

Item No. 10.1.1

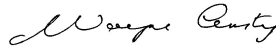
**Halifax Regional Council
February 10, 2009**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council



SUBMITTED BY:

Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

DATE: January 12, 2009

SUBJECT: RFP - Cogswell Interchange Master Plan

ORIGIN

This report originates from staff as a consequence of two ongoing initiatives;

- 1) On February 26, 2008 Council approved moving forward with planning and design work to support the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange as part of the HRMbyDesign vision for downtown Halifax;
- 2) Recently completed engineering assessments have identified the need for a more comprehensive and increasingly costly maintenance program for parts of the Cogswell Interchange;

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that HRM Council:

- 1) approve the issuance of an RFP for consulting services to produce a detailed master plan for the removal and re-design of the Cogswell Interchange; and
- 2) instruct staff to explore the establishment of reserve Capital funding to offset future costs related to the maintenance and/or demolition and redesign of the Cogswell interchange.

BACKGROUND

The HRM by Design urban design study has been ongoing since July 2006. Research and public consultation during this study has been extensive. Throughout the project, the concept of redeveloping the Cogswell Interchange has received very high levels of public support and has emerged as a key component of HRM by Design's urban design and economic objectives. The next step in this process includes the development of a focussed, detailed master plan that would provide a solid framework for future decisions regarding these lands. This approach was endorsed by Council on February 26, 2008 as part of the interim approval process associated with HRM by Design.

Staff have completed a preliminary project time line for the master planning study and a Request For Proposals (RFP) for the associated professional consulting services has also been developed. A summary of the time line and the rationale for the RFP are included in the discussion section of this report. Staff seek Council's approval for issuance of the RFP.

In addition to the master plan exercise outlined above, significant maintenance is required if the existing road infrastructure in the Cogswell interchange is to be retained. Future capital investment should be carefully assessed in light of the potential for demolition of the interchange and redevelopment of these lands. While HRM's portion of the short term maintenance program is currently fully funded, staff recommend initiation of a reserve funding program to offset future significant capital costs associated with the maintenance and or demolition and redesign of the interchange.

DISCUSSION

Cogswell Master Plan

Project Governance

Internal HRM oversight of this project will be provided through a multi-business unit project team with representation from Infrastructure and Asset Management, Community Development, Transportation and Public Works and Finance. This group will work with the consultants to support delivery of the Cogswell Master plan and ensure integration of the various project streams. Staff will also be developing a communications plan to guide public engagement and ensure accurate and timely information distribution.

In addition to the staff project team, an RFP has been developed to recruit a multi-disciplinary consulting team with expertise in urban design, transportation planning, civil engineering, and market & economic impact assessment. The successful proponent will be a team with international calibre expertise in undertaking master plans for major land and infrastructure redevelopment projects, as well as an in-depth understanding of the local development climate.

Master Plan Rationale and Criteria

The RFP sets out objectives, operating assumptions and deliverables for the project. Those elements are reflected in the following scope of work summary:

- Preparation of a comprehensive urban design plan for the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange lands which capitalizes on the vision approved by Council as part of HRM by Design. The plan shall include integrated plans and design guidelines for new public spaces, streets and development parcels;
- Refinement and conformity with the various regulatory and procedural documents generated from the HRM by Design urban design study;
- Recommendations toward a redevelopment strategy for the Cogswell Interchange lands which addresses:
 - a method of redevelopment that most benefits Halifax and the region;
 - the highest and best uses of the lands;
 - costs to demolish the Interchange and construct new streets, public spaces and development sites;
 - the optimal timing for the redevelopment in consideration of ongoing maintenance requirements; and
 - how can funds be leveraged to support the redevelopment;
- Refinement of a conceptual grade level Street Network Plan for downtown Halifax to ensure new streets proposed as part of the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange are supported by an overall street network plan that:
 - ensures the development of a street level network system remains feasible from a traffic perspective.
 - aligns with regional transportation objectives to maintain traffic flows;
 - safely manages truck traffic; and
 - creates new streetscaping, pedestrian and cycling opportunities.

