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Chebucto Community Council
September 14, 2009

TO: Chair and Members of Chebucto Community Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Mike Labrecque, P.Eng, Director, Transportation and Public Works Unit

DATE: July 28, 2009

SUBJECT: Traffic and Safety, Melody Drive/Skylark

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 12.1 raised at the February 2, 2009 meeting of Chebucto Community Council.

BACKGROUND

During the February 2, 2009 meeting of Chebucto Community Council, Councillor Hum advised that she had received correspondence from two residents regarding long-standing concerns with traffic and safety issues on Melody Drive and Skylark Street. She noted the following concerns and requests:

- Concerns with speeding;
- Concerns with traffic shortcutting from the Bedford Highway;
- Request for an updated traffic count for both Melody and Skylark Drive;
- Request for an update on a new sidewalk;
- Request for the possibility of an all way stop at Melody and Skylark Drive;
- Request for speed humps or barriers on Melody Drive;
- Request for a review of on-street parking on Skylark Drive; particularly during the winter months;
- Request for police enforcement for speeding and parking violations;
- Request for an evaluation of a crossing guard at the intersection;
- Request for a review of the possibility to install traffic light signalization or a merge light at the Flamingo Drive and Bedford Highway intersection.

DISCUSSION

Concerns with speeding:

Skylark Street:

Vehicle speeds were measured using an automatic traffic counting device over the period 18 June to 24 June, 2009. The speeds were measured during the summer when most students are not in attendance at the nearby university and when there were fewer cars parked alongside the roadway because that will give higher driver speeds. The counter hoses were placed midway between two speed humps. The results showed for the period 0700 to 2100 (over the seven days) that northbound traffic had an average speed of 16 km/h, and an 85th percentile speed¹ of 27 km/h. Southbound traffic had an average speed of 17 km/h and an 85th percentile speed of 27 km/h. Speeds of this sort are particularly low and show the success of the speed humps constructed on Skylark Street.

Melody Drive:

Vehicle speeds were measured using an automatic traffic counting device over the period 6 July to 13 July, 2009. The hoses were placed on the road at 55 Melody Drive. The results showed westbound traffic had an average speed of 34 km/h and an 85th percentile speed of 42 km/h. Eastbound traffic had an average speed of 34 km/h and an 85th percentile speed of 41 km/h. These speeds are low for a typical residential street and do not show any particular problem requiring action.

Concerns with traffic short-cutting from the Bedford Highway:

Melody Drive and Skylark Street were a significant part of the Flamingo Drive Short-Cutting Study that began in 1996 and was completed in 2006. Many efforts were made to find suitable and practical methods to reduce short-cutting traffic on Melody, Skylark, Flamingo Drive, Meadowlark Crescent, and Lincoln Cross. The results of the study, trial installations and vote of residents were implemented in 2006. The study was done according to the procedures laid out in the HRM Neighbourhood Short-Cutting Policy. Measures were put in place to discourage drivers from cutting through between Bedford Highway and Dunbrack Street. These included a number of unwarranted all-way stop signs on Flamingo Drive and Meadowlark Crescent, changes in the traffic signal arrangements at the intersection of Flamingo Drive and Bedford Highway and seven speed humps on Skylark Street. While the study was being done, an examination of potential locations for speed humps on Melody Drive was made but no suitable location was found. After work over ten years involving many public meetings and consultations, consultant studies, HRM staff, Councillor and resident time and effort there are no more available measures to be taken than have already been put in place to discourage short-cutting drivers.

Request for an updated traffic count for both Melody Drive and Skylark Street:

Traffic volumes on Melody Drive and Skylark Street are influenced very much by Mount Saint Vincent student attendance. In the spring of this year weather conditions did not allow the automatic traffic counts to be made before classes at the universities ended. Therefore, traffic volume counts will be made in late September or early October when travel patterns have settled down after the summer break. The count data will be provided in a follow-up report.

Request for an update on a new sidewalk:

Prior to amalgamation, sidewalks were not required in several areas of HRM including areas of Sackville, Dartmouth and Halifax. Since then, all new developments have been required to have sidewalks installed

¹The 85th percentile speed is the speed that 85 percent of drivers travel at or below.

when built. HRM is rating areas without sidewalks and installing them first on streets that are rated the highest. The rating takes into account potential for pedestrians including proximity to schools, day-cares, parks, shopping, and public transit. There are more than 200 locations on the rated list but based on current funding HRM is able to install only 5-10 new locations a year. New sidewalks are funded 50% through the capital budget and 50% through local improvement charges (with limits approved by the area Councillor).

Skylark Drive between Melody Drive and Flamingo Drive rates above average, but not high enough to be included in next years budget.

