

TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES

March 1, 2012

MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Councillor Reg Rankin, Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts, Vice-Chair
Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor Darren Fisher
Councillor Jackie Barkhouse
Councillor Bob Harvey

OTHERS

PRESENT:

Councillor Peter Lund

REGRETS:

Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
Councillor Debbie Hum

STAFF:

Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation & Public Works
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:17 a.m. in the Council Chamber, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

The Committee welcomed Councillor Lund, who was also in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 9, 2012

MOVED by Councillor Barkhouse, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the Transportation Standing Committee minutes of January 9, 2012 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Additions:

- 8.1 Councillor Hendsbee – Cost Sharing with Halifax Harbour Bridges on Variable Message Signs (VMS)
- 8.2 Citizen Appointment to the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM
- 8.3 Councillor Watts – Request for Report – Road Network Functional Plan

The order of business was agreed upon, as amended.

4. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Correspondence

4.1.1 Letter from the Halifax Cycling Coalition dated January 7, 2012 re: Lower Water Street Bike Lane

Correspondence from the Halifax Cycling Coalition dated January 7, 2012 was before the Committee.

No discussion was held on this item.

4.2 Petitions - NONE

4.3 Presentations

4.3.1 Halifax Cycling Coalition

- **Kickstand Professional Workshop findings**

Mr. Ben Buckwold, Halifax Cycling Coalition (HCC”), shared the key lessons learned from an interactive workshop held recently with bicycle policy experts, co-hosted by the HCC and the Dalhousie Cities & Environment Unit. The top lessons were outlined as:

- It’s not just about cycling, it’s about people places.
- Cycling should be for everyone - Make it easy, attractive, and safe.
- Design our cities for the bicycle - Design networks and streets for the user (ie: crosstown connector, speeds)

He noted that they would like to use these lessons to build the bicycle culture of HRM.

Councillor Watts noted that in the European Union some municipalities and cities were enabled by state governments to have the power to impose reduced speed zones where they choose.

Mr. Reashor commented that previous requests to the province to reduce speed zones have been refused. He indicated that the Traffic Authority has the right to install the “bike boxes” mentioned in Mr. Buckwold’s presentation, where there are bike lanes. Mr. Reashor noted that staff have looked at several locations and will look into this further.

- **North-South Cycling Route (Crosstown Connector)**

Mr. Ross Soward, Halifax Cycling Coalition, circulated an information sheet “Crosstown Connector: The Path to Bicycle Culture in Halifax” and presented to the Committee on the Crosstown Connector, including:

- Background on the development of the Crosstown Connector;
- Cycling events in Halifax, including Bike Week events;
- Advantages of the Crosstown Connector;
- Initiatives in other bike friendly places;
- Why cycling supports local business districts;
- The opportunity for a Crosstown Connector in Halifax must take into account:
 - Vibrant and liveable neighbourhoods in Canada
 - Play to the strengths of the area
 - People first
 - Design must be right, one street where priority is shifted

Mr. Soward reviewed why Agricola Street would be a good location for the Crosstown Connector, noting that the bicycle fits with the culture of Agricola Street because of the students, music venues, cafes, and arts.

The Committee discussed with Mr. Soward the potential return on investment of the Crosstown Connector, with Mr. Soward noting that the investment in infrastructure could increase the number of trips by cycling from 1% to 5% and reduce motorists.

Councillor Harvey commented that cycling needs to be viewed as more than a casual recreational activity and more of a means of transportation.

Councillor Watts commented that the main issue on Agricola Street would be parking, and staff would have to see the response from local businesses. She noted that there would be many benefits to the Crosstown Connector, including economic stability and transportation, quality of life, and improving the sense of neighbourhood.

Mr. Soward noted that the Province is currently developing a sustainable transportation strategy, and this may be an opportune time to introduce the Crosstown Connector. He also discussed the issue of parking on Agricola Street, commenting that the side streets surrounding Agricola may be better for parking.

Councillor Hendsbee arrived at 11:07 a.m.

Councillor Lund noted the importance of connecting transit with cycling. Mr. Soward agreed that cycling and transit should be looked at in an interconnected way of multi-modal transportation.

Councillor Hendsbee asked about a dawn to dusk removal of parking along Agricola Street, where after dusk local residents could park along the street overnight. Mr. Soward indicated that there may be opportunities to look at special parking provisions like that.

The Chair thanked Mr. Buckwold and Mr. Ross for their presentations.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – Date

6.1 Councillor Watts – Regional Parking Strategy update

This item was deferred from the January 9, 2012 meeting.

Mr. David McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation, updated the Committee on the Regional Parking Strategy. The last update was by information report submitted to Council in November 2010. He noted that one of the concerns raised by Councillor Watts was the degree to which some of the recommendations of the parking strategy have been implemented without the alternatives in place. The Regional Parking Strategy does recommend reducing parking for both businesses and residential uses. The idea is that as HRM moves forward with all aspects of the Transportation Strategy, the need for making trips with a vehicle will be reduced and therefore so will the parking requirements, which requires the alternatives to be in place to be able to do that.

Staff are looking at, through the Regional Plan 5 year review, locking the Regional Parking Strategy and the Transportation Strategy together so that they advance at the same time. They will also be taking a serious look at the establishment of a Parking Authority.

Councillor Watts noted that with reduced parking requirements for new development, people still require parking for cars in residential areas, which is having an impact on residential neighbourhoods.

Mr. McCusker noted that staff will be looking at options for contributions in lieu of parking, such as contributions to an off street parking lot for business use during the day and residents at night.

