



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

# Briefing Note

**To:** Council

**File No.:** 5640-07

**From:** Director of Operational Services

**Date:** July 30, 2025

**Subject:** Back Road Traffic Study and Mitigation Measures

**PURPOSE:** To provide an overview of vehicle volume and speed data collected from Back Road between Ryan Road and McDonald Road, contextualized by resident concerns and outlining planned traffic calming improvements and RCMP enforcement strategies.

## BACKGROUND:

Residents along Back Road via the *Make Back Road Safe* campaign have consistently identified motor vehicle speeds and volumes along this corridor as an ongoing safety issue that needs to be addressed. Compounded by the impacts of the CVRD Sewer Conveyance Project and subsequent traffic impacts due to the detour routing, traffic volume has increased in this corridor by an average of ~40% since construction commenced on March 10, 2025.

Throughout this time period, the City has had Speed display devices (SDDs) consistently deployed along the corridor, effectivity collecting speed and vehicle count data from various locations. This historical information can be found in Table 1.

Additionally, in 2024, Council, through the development and adoption of the City's new Traffic Calming policy, directed staff to review the Back Road corridor through the lens of the policy framework. The outcome of that review recommended that Traffic Calming measures in the form of a constructed mini-roundabout be added to the Valley View Drive intersection as well as to erect post guardrails between 10<sup>th</sup> Street East and Valley View Drive.

## DISCUSSION:

While Back Road was not identified as an official detour route in the CVRD Traffic Management Plan (TMP), the plan states that Back Road remains an important linkage in terms of providing alternate and or relief routing throughout the construction timeline. In fact, the report suggests that a full closure of Back Road is not recommended, as the fallout from such action could be catastrophic in the overall success of the detour routing.

Local residents have expressed significant concerns about increased traffic on Back Road, reporting volumes equivalent to an additional 6,000 vehicles and speeds reaching 110 km/hr. These reports highlight the perceived impact of the increased traffic on the corridor.

City data collected since the commencement of the CVRD Traffic Management Plan (TMP) shows a 42% increase in total vehicle counts (AADT) on Back Road at 6th Street East (Southbound). This represents a rise from 3,757 vehicles/day to 6,984 vehicles/day, with a peak day recorded at 7,132 vehicles/day. While this confirms an increase in traffic, it's important to clarify that the 6,000+ figure represents a cumulative total, not a net increase of 6,000 vehicles per day. Furthermore, data analysis indicates that not all vehicles traveling on Back Road (at 6th Street) continue through the entire corridor. For instance, on June 3rd, of the approximately 6,900 AADT, only about 1,600 vehicles/day continued southbound past Marsland Road.

The City acknowledges the significant disruption and anxiety that this increased traffic has caused Back Road residents. While the collected data may not fully reflect the highest reported speeds, it is understood that even moderate increases in traffic volume and speed can significantly impact residents' lived experiences and sense of safety along the affected route.

With respect to speeds within the corridors there are outliers within the data sets, however, the average speed (as recorded over the past three years) is 47km/hr with the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile @ 54km/hr. It is recognized that average speeds may not fully capture residents' experiences, particularly during peak hours or with sporadic instances of speeding. The collected data provides valuable insights into traffic patterns, including trends related to specific times and days where outlier speeding behavior occurs. This information will be shared with the RCMP to enhance enforcement efforts and allow for strategic adjustments based on when these challenging behaviors are most prevalent.

