



# Brant Safe Streets

[Strategy]

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## Strategy

### Understanding the Current Situation

Understanding the current situation as it relates to speeding and unsafe driving behaviors, at a national and local level, is an important step to create safer streets.

#### A National Review

A national survey from the 2016 Road Safety in Canada Report noted the following:

*“A national survey... indicated that while 47% of respondents agreed that speeding was a main cause of traffic collisions, 70% admitted to exceeding the speed limit sometimes, particularly on highways (81%). This suggests that there is a disconnect between how people perceive the risk of speeding behaviour and how they actually drive.”*

#### In the County of Brant

The County of Brant and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) collect speed data using radar devices known as Speed Spies. These can be unobtrusively deployed on any roadway and records the speed of each vehicle that passes the device. A broad review of Speed Spy data suggests that on most County roads, the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of drivers drive within 5 km of the posted speed limit. Exceptions include portions of a number of primary or arterial roads including Grand River Street North, County Road 18, Highway 24, Colborne Street West, Paris Road, and Colborne Street East.

According to the OPP, the top four (4) causes of collisions in the County of Brant in 2018 were:

- 32% were caused by distracted driving,
- 24% were caused by contact with animals,
- 5% were caused by drivers following too close and
- 5% were caused by failure to yield and improper turns.

It is interesting to note that 1.7% of collisions were caused by excessive speed while the remainder of collisions were caused by a variety of other factors.

The community's perception that speeding is increasing does not seem to be supported by the data.

## The Perception of Speeding

There is a set of conditions within the County, and more broadly in society, which explains why citizens likely perceive speeding is becoming a prominent concern including:

- A small proportion of drivers exceed the speed limit in most areas and traffic volumes are increasing throughout the County. Although the proportion of drivers who speed is small, this number is increasing as traffic volumes increase.
- Vehicle size (SUVs, trucks and crossovers) has increased and continues to increase. As well, the number of transport trucks are increasing on the County's roads. Larger vehicles driving at the same speed as a smaller vehicle are perceived to be travelling at a faster speed.
- Distracted driving is a growing concern and serious problem with the use of smart-phones, GPS devices and other distractions for the driver.
- Aggressive driving is also a growing concern which includes failure to stop at intersections, engine racing, following too closely, failure to yield to pedestrians, and other aggressive behaviours.

## Previous Strategies Used for Speed Control

There are a number of speed control strategies which have been used and have consistently proven to be ineffective. They include:

- 1) **Speed Limit Amendments.** The Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) outlines a recognized engineering criteria which should be used to set the speed limit. These criteria include traffic volume, sightlines, curves in the road, hills and the number of access points. However, drivers will drive to the condition of the roadway regardless of the established speed limit. Setting an arbitrary speed limit without altering the physical nature of the roadway leaves enforcement as the only option to change driver behaviour. Enforcement is labour intensive and enforcing an inappropriately set speed limit is not an effective use of police resources. Accordingly, the County of Brant will recommend that speed limits should be set following the OTM criteria.
- 2) **Unwarranted All Way Stops.** Intersections represent one of the highest risk areas of the road system for both motorists and pedestrians. The OTM outlines an engineering approach as to where an all-way stop should be established. Unwarranted all-way stops are proven to increase vehicle collisions and pedestrian injuries. They increase driver frustration and promote aggressive driving and will actually increase speeding outside of the intersection zone.
- 3) **Rumble Strips.** These are used in Ontario to alert drivers to approaching hazards, usually intersections. The use of these for speed control is not recommended as it dilutes the understanding of their primary purpose.
- 4) **Speed Bumps.** Speed bumps are vertical obstructions usually found in parking lots. They are inappropriate for travelled road ways. They have been proven to create rear-end collisions and to cause erratic driving behaviour as the driver tends to accelerate aggressively after clearing the speed bump. Speed humps, which are shorter, longer, and have more gradual inclines and declines, can be effective in low traffic areas.
- 5) **Single element speed control devices.** These include "children playing signs", single electronic speed signs, single speed limit signs, and any other device deployed in an "ad-hoc" or uncoordinated manner. These items are proven to be ineffective in changing behaviour as they have a short term and very limited impact.
- 6) **Photo Radar as a Road Safety Strategy.** The use of widely deployed photo radar system can be successful in decreasing speeding. However, new legislation would limit the deployment of photo radar which would not be widely effective. The deployment of photo radar requires a significant investment in technology, administrative systems, and legal systems. Due to the lack of clear legislated regulations, photo radar is not included in the strategy outlined below.

# Brant Safe Streets Strategy

Based on current research, the Brant Safe Streets strategy is designed to achieve **four (4) objectives**:

- Create roads that are both perceived to be and actually are safe,
- Change the behaviour of drivers who speed and engage in dangerous driving practices, primarily through positive reinforcement and voluntary compliance,
- Engage members of the community to learn about road safety and become more active in creating and sustaining a safe County road system,
- Create a mix of easily and rapidly deployed road safety solutions along with longer term solutions.

The Brant Safe Streets strategy is comprised of **four (4) initiatives** which are designed to meet the objectives.

