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Halifax Regional Council
May 9, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Mike Labrecque, P. Eng., Director, Transportation and Public Works Services

DATE: May 1, 2006

SUBJECT: **Petition - Overhead Lighting and Excessive Speeding, Highfield Park Drive**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Halifax Regional Council meeting of April 4, 2006, Item 8.2 Petitions.

BACKGROUND

Councillor Smith served a petition of approximately 165 signatures expressing concern about the dangers associated with using the crosswalk located in front of Highfield Rite Stop Store. The petition indicates the contributing factors of this risk being: (1) the crosswalk does not have proper overhead lighting and (2) excessive speeding through Highfield Park Drive. The petition will be forwarded to staff.

Councillor Hendsbee requested that when the petition is forwarded to staff that clarification be provided on the current standard policies and practices of having a crosswalk with a flashing red light which would ensure traffic comes to a stop for pedestrians. He suggested the flashing white lights do not work.

DISCUSSION

Overhead Lighting

The marked crosswalk in question is located on Highfield Park Drive at its southern intersection with Joseph Young Street. Although the petition does not specifically request RA-5 overhead illuminated crosswalk signs at this location, there have been periodic requests for them here since amalgamation (and prior).

The HRM and Provincial guidelines for the installation of RA-5 overhead crosswalk signs provide that they may be installed at existing marked crosswalks where there is a demonstrated need for the nighttime illumination of the crosswalk area which is not provided by existing street lights. The existing marked crosswalk at the intersection is presently illuminated by a street light directly over the crosswalk on the west side. Because this section of Highfield Park Drive is one lane in each direction, it would not qualify for RA-5 signs with pedestrian actuated flashing amber lights which are intended for use on multi-lane roadways. The existing side mounted crosswalk signs are clearly visible in both directions. Accident report information collected from 1999 to date indicated no pedestrian accidents had occurred in the marked crosswalk during that time.

Although the existing street light level meets the minimum standard for intersection illumination in Dartmouth, the wattage of the street light over the crosswalk will be increased.

Speeding

With respect to concerns expressed regarding excessive speeding on Highfield Park Drive, results of periodic speed monitoring by Police have not indicated that the prevailing speeds are any higher than other similar streets in HRM. Like most streets, the majority of drivers travel within the speed limit with only a very small percentage of violations recorded.

Clarification on Use of Flashing Lights at Crosswalks

Overhead illuminated crosswalk signs with pedestrian-activated flashing amber beacons (technically referred to as RA-5 signs) are regulatory traffic control devices and therefore must conform to the "Regulations Respecting Traffic Signs" made by the Minister of Transportation pursuant to the Motor Vehicle Act. The RA-5 sign was adopted for use in Nova Scotia in 1988 after it had been accepted as a national standard for overhead illuminated crosswalk signage in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada (MUTCD). The RA-5 sign was approved for use in Canada after a nearly ten year study project recommended adoption of a uniform "special crosswalk" system comprised of side-mounted signs, overhead internally illuminated signs with pedestrian activated flashing amber beacons, and pavement markings.

Amber flashing beacons were approved in the MUTCD for use with RA-5 signs instead of red flashing beacons because some cities in Canada had experimented with the use of flashing red beacons with less than desirable results. Since the flashing red lights indicate that traffic must stop then proceed when safe, there was confusion as to what was required when the pedestrian had completed the crossing but the lights continued to flash. There were instances of motorists ignoring the flashing red lights when they saw no need to stop. The flashing red lights also changed the perception of the right-of-way at intersections with motorists on the side streets theoretically having the right-of-way over motorists stopped for the flashing red lights on the main street. The confusion surrounding flashing red lights at crosswalks was believed to establish potentially dangerous driving habits.

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.

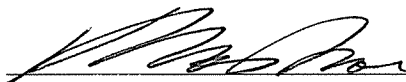
ALTERNATIVES

There are no recommended alternatives.

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.

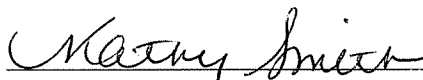
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