

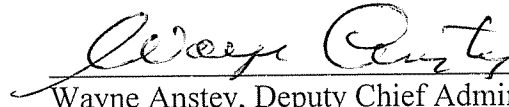


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**Committee of the Whole
November 14, 2006**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Geri Kaiser, Acting Chief Administrative Officer


Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

DATE: October 17, 2006

SUBJECT: Gravel Road Paving Prioritization

ORIGIN

This report originates from staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended by staff:

1. that Regional Council approve Option No. 5 (Prioritization of gravel roads based on Geographic Area, Maintenance and Road Classification) as outlined in the Discussion section of this report;
2. that the remaining 2006/07 "Paving of Gravel Roads inside the Core Area" projects be given priority and carried forward as paving projects for the 2007/08 capital program. These remaining streets include Hillary Crescent, District 8 and Sidhu Drive, District 2;
3. that the remaining 2006/07 "Paving of Gravel Roads outside the Core Area" projects be given priority and carried forward as paving projects for the 2007/08 Aid to Municipality Program (provided funding is available from the Province). These remaining streets include Ben Court and Lynwood Drive, District 22 and West Avenue, District 2.

BACKGROUND

Asphalt paving of gravel streets and roads (to be referred to as roads in this report) is funded by the HRM Transportation and Public Works Capital Budget from two accounts; the “New Paving of Subdivision Streets Inside the Core Area” and “New Paving of Subdivision Streets Outside the Core Area”. The “New Paving of Subdivision Streets Outside the Core Area” is initiated by the Province through the Aid to Municipality program. Gravel roads are paved primarily to decrease long-term maintenance costs and to increase rideability levels. The placement of new paving is subject to Local Improvement charges as stipulated in Bylaw S-400 where the residents incur 50% of the total construction costs. The current approach for prioritizing the lists of roads for both paving programs is based on the date of successful survey. There have been questions regarding the current method of street prioritization and as such staff has been requested to review potential options.

With respect to recommendation no. 2, Hillary Crescent and Sidhu Drive were approved as shopping list projects in the 2006/07 capital budget program. There were not sufficient funds remaining in the applicable account to complete those projects in 2006. Therefore staff suggests that in keeping with the past practice these streets be brought forward for consideration in the 2007/08 capital budget program.

Regarding recommendation no. 3, Ben Court, Lynwood Drive and West Avenue were to be paved in 2006 under the Aid to Municipality Program. However the Province stipulated that funding that was to be allocated for the paving of these streets be redirected to the East Region. The affected Councillors were informed of this decision and as such these three streets were not upgraded to pavement. As a result of this staff suggests that Ben Court, Lynwood Drive and West Avenue be considered for the 2007/08 Aid to Municipality Program.

DISCUSSION

Where interest exists to pave a gravel road, the residents are surveyed and if successful, the road is added to the capital list for future paving considerations. As well, Council has the right to waive a survey and have the road added to the capital budget list for future paving considerations. To date the roads that are selected for the capital program are based on the date of survey and budget levels. Staff is proposing to Council a more equitable approach in determining the prioritization for the paving of gravel roads.

In consideration of this review, gravel roads were examined from four aspects: required maintenance, classification of the road, geographic area and date of survey. From a maintenance perspective, the roads were identified as requiring high, medium or low attention. From a road classification position, gravel roads are currently classified as Local Streets. However, staff has further delineated the roads as either a feeder, local or cul-de-sac.

Staff wishes to review with Council a number of options for consideration and a possible adoption of a new procedure from the existing method. The following outlines the various options and

include advantages and disadvantages of each. If Council chooses to adopt a new prioritization method, the intent would be to apply this method to the paving of gravel roads outside the core as well provided relevant information is furnished to HRM from the Province.

Option 1: Prioritization based on the Date of Successful Petition

This is the current approach. In this scenario the roads are prioritized as per the date of successful survey.

ADVANTAGES

- List of prioritized roads is easily generated.
- It is clear as to which roads will be recommended for inclusion into the Capital Budget.

DISADVANTAGES

- Roads may be paved which require low or medium maintenance and which handle a low volume of traffic.
- Several roads throughout the Municipality in a wide geographic area may be paved which may result in higher construction costs than if several streets in one area were paved.

Option 2: Prioritization based on Maintenance

In this approach the gravel roads are prioritized based on the required maintenance, i.e. high (greater than \$5,000 per km), medium (\$3,500-\$5,000 per km) and low (\$1,000-\$3,500 per km). These numbers do not include snow removal operations but would include the filling of potholes, and repairs to shoulders and washout areas.