## 1. Deployment of Mobile Brant Safe Streets ‘Systems’

Three (3) Brant Safe Street ‘systems’ would be deployed to create local awareness, interest, and information on road safety and speeding. Each ‘system’ would include:

- Two (2) portable electronic messaging signs,
- Two (2) portable electronic speed radar and display signs,
- Two (2) portable non-electronic message boards with Brant Safe Streets messaging,
- Deployment of speed-spy devices prior to, during, and following the system deployment to provide quantitative data gathering,
- A mailing with a targeted brochure to all residents within and periphery to the deployment area outlining the goals of the system and providing information on safe driving behaviours,
- A media “blast” through all social media outlets to both notify the public and to also continue to build public knowledge and awareness about safe driving behaviours,
- A webpage [www.brant.ca/SafeStreets](http://www.brant.ca/SafeStreets) would allow residents to:
  - Request deployment of a “safe streets system”,
  - Provide qualitative feedback during the deployment of the system, and
  - Provide qualitative feedback following the removal of the system.

The mobile “Brant Safe Streets” system would be ideal for any road where residents, members of Council, County of Brant staff or OPP officers feel that road safety is an issue. The system would be deployed for 2 to 4 weeks.

Through research, it has been noted that this would:

- Allow residents to be active participants in the deployment of the system and also provide a feedback mechanism,
- Be deployed in different areas of the County and moved frequently throughout the community,
- Contain a robust quantitative and qualitative data gathering component, which can be used to influence other strategies noted below.

## 2. Installation of Permanent Passive Safety Measures in Targeted Areas

This initiative is ideal to address speed control and road safety issues in areas that have been persistently problematic and warrant permanent measures. Examples of problematic areas include village cores and secondary collector streets where there is heavier traffic, a larger number of fronting residences, and greater pedestrian and cyclist activities.

The components will vary based on the individual area but can include:

- Signage, both electronic and non-electronic, advising that the area is a “Brant Safe Streets” area,
- Electronic radar speed signs that show motorists their travelled rate of speed,
- Various “Road Diet” assets depending on the specific qualities of the roadway. “Road Diet” refers to subtle and targeted reduction and constraint of the driving area. This naturally causes drivers to drive slower, more attentively, and more cautiously. “Road Diet” assets can include:
  - Line painting to reduce the travelled road width,
  - Line painting to create visual delineation between driving lanes and adjacent non-driving activities,
  - Line painting to further delineate and identify crosswalks, and
  - Installation of vertical delineators, portable speed humps, and portable medians to further constrain the driving surface.
- Routine enforcement during high volume traffic periods or at other random periods.

Deployment of this initiative into an area would be informed by the first initiative by analyzing the hard data and more general feedback gathered.

Through research, it has been noted that this initiative:

- Influences driver behaviour through mostly positive reinforcement.
- Although permanent, the components of the system can be quickly deployed and do not require extensive engineering investigation or environmental assessments.
- These permanent assets must be planned out thoroughly and in accordance with the OTM and other best practices. Otherwise, these assets can negatively influence public safety and cause accidents to either motorists, cyclists or pedestrians.

## 3. Brant Safe Streets “Pace Car” Program

This initiative, although initiated by the County, is completely undertaken by citizens who are interested in becoming active participants in creating safer streets.

The Pace Car program was created by Parachute Canada, a non-for-profit public safety institution. Becoming a Pace Car community involves engaging residents to become safer drivers and creating a natural and organic traffic calming effect.

Residents are encouraged to enroll in the program, sign a pledge form and display an emblem on their car. They are asked to agree to drive the posted speed limit, engage in more courteous and respectful driving behaviours, and become ambassadors of safe driving in the community.

The initiative also has a broader public outreach focus including engaging schools and community groups. As part of the initiative, alternative transportation modes are encouraged including walking, cycling, and using public transportation.

## 4. Road Construction and Reconstruction Projects

As new roads are being designed or existing roads are being redesigned, the design should be informed by the Brant Safe Streets objectives to influence safe driver behaviour.

Individual components of how roads will be designed and built to achieve the Brant Safe Streets objectives will vary, but may include:

- Raised intersections to influence driver behaviours and protect pedestrians,
- Centre medians with landscaping to constrain traffic and improve driver attentiveness and focus,
- Speed humps to gradually and subtly slow traffic at strategic locations,
- Roundabouts and traffic circles to slow traffic, reduce intersection conflict points, and smooth traffic flows,
- Bike lanes, multi-use pathways, and buffer strips between travelled roadways and pedestrian areas,
- Road curvature and texture to calm and constrain the roadway area.

A number of major construction or reconstruction projects which are underway or pending will include the Brant Safe Streets components. Examples of projects underway include the urbanization of Rest Acres Road, the approved Environmental Assessment for Falkland / Bishopsgate Road, the current Environmental Assessment for Grand River Street North and the Master Plan initiatives for downtown Paris, St. George and Burford. Future areas for consideration include Dundas Street East in Paris, King Edward Street in Paris, and Colborne Street East at County Road 18 in Cainsville.

## Summary

The four (4) initiatives are aimed at reducing speed on County roads and creating a safer road system for all residents. These initiatives are based on current research and best practices. While some initiatives can be implemented immediately, others will be implemented in the coming years.

Residents are encouraged to be active participants in this solution. We encourage you to take part in the Pace Car program and contact us about problematic roads in the County. Being aware of your own driving habits is also critical to creating safe streets. Together, we can make the roads a safe place for all drivers (new and experienced), motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians.

If you have questions about the Brant Safe Streets Strategy, please visit [www.brant.ca/SafeStreets](http://www.brant.ca/SafeStreets).