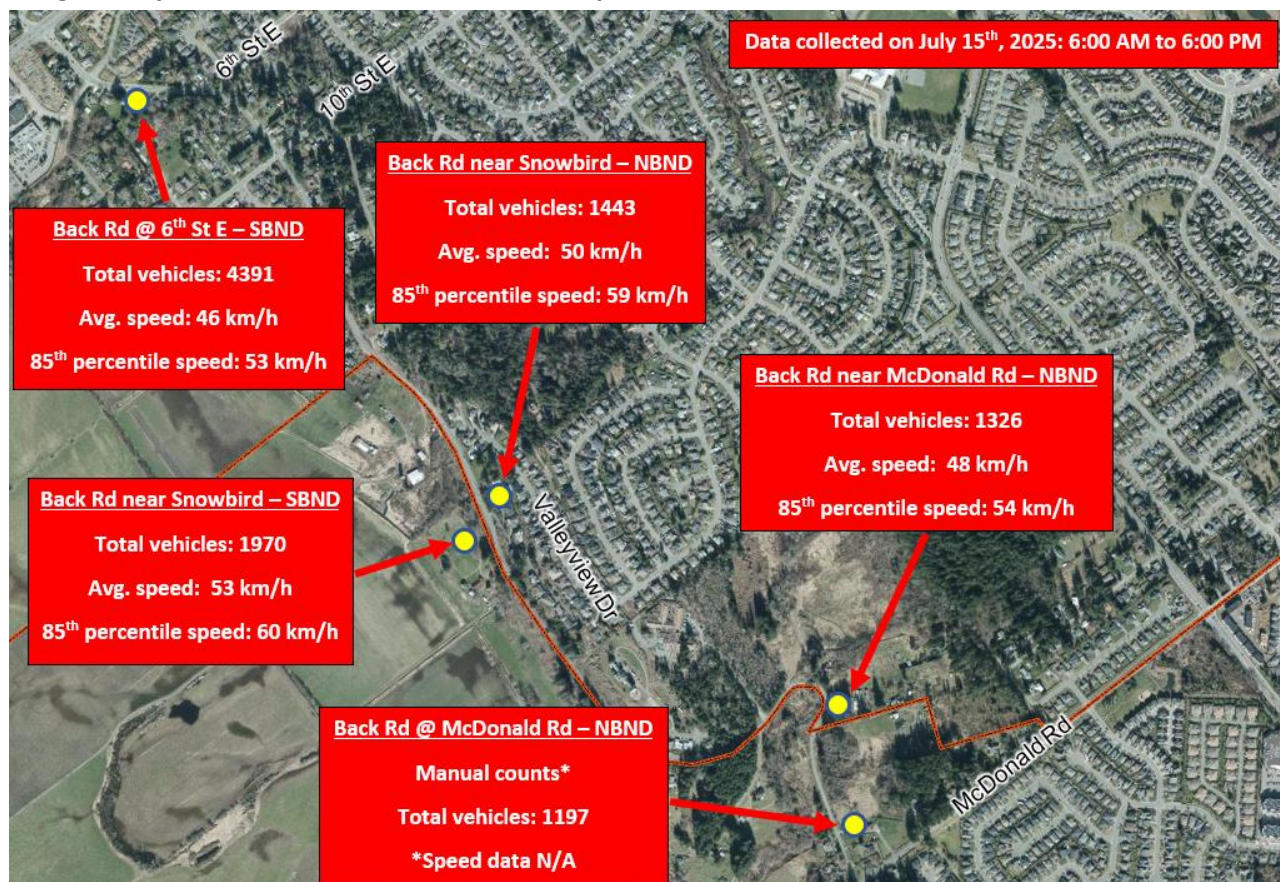
**Table 1: Historical Radar Speed Display Data – Back Road:**

Location	Study period	Traffic volume (veh/day)	Avg. Speed (km/h)	85th Percentile Speed (km/h)
Back Rd @ 6th St E - SBND	Dec, 2024	2500	40	49
	Jan-Feb, 2025	3757	40	48
	Mar-25	7132	41	47
	May-Jun, 2025	6984	40	47
Back Rd @ Valleyview Dr - SBND	Jul - Aug, 2023	1478	55	61
Back Rd @ Marsland Pl - NBND	Jul - Aug, 2023	1539	52	58
	Mar - Jun, 2025	1048	49	55
Back Rd @ Snowbird Lane - NBND	Jul - Aug, 2023	1556	55	62
	Sept-Dec, 2024	1498	52	60
Valleyview School - EBND	Sept-Oct, 2023	1525	39	47
	Sept-Nov, 2024	1049	41	48
	April-Jun, 2025	1724	39	46

On July 14, 2025, the City redeployed four speed-reader boards throughout the entire corridor to capture accurate data sets. These data sets were sought to depict how the corridor was being used (in real time) or where vehicles were entering and exiting the corridor, while counting the total number of vehicles traveling within, and the average and 85% of speed of all vehicles travelled.

Additionally, on July 15<sup>th</sup>, staff enlisted the support of a third-party consultant to provide in-person traffic counts to verify the SDD data sets. The outcome of this analysis is presented in Image 1 and Table 2 on the following page.