Request for the possibility of an all-way stop at the intersection of Melody Drive and Skylark Street:
National standards provide that all-way stop control may be warranted where either traffic volumes are both significant and relatively equal, or where there is a significant collision history deemed to be preventable by all-way stop control.

The volume portion of the warrant requires that an average of at least 200 units (pedestrians plus vehicles) enter the intersection from the minor volume street over each of the eight highest volume hours of the day; and, the intersecting volumes on each street be relatively equal, in that the volume on the major street should not exceed that of the minor street by a ratio of more than 2:1. There is an insufficient volume at this intersection to warrant all-way stop control.

The collision portion of the warrant may be applied where the volume warrant is not met, but where there is an average of at least five collisions per year deemed preventable by all-way stop control reported over a five-year period. This is not applicable at this location because the minimum has not been met.

Request for speed humps or barriers on Melody Drive:

As mentioned above, during the Flamingo Drive and Area Short-Cutting Study Melody Drive was examined to see if there was any location suitable to install one or more speed humps. No suitable location exists because of either the steepness of the slope in the road, the closeness to the intersection, or the alignment of residential driveways.

Request for a review of on-street parking on Skylark Drive; particularly during the winter months:
Melody Drive and Skylark Street, like any streets, can be considered for temporary signed "No Parking Anytime" restrictions depending on the level of snow accumulation and time of year. Skylark and Melody were reviewed during the winter of 2008/09. Based upon the low volume of traffic predominantly moving in a one way direction depending the time of day, and that there were no complaints from snow operations or service delivery vehicle companies that access was compromised, we did not recommend parking restrictions on Skylark or Melody.

Melody Drive east of Skylark already has parking restricted on the south side and for much of the north side (except on weekends to facilitate church events). Melody Drive west of Skylark is signed as "No Parking Anytime" along the entire north side. There are no restrictions in effect along the south side.

Parking is prohibited on the east side of Skylark north of Armada. Parking will continue to be permitted along the remainder of the east side. "No Parking Anytime" is already in effect along the west side south of Armada. Given the low traffic volume on Skylark, we do not believe it is necessary to restrict parking in its entirety from both sides.

Request for police enforcement for speeding and parking violations:

At the time of the review of on-street parking on Skylark and Melody, Halifax Regional Police found no illegally parked cars, nor is it common to do so. The measurements of speeds discussed above showed exceptionally low motor vehicle speeds indicating that even if police did set up to enforce for speeding violations the likelihood of finding any violators of the normal 50 km/h speed limit is zero.

Request for an evaluation of a crossing guard at the intersection:

Crossing guards are provided at locations according to criteria administered by Halifax Regional Police. At the intersection of Melody Drive and Skylark Street, between 7:45 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., Halifax Regional Police personnel counted one child traveling to school, accompanied by a parent. During the same period there were 203 vehicles traveling along Skylark, all of them turning left onto Melody, and 25 vehicles combined in both directions on Melody. The criteria for provision of a crossing guard in an urban area such as this is a minimum of 500 vehicles and a minimum of 20 children.

Request for a review of the possibility to install traffic light signalization or a merge light at the Flamingo Drive and Bedford Highway intersection:

There already is a right-turn traffic light and a left turn traffic light for Flamingo Drive at Bedford Highway.

Where Flamingo Drive meets Bedford Highway there are two lanes provided for eastbound traffic. The traffic signal normally stays green on Bedford Highway until a "call" is made to the traffic signal control computer. At this location there are three types of "calls": (a) a pedestrian can push the crossing button, (b) a left turn vehicle stops just behind the stop bar in the left turn lane, or (c) a right turn vehicle stops just behind the stop bar for more than 20 seconds. (The delay is to allow right-turn-on-red vehicles not to trigger unneeded greens.) If Bedford Highway has had a green light for more than a certain minimum number of seconds (depending on the time-of-day)² then Flamingo Drive will get a green light (after the amber and all-red on Bedford Highway). The reason for the minimum green on Bedford Highway is so Flamingo "calls" don't interrupt Bedford Highway traffic too frequently.

If a pedestrian has requested the walk signal, the minimum walk plus flashing don't walk time is 13 seconds. If it was a vehicle "call", the minimum green (without a walk signal) is seven seconds which can be extended to a maximum of 13 seconds if more turning vehicles arrive.

The right turn vehicle detector was out of order for an unknown period earlier this year but has now been repaired. Most traffic signal malfunctions are able to be detected remotely, but some detector failures have to be reported by drivers (similarly for defective pedestrian pushbuttons).

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

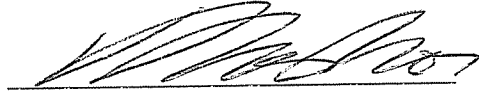
²Morning peak 95 seconds, afternoon peak 63 seconds, day and evening off-peak 39 seconds, night-time 21 seconds.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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