ADVANTAGES

- Those roads that rate the highest in terms of annual maintenance costs would receive highest priority, and therefore HRM would recognize a reduction in maintenance costs.

DISADVANTAGES

- Some roads throughout the Municipality are subjected to higher volumes of traffic that may be categorized at a low or medium maintenance level.
- If roads are paved over a wide geographic area this may result in higher construction costs than if several streets in one area were to be paved.

- Locations that have already been successfully surveyed and are currently a priority may now be required to wait a longer period of time for paving.
- Utilizing this criteria alone does not provide a clear method to prioritize roads within each maintenance category.

Option 3: Prioritization based on Road Classification

Gravel roads are currently classified as local roads. However staff has reviewed each road location, and based on the configuration and layout, has delineated roads as feeder, local or cul-de-sac for the purpose of this re-prioritization review.

ADVANTAGES

- The roads that are subjected to greater volumes of traffic will be given priority thus providing satisfaction to a larger number of taxpayers.

DISADVANTAGES

- Streets that are high on the maintenance list may be designated at a different road classification. Therefore the municipality may continue to maintain gravel roads that require higher maintenance costs.
- If roads are paved over a wide geographic area this may result in higher construction costs than if several streets in one area were paved.
- Locations that have already been successfully surveyed and are currently a priority may now be required to wait a longer period of time for paving.
- Utilizing this criteria alone does not provide a clear method to prioritize roads within each classification.

Option 4: Prioritization based on Geographic Area

Under this scenario the prioritization would be developed based on geographic area. Those roads that are in proximity to one another would be paved as a group and given priority.

ADVANTAGES

- Roads paved that are located in proximity to each other may result in lower construction costs than if several roads over a large area were to be paved.

DISADVANTAGES

- Specific roads that are identified within a geographic area may require low to medium maintenance. Therefore the municipality may continue to maintain gravel roads that require higher maintenance costs.
- Specific roads that are identified within a geographic area may be classified as having low traffic volumes. Therefore taxpayer satisfaction will not be as high.
- Locations that have already been successfully surveyed and are currently a priority may now be required to wait a longer period of time for paving.
- Utilizing this criteria alone does not provide a clear method to prioritize roads within each geographic area.

Option 5: Prioritization based on Geographic Area, Maintenance, and Road Classification

In this approach the prioritization method is based on a common geographic area, the required maintenance levels, and road classification. Specifically staff grouped the streets relative to geographic areas and then established the priorities based on a points system with respect to classification and level of maintenance requirements. In conjunction with option no. 5, it is suggested that where there are “standalone” gravel roads, staff will review and determine if an opportunity exists to combine this paving work with a capital upgrade project of an existing paved street that may be in proximity to the gravel road.

It is noted that staff has assumed a certain level of annual funding for paving of gravel roads inside the core. If this level is not sufficient to complete all roads identified in the common geographic area, these roads will be carried over into the subsequent capital budget program.

ADVANTAGES

- Reduction in maintenance and capital costs.
- Provides for a more equitable approach in the selection of roads by incorporating key criteria such as maintenance, classification of roads and proximity opportunities.

DISADVANTAGES

- While some roads within a geographic area may have high maintenance costs and are classified as feeders, the area could also include roads that have low or medium maintenance and which handle a lower volume of traffic.
- Locations that have already been successfully surveyed and are currently a priority may now be required to wait a longer period of time for paving.

- This option is more complicated and therefore offers additional management challenges.

Staff is suggesting that the approved prioritization method apply to gravel roads located both inside and outside the core. The roads located outside the core are owned by the Province and are paved through the Aid to Municipalities Program. If option no. 5 is approved by Council, staff will require maintenance records from the Province to aid in determining the prioritization list for those gravel roads located outside the core area.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time.

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.

ALTERNATIVES

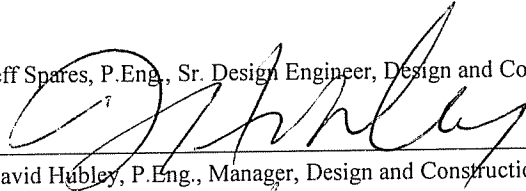
The alternatives are listed in the Discussion portion of the report.

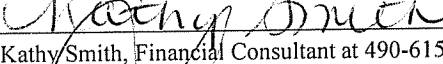
ATTACHMENTS

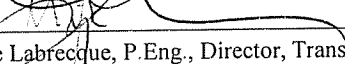
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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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