**Image 1: July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – Back Road Traffic Analysis Results**



**Table 2: Back Road Traffic Analysis - July 15<sup>th</sup>:**

Back Road Traffic Analysis - July 15 <sup>th</sup>			
Time Stamp - 6 AM to 6 PM			
Location	Total vehicles	Average Speed (km/h)	85th Percentile Speed (km/h)
Back Road at 6th Street East - Southbound	4391	46	53
Back Road near Snowbird Lane - Northbound	1443	50	59
Back Road near Snowbird Lane - Southbound	1970	53	60
Back Road near McDonald Road - Northbound	1326	48	54
Back Road at McDonald Road - Northbound	1197	Manual count speed data not collected	

### **Traffic Calming Construction Timeline:**

With respect to the impending construction timeline for the traffic calming improvements, construction of the mini-roundabout is scheduled to commence on Tuesday, August 5, 2025. Construction timelines remain subject to weather; however, the work is anticipated to take approximately three weeks or until August 29<sup>th</sup>. While the majority of the construction will occur during the evening hours and overnight, the road will be subject to intermittent interruptions throughout the project. That said, staff and crews will aim to maintain two-way traffic as much as possible, with safety being paramount.

### **RCMP Awareness and Response**

The Comox Valley RCMP Detachment has been aware of concerns raised by the Back Road delegation since July 2024, specifically regarding vehicle noise, speeding, and stunting offenses. The Municipal Traffic Section was tasked early on to assess the reported traffic problems and provide necessary enforcement support. Over the past year, data analysis has not indicated that Back Road is inherently more dangerous or unsafe than other well-traveled Comox Valley roadways.

While Back Road's size, compared to most single-lane roads, presents opportunities for safety enhancements such as traffic calming and guardrails, the existing terrain and road curvature often create natural speed reduction. However, this does not preclude speeding offenses, which occur on all road types. The existing driveways and approaches to residences along the embankments present additional challenges due to angles, grades, and sudden approaches, creating difficulties for merging traffic and requiring yielding from existing traffic. Blind corners further obstruct clear views and make anticipating oncoming traffic difficult.

Back Road's layout is not conducive to traditional traffic enforcement due to limited safe pullover or turnaround locations. Therefore, alternative enforcement approaches, including aerial surveillance, lasers, and trap vehicles, are being utilized. A summer enforcement campaign employing these techniques is currently under development to provide an effective presence in the area. While a single enforcement event may not significantly deter future speeding, promoting these efforts may serve as a short-term deterrent by demonstrating new and dynamic monitoring of the corridor. Continued municipal support could facilitate enhanced enforcement efforts if sufficient violations are recorded.

The Comox Valley Detachment has contacted the Back Road delegation to collaborate on identifying key enforcement areas. Open communication regarding RCMP capabilities and potential police support to address traffic concerns and provide residents with peace of mind is ongoing.

### **Ongoing Monitoring, Community Engagement, and Interagency Collaboration**

The City is committed to ongoing engagement with Back Road residents and recognizes the importance of their feedback in addressing traffic concerns. Open communication channels will be maintained to ensure residents are informed of traffic management strategies and construction updates. The City continues to work closely with the Comox Valley RCMP Detachment, who have been actively monitoring the situation and engaging directly with the Back Road delegation since July 2024. The RCMP's planned summer enforcement campaign, utilizing techniques such as aerial surveillance, lasers, and trap vehicles, will be a key component in addressing speeding and other traffic violations. The City will continue to share relevant data with the RCMP to support these targeted enforcement efforts.

Furthermore, the City will also continue to explore opportunities to mitigate the temporary impacts of the detour routing, including ongoing communication with the CVRD regarding their Sewer Conveyance project and associated Traffic Management Plan. Specifically, the City will encourage the CVRD to enhance public awareness of detour routes and their impacts on affected neighborhoods through improved signage, radio announcements, and other media outreach. This outreach should emphasize community compassion and

responsible driving behavior in impacted areas such as Back Road and other effected detour neighbourhoods. This collaborative approach, encompassing City initiatives, RCMP enforcement, and CVRD public awareness, aims to ensure effective and responsive traffic management throughout the duration of the project.

**RECOMMENDATION:** THAT Council receive the “**Back Road Traffic Study and Mitigation Measures** ” briefing note.

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