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Item No. 3
Halifax Regional Council
August 3, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Acting Director, Transportation & Public Works

DATE: July 9, 2010

SUBJECT: Westmount Elementary School Petition Response - Councillor Watts

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 10.2.1 raised at the April 27, 2010 meeting of Halifax Regional Municipality.

BACKGROUND

At the April 27, 2010 meeting of Halifax Regional Council, a petition containing 102 signatures was submitted on behalf of the Westmount School Travel Planning Committee and the school community requesting HRM's assistance to help achieve safe and accessible routes for walking and wheeling to and from Westmount Elementary School, Halifax.

DISCUSSION

The specific requests identified in the petition were as follows:

- a) A study of safe crossing options along Connaught Avenue between Bayers Road and Chebucto Road - namely, examining and improving the safety, visibility and crossing times for the crosswalks at Almon and Connaught and at Liverpool and Connaught;
- b) An up-to-date study of the current traffic patterns and volumes along Connaught Avenue;
- c) A feasibility analysis of moving the crosswalk from Liverpool and Connaught to an alternative location with better visibility, such as London and Connaught;
- d) Sidewalk and/or curb cut improvements at the intersection of Connaught and Almon;
- e) A study of safe crossing options along Bayers Road, with special attention to the intersection at the entrance to the Halifax Shopping Centre;

and are addressed in the order in which they appear.

- a) Almon and Connaught is a signalized intersection equipped with pedestrian “Walk/Don’t Walk” signals for marked crosswalks across all four legs. The pedestrian signal heads are visible for crossing both directions on both sides of Almon Street and Connaught Avenue. There was only one pedestrian injury collision reported at this intersection in the 10-year period from 1997 to 2006 for which the Province was able to provide reported pedestrian collision information. It occurred on Thursday, February 6, 2003 at 2:56 pm and involved a southbound vehicle which turned left to proceed east on Almon Street and struck a pedestrian crossing Almon Street (direction of pedestrian travel was not stated).

The pedestrian crossing times provided for crossing Connaught Avenue at Almon Street are the same throughout the day: seven seconds of “Walk” indication, followed by 21 seconds of “Flashing Don’t Walk”, followed by seven seconds of “Solid Don’t Walk” indication during the 35 seconds that Connaught Avenue traffic faces a red light. Pedestrian crossing times for crossing Almon Street vary from 53 seconds during the AM (7:15-9:15) and PM (3:45-6:00) weekday peak hours to 45 seconds during weekends and weekday off peak periods.

As part of a recent program of traffic signal upgrades, pedestrian countdown signals have been added to the pedestrian signal heads facing the Connaught Avenue crosswalks. This may assist pedestrians (and drivers) in understanding that pedestrians still within the crosswalk when the “Don’t Walk” symbol begins to flash continue to have the right of way.

The Connaught Avenue at Liverpool Street marked crosswalk is discussed in (c).

- b) The two-way average annual weekday traffic (AAWT) volume recorded by road tube traffic counters along Connaught Avenue between Bayers Road and Young Street have remained remarkably consistent over the years.

Connaught Avenue (AAWT) between Bayers Road and Young Street

Year	Total	S/B	N/B
1995	22,162	13,010	9,152
2003	23,541	13,172	10,369
2004	23,644	12,917	10,727
2005	22,714	12,407	10,307
2006	23,596	12,646	10,950
2007	*20,137	12,881	7,436*
2008	22,223	12,153	10,070
2009	23,467	12,534	10,993

*Counter Malfunction?

- c) The tee-intersection of Connaught Avenue at Liverpool Street has a marked crosswalk across the south leg of Connaught Avenue and stop bar/crosswalk marking installed at the stop sign in Liverpool Street. The standard marked crosswalk across Connaught Avenue is supplemented by RA-5 overhead crosswalk signs equipped with pedestrian push button activated amber flashers and “Do Not Pass Here to Crosswalk” signs on both sides of Connaught Avenue one block in advance of the marked crosswalk in each direction. In addition, there are yellow “School Crosswalk Ahead” signs posted approximately 100 metres in advance.

The RA-5 amber flashing signals are being upgraded from 200 mm incandescent lights to 300 mm LED light fixtures. In addition, the controller is being replaced in order to enable pedestrians who push the button after the signals have already been flashing for a period of time to receive the full length of flash time. The old controller did not have such capability.

Relocation of the marked crosswalk on Connaught Avenue from Liverpool Street to London Street would not result in any significant increase in stopping sight distance. Recommended minimum stopping sight distance for marked crosswalks is 65 metres for posted speed limits of 50 km/h. The sight distance of the existing marked crosswalk at Liverpool Street is in

excess of 200 metres for southbound traffic; for northbound traffic it is approximately 100 metres. The sight distance for the unmarked crosswalks (ie: extension of curb/property lines) at London Street is similar, except for reversed direction; southbound visibility is approximately 100 metres and northbound visibility is in excess of 200 metres.

The cost of such relocation would be substantial because there are no existing utility poles which could be used for the overhead signage at London Street. In addition, a marked crosswalk at London Street would be within 200 metres of the signalized intersection at Almon Street which is contrary to recommended criteria for marked crosswalks.

A crossing guard is assigned at Liverpool to assist elementary students from 8:15am - 9:00am; 11:55am - 12:20pm; 12:50pm - 1:10pm; 2:45pm - 3:40pm. No pedestrian injury collisions reported at this intersection in the ten-year period 1997-2006 for which collision records are available.

- d) It is assumed that the “sidewalk and/or curb cut improvements at the intersection of Connaught and Almon” request relates to the lack of curb cuts and sidewalk on the median divider. Since the pedestrian signals provide lengthy crossing intervals, enabling the majority of pedestrians to cross the full width of Connaught Avenue without stopping at the median, it is not considered necessary to provide a concrete pedestrian refuge area on the ends of the grassed medians.
- e) The signalized intersection of Bayers Road at the Halifax Shopping Centre has a marked crosswalk located between the west entrance/exit and the east entrance/exit equipped with “Walk/Don’t Walk” signal indications. The location of the marked crosswalk between the two driveways reduces the number of vehicle/pedestrian conflicts points since all left-turning vehicles exit at the west driveway and all right-turning vehicles exit at the east driveway. There are no turning vehicles to conflict with pedestrians in the marked crosswalk across Bayers Road.

There are three crossing guards assigned to the intersection during before-school, lunchtime, and after-school periods. One assists with the crossings of Bayers Road, one with the crossings of the western driveway, and one with the crossings of the eastern driveway. Pedestrian crossing times for crossing Bayers Road vary from 26 to 32 seconds with a 10-second “Walk” signal in the am peak, a 16-second “Walk” signal in the off-peak and a 14 second “Walk” signal in the pm peak. Pedestrian crossing times for crossing the two shopping centre driveways vary from 72 to 90 seconds with “Walk” signals displayed for varying times between 55 to 73 seconds.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the information provided in response to the Westmount School Travel Planning Committee, staff has indicated availability and willingness to discuss any other issues identified in the ongoing School Travel Planning process.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.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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