possible through the city), the 50 km/hr limit across the Swale reflects concern for public safety and a measure to try to protect wildlife. An argument for faster speeds based on getting rid of "inconsistencies" is irrelevant to this discussion. Given the care that went into setting the speed limits **when the roads were initially planned**, it is surprising to find this issue back on the table again. A review of recent events may be helpful in understanding this turn of events.

At its regular business meeting held on November 18, 2019, City Council considered the Chief Mistawasis Bridge Traffic Impact Assessment and resolved:

"That the Administration provide a report with an analysis from an engineering perspective on the feasibility of raising the speed limit on McOrmond Drive between

*Wanuskewin Road and Fedoruk Road and on Central Avenue between Fedoruk Road and McOrmond Drive. **If available please include data on traffic infractions and wildlife deaths, with a comparison to other roads surrounding the city.***

To discuss these issues the NSWG met on Jan. 28, 2020¹. The attendees included: City Council, the Meewasin Valley Authority, the University of Saskatchewan, and the City of Saskatoon Administration (including Traffic Engineering, Green Infrastructure, Natural Areas Policy) and the Northeast Swale Watchers.

The meeting minutes conclude:

- *The group reiterated that significant work has been completed by the City, Meewasin, and community groups to conserve and value natural areas in the area being discussed.*
- *Upon review of data on traffic infractions and wildlife deaths, the group recognized:*
 - *that animal interactions are an issue; and*
 - *as no animals deaths have been recorded on portion of roadway through the Northeast Swale, the 50 kph speed limit and roadway design for this portion of the road is working when considering animal interactions.*

Northeast Swale Working Group, therefore recommended:

- 1) No increase to current traffic speed; and
- 2) Further monitoring and data analysis of the NE area to ensure that existing roadway design and travel speeds minimize risks of habitat fragmentation, wildlife mortality and stress from light and noise consistent with the principles of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Prior to the NSWG meeting, data on animal collisions and traffic violations had been provided by the City and had been discussed at the NSWG meeting. However, the analysis was not minuted, so we will present this data here:

1. Ticketing² for an 11-month period:

- 492 tickets were issued on McOrmond Drive between Wanuskewin Road and Fedoruk Drive, predominantly for speeding; and
- 254 tickets were issued on Central Avenue between McOrmond Drive and Fedoruk Drive, also predominantly for speeding.

2. Average daily traffic on the NCP for that period was 9,900 vehicles/day. No additional traffic data was collected on McOrmond Drive or Central Avenue north of Fedoruk Drive.

3. Total wildlife deaths for these streets (as of the end of summer 2019) was 20 collisions; 14 of which were deer. There were no reported wildlife collisions in the Northeast Swale.

¹ see Minutes of the NSWG, Feb.7, File: PL 4131-47

² Information was supplied by SPS

Our analysis concludes:

- 1) *Speeding is a violation of the law.* A normal response to speeding should not be to increase speeds to reduce speeding fines! Poor signage (simply *Wildlife on Road*) does not relay the significance of driving at lower speeds nor a particular message of the *importance* of the Swale to the City.
- 2) A volume of 9900 vehicles per day is **not** below traffic projections, nor causing the roadway to be underutilized, because the population density in the area is still being built up.
- 3) Refereed studies^{3,4,5,6,7,8} show that wildlife fatality data notoriously and dramatically underestimate actual mortality rates, so true collision rates are at least 100% higher than reported since some fatally injured animals will move away from the roadway to die, are thrown beyond the survey area, or are scavenged before they are counted. Thus, true animal deaths can be projected to be 40 or more over the first year.

What was also not reported is property damage to vehicles or any personal injuries as a result of the collisions with each of the deer, which would be reported to SGI, and not the City.

Plotting the animal kills shows significant clustering of data, **with the most significant cluster** just west of the intersection of NCP and Central Avenue **where the road speed is 70 km.**

Smaller kill clusters occur where spaces are wide-open (northern Central Avenue) where there is a greater propensity to speed **though roadways posted at 60-km/hr** and at Central Avenue between Somers Road and Fedoruk Drive, before the Swale, where the Saskatoon Natural Grasslands and the NE Swale converge and form the corridor for animals migrating to the river and at the NCP roadway between RR 3050 and the NE Swale.