It should be noted that consideration of extending the design parameters for maximum grades may be required to allow an extension of a modified grid pattern involving construction of east west streets on the Cogswell interchange lands;

- Support for the development of Cogswell Interchange lands as a major transit hub for downtown Halifax and a gateway for transit, vehicles, cyclists and other commuters to downtown;
- Support for strategies to intensify downtown Halifax's traditional business district and encourage infilling of vacant and underutilised lands within the built up area of downtown before introducing new land to the market;

- Consideration of the benefits and risks of proceeding with substantial capital upgrades that may be needed in the short term to address ongoing maintenance & operational requirements. The study shall also investigate any potential sources of external funding such as partnerships with other levels of government and the private sector;
- Development of a public consultation program that is focussed on key stakeholders and expands on HRM By Design's extensive public process championed by the Halifax Regional Council's appointed Urban Design Task Force; and
- Assessment of the potential to accommodate an anchor civic project such as an institutional, cultural or sporting facility.

Time Line

Staff have carefully examined the nature of the study and have developed a preliminary time line from development of the RFP through the conclusion of the research and ultimate delivery of the final product. Six months have been allotted for the research and consultation phase of the program. Key milestones are as follows:

Council approval of rationale	February /09
RFP Issued	February /09
RFP Closed	March/09
Council award of RFP	April /09
Master Plan Complete	January /10

2) Maintenance Issues - Implications of continued operation of the Cogswell Interchange

As noted above, there are maintenance needs associated with the short, medium and long term retention of the Cogswell Interchange infrastructure in its current form. The need for this maintenance arose from two engineering studies. In Spring 2007 HRM staff engaged the services of a consultant (MacDonnell Group Consulting Ltd) to perform a structural assessment of the Cogswell Interchange; namely, Ramps 1 and 4, and the Barrington Street Overpass. Their findings were submitted to HRM staff in the Fall 2007. In January 2008 HRM engaged the services of O'Halloran Campbell to perform a review and validation of the MacDonnell findings. The O'Halloran Campbell findings identified a scope of immediate maintenance work along with short and medium term recommendations.

There is approximately \$435,000 in maintenance work to be carried out within a 6-8 month period beginning in the spring of 2009. This work is to be cost shared between the Province and HRM, and the tendering process will be administered by the Province. Further details will be presented to Council once the precise cost sharing recommendations are completed. A contribution agreement will be presented to Council for consideration at that time. HRM's 2008/09 capital bridge budget includes \$300,000 towards work on Cogswell Interchange, and the budget was prepared based on 50% of an estimated total project cost of \$600,000. The current proposal from the Province estimates the work at \$435,000 and would see HRM pay \$264,000 and the Province pay \$171,000.

Regardless of the extent and precise nature of the maintenance burden, it seems clear that maintenance costs are likely to remain significant and continue to increase while the benefits of retention of this road infrastructure seem to be diminishing. Despite the fact that HRM's immediate contributions are included in the current budget structure, staff support the development of a reserve fund to offset future capital costs associated with the ongoing maintenance and/or demolition and replacement of the Cogswell interchange.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The funding for the Cogswell Master Plan project and the aforementioned interchange maintenance program already exists in the current approved capital budget, CDG00498, Cogswell Design and Administration.

Recommendation #3 supports exploration of the possibility of creating a reserve fund in future budget years to offset increased maintenance or demolition and redevelopment costs.

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

1. Instead of approving the issuance of an RFP for consulting services to produce a detailed master plan for the removal and re-design of the Cogswell Interchange, Council could direct staff to produce the master plan through internal resources. This is not the recommended course of action because HRM does not have the internal human resource skills necessary to carry out the assignment, nor could HRM staff carry out the task internally in a reasonable period of time without forgoing or delaying other important planning initiatives, including further phases of HRM By Design.
2. Refuse to endorse the scope and rationale for the Cogswell Interchange RFP and Master Plan at this time and instruct staff to undertake revisions as determined by Council.
3. Defer establishment of the capital maintenance reserve for the Cogswell Interchange until completion of the Cogswell Master Plan.

If the report is released to the public, a copy can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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