7. REPORTS

7.1 STAFF

7.1.1 Cost-sharing Agreement for LocalMotion Project - QUEST Canada

A staff report dated January 13, 2012 was before the Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend to Halifax Regional Council that the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to sign a cost-sharing agreement with QUEST Canada to undertake the implementation of the LocalMotion project.

Mr. McCusker clarified, at the request of members that this is one time funding. He also clarified that the correct funding for the grant is \$12,000 as indicated in the Contribution Agreement, not \$13,000 as indicated in the staff report.

Mr. McCusker advised that there have been a number of discussions on which neighbourhoods to start the program with, and the Portland Hills/Russell Lake area is being proposed. Staff have had discussions with the area Councillor (Deputy Mayor Karsten) and there are volunteer community representatives ready.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7.2 MATTERS REFERRED FROM REGIONAL COUNCIL - NONE

7.3 MATTERS REFERRED FROM STANDING COMMITTEES - NONE

7.4 MATTERS REFERRED FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL - NONE

7.5 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.5.1 Update from Councillor Watts (verbal)

Councillor Watts provided a brief update on recent activities of the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, including work on planning for Bike Week, which will be held at the end of May and models for options around bike lanes on arterial roads.

7.6 ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.6.1 Housekeeping Amendments to Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

A report from the Accessibility Advisory Committee dated February 1, 2012 was before the Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee, that the Transportation Standing Committee approve amendments to the Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference, as attached to the February 1, 2012 report. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7.6.1 Update from Councillor Blumenthal (verbal) - None

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Councillor Hendsbee – Cost Sharing with Halifax Harbour Bridges on Variable Message Signs (VMS)

Councillor Hendsbee commented that, as a member of the Halifax Harbour Bridges Commission, he wanted to bring to the attention of the Committee an opportunity for cost sharing between HRM and the HHB of variable message signs. He noted that there are already a few variable message signs in place to facilitate the flow of traffic on the bridges, and indicated that there may be an opportunity for HRM to cost share more of these signs for use of multiple services, such as amber alerts, traffic accidents, construction, etc. Councillor Hendsbee noted that there may be an opportunity through the upcoming review with the Joint Strategic Transportation Commission.

Mr. McCusker indicated that staff have spoken with the HHB and the province on the issue and scoped out a cost sharing arrangement and provided it to the Capital Steering Committee for consideration in the upcoming project budget.

Councillor Watts indicated she would want to know the costs and intended placement of the signs before committing.

Councillor Hendsbee noted that the staff have previously met with the Halifax Harbour Bridge Commission about the signs.

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Barkhouse, that staff and the Halifax Harbour Bridges make a presentation to the Transportation Standing Committee on the subject of Variable Message Signs at the next meeting. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8.2 Personnel Matter - Citizen Appointment to the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM

Private and Confidential applicant information was before the Committee for consideration.

MOVED by Councillor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Barkhouse, that the Transportation Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council approve the appointment of the applicant outlined in the application circulated to the Transportation Standing Committee on March 1, 2012. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8.3 Councillor Watts – Request for Staff Report – Road Network Functional Plan

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Barkhouse, that the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report that outlines the process for the approval of the Road Network Functional Plan and specifically clarifies how residents' concerns about the Bayers Road widening will be addressed in this process and how the public will be engaged in commenting on the functional plan prior to presentation to Council.

Mr. Reashor updated that since the Road Network Functional Plan comes out of the Regional Plan, the Regional Plan 5 Year Review will help define the Road Network Functional Plan. He reminded the Committee that the Road Network Functional Plan has not yet been approved by Council, and is awaiting feedback from the Regional Plan 5 Year Review before being brought back to Council for approval.

The Committee were satisfied with this direction, and a vote was not taken on the motion.

8.4 Councillor Watts - Request for Correspondence to Province with a Request for Reduced Speeds

The Committee agreed to add this additional item at the request of Councillor Watts.

Arising from discussion held earlier in the meeting during the presentation by the Halifax Cycling Coalition, Councillor Watts asked for feedback from Mr. Reashor with regard to requesting the Province to provide enabling legislation to the HRM Traffic Authority to enact speed zones lower than 50 km/hour, for the Province to take into consideration during the Sustainable Transportation Review.

Mr. Reashor indicated that he would have no problem drafting such a request to forward to the Province. He noted that the request would be worded for the Province to assign the discretion of the Minister to the Traffic Authority.

The Committee asked that the draft letter be circulated to Regional Council for endorsement before being forwarded to the Province.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee, that the Transportation Standing Committee request the Traffic Authority to draft a letter to the Nova Scotia Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, to circulate to the whole of Regional Council, requesting the Province to provide municipalities with enabling legislation to reduce motor vehicle speed zones to lower than 50 km/h. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

With the agreement of the Committee, Councillor Hendsbee asked that the Crosswalk Flags information report be circulated to Regional Council.

9. NEXT MEETING - Thursday, March 22, 2012

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 22, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Jennifer Weagle
Legislative Assistant

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Information report dated January 30, 2012 re: HRM Legislative Requests Strategy
2. Information report dated January 17, 2012 re: Consideration of Changes to By-law P-1000
3. Information report dated February 8, 2012 re: Crosswalk Flags – Final Results
4. Information report dated November 16, 2011 submitted to the January 10, 2012 Regional Council re: Crosswalk and Crosswalk Controls: Barrington Street at Young Street and Devonshire Avenue at Young Street