

Item No. 1
Halifax Regional Council
November 16, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

SUBMITTED BY: Phillip Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

DATE: October 30, 2010

SUBJECT: Musquodoboit Harbour Trail Petition

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Councillor Steve Streach presented a petition to Council on November 18, 2008. The petition of 39 signatures requested that the development of the abandoned railway bed from Highway 357 toward Chezzetcook area, as an extension of the Musquodoboit Trailways Association's existing trail, be prevented.

At the December 9, 2008 Council meeting, Councillor Streach, based on an e-mail from the Musquodoboit Trailways Association, clarified that it is not the Musquodoboit Trailways Association that is proposing the trail but rather the Chezzetcook - Musquodoboit Trails Association.

BACKGROUND

In 1998, the Musquodoboit Trailway Association developed a 15km section of rail line from Gibraltar Rock to the Railway Museum in Musquodoboit Harbour. In the past 10 years, the trail has become a valuable community asset for the residents of Musquodoboit Harbour and all of HRM. The trail section continuing from the Rail Museum through to Chezzetcook, has not been developed as of yet. The alignment is part of a larger HRM regional trail network and the Trans Canada Trail running from Gibraltar into Cole Harbour and Dartmouth/Halifax through to Hubbards.

The Chezzetcook - Musquodoboit Trails Association is proposing to build the undeveloped portion of the trail. This group of over 90 members is proposing, as phase I, an Active Transportation corridor starting at the Musquodoboit Harbour end and running through the village. That vision can be found on the group's web site www.cmttrail.ca.

Both the Musquodoboit Trailways Association and Chezzetcook Musquodoboit Trails are members in good standing of the Halifax Regional Trails Association.

DISCUSSION

The residents of Musquodoboit Harbour have engaged in a Community Visioning Process. During that process, discussions were had around completing the trail section. Response was divided. Various interests were expressed including:

- a) support for the trail;
- b) objection to its use by ATVs and other motorized recreational vehicles as it ran through the village;
- c) objection to motorized use anywhere along the trail; and
- d) opposition to development of the trail all together.

The former rail line is owned by the Province of Nova Scotia who purchased the line to foster the development of a province wide system of rail trails. At this time, no Letter of Authority has been issued by the Province for the development of a trail, which is a necessary step in the process.

While trails have proven to be an overall asset where they have been built, the concerns of the community expressed in the petition and during the Community Visioning Process must be addressed prior to moving ahead with any trail development. Working with the Area Councillor, HRM staff determined not to move forward with the development of the trail until:

- a) a community consultation process is developed; and
- b) the Province and HRM complete their development of a joint approach to dealing with ATV/Active Transportation conflict, which is expected to be ready for Council review spring of 2011.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications. Funding for the active transportation trail is already available and requested.

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.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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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