³ For example, see: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/02/190215135832.htm>

⁴ Havlick, D. (2004). "Road kill: Vehicle collisions can be a matter of life and death, not just for individual animals but for entire species." *Conservation in Practice* 5:30-34.

⁵ Seidler, R. (2002). "Book review of: *Road ecology: Science and solutions*, Forman, R.T.T. et al., Island Press, Washington, D.C., U.S.A." *Conservation Biology* 18:850-852.

⁶ Parendes, L. A., and Julia A. Jones (2000). "Role of light availability and dispersal in exotic plant invasion along roads and streams in the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest, Oregon." *Conservation Biology* 14:64-75.

⁷ Jones, J. A., Frederick J. Swanson, Beverley C. Wemple and Kai U. Snyder (2000). "Effects of roads on hydrology, geomorphology, and disturbance patches in stream networks." *Conservation Biology* 14:76-85.

⁸ Jones, J. A., Frederick J. Swanson, Beverley C. Wemple and Kai U. Snyder (2000). "Effects of roads on hydrology, geomorphology, and disturbance patches in stream networks." *Conservation Biology* 14:76-85.

Here are some obvious conclusions from the data:

- The largest number of kills occurs where the road speeds are highest.
- The next largest number of kills occurs where the road speeds are intermediate.
- Zero kills occur where the road speeds are 50 kph, such as within the NE Swale or the Small Swale, indicating that the deer populations do not exclusively use the swales for transportation, and that adjacent flat lands are used.

If roadway speeds were increased, then animal deaths, vehicle damage and personal injury would be expected to increase proportionately.

At the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation meeting of May 4th⁹, Traffic Engineering, with all comments "from an engineering point of view", and without animal collision conclusions, **still recommended no speed increases to any roads** within their report.

Speeds had previously been determined and set by several studies including: the NE Swale Master Plan¹⁰, discussions by Council and other committees, including the MVA Board and the NSWG prior to the opening of the Chief Mistawasis Bridge.

Unphased by these reasoned recommendations, Councillor Donauer stated Council had *reached the wrong conclusion* on traffic speeds and made three motions to increase all three 50-km/hr sections to 60-km/hr.

Councillor Dubois requested more information about animal collisions, but was not presented with this data verbally at the meeting, though the data does appear within the Traffic Report. The voting proceeded:

Vote 1: McOrmond Drive from Fedoruk Drive to the NE Swale: 4 support, 2 against - a speed increase to 60 km/hr passes and will be recommended to Council.

Vote 2: McOrmond Drive through the NE Swale: 3 support, 3 against – **the vote fails**. Speed remains at 50 km/hr.

Vote 3: Central Avenue from Agra Road to south of Fedoruk Drive through the NE Swale: 3 support, 3 against – **the vote fails**. Speed remains at 50 km/hr.

It is alarming that in spite of all of the studies and data, the votes were close to overturning all work done in the past.

In his May 19th interview on CBC morning radio¹¹, Councillor Jeffries continued to push for higher speeds without accurately presenting how the designed roadways and speeds were determined, and without acknowledging how data collection has shown that those

⁹ Minutes: <https://pub-saskatoon.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=114066>

¹⁰ <https://meewasin.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Meewasin-Northeast-Swale-Master-Plan.pdf>

¹¹ Saskatoon Morning with Jen Quesnel: Saskatoon city councillor launches petition for speed limit change on McCormond Road
<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-88-saskatoon-morning/clip/15777099-saskatoon-city-councillor-launches-petition-for-speed-limit-change-on-mccormond-road>

speeds were working as planned **and they were correct decisions that continue to be correct today.**

We believe that all speed limits as posted need to remain as they were engineered for the reasons stated in the Plans and from the analysis of the data. The 50-km/hr speed limit does not kill animals nor cause property damage.

A simple calculation also shows that for every kilometre of roadway being discussed, increasing the speed by 10 km/hr decreases travel time by only 10 seconds! What is the cost to Administration and Council – not to mention wildlife - to make changes to save 10 seconds of travel time?

And looking at the data, animal mortality and vehicle / personal collision damage can be reduced or eliminated if the faster sections of the roadways have their speed actually reduced, and not increased.

Yours truly,

Louise Jones,
Chair, Northeast Swale Watchers

NCP Wildlife Fatalities

