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Halifax Regional Council
January 24, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Labrecque", written over a horizontal line.

Mike Labrecque, P.Eng., Director, Transportation & Public Works

DATE: January 10, 2006

SUBJECT: Petition - Dartmouth Road

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 8.2 raised at the October 18, 2005 meeting of Regional Council.

BACKGROUND

Councillor Goucher submitted a petition on behalf of 11 residents of the upper section of Dartmouth Road, east of Brentwood Drive with regards to traffic concerns. The area in question ranges from the top of the hill, east of Eaglewood Drive, to Brentwood Drive. Residents are concerned with the speed of traffic, noise from trucks using engine brakes, the hazards for school children crossing Dartmouth Road, and erosion of the shoulder on the downhill (north) side of Dartmouth Road. The petition suggests a number of measures be undertaken including: increasing police presence for speed and truck noise, changing the left eastbound lane to a dedicated two way turning lane, implementing a marked crosswalk with crossing guard at Eaglewood Drive, constructing a sidewalk on the north side of Dartmouth Road between Brentwood Drive and Eaglewood Drive, or alternately constructing a paved channel at the edge of the road to reduce the erosion.

DISCUSSION

Existing Traffic Control and Lane Configuration- The intersection of Dartmouth Road and Ridgevale Avenue/O'Brine Street was recently upgraded to a signalized intersection. Prior to this, an RA-5 overhead crosswalk flashing light was used in conjunction with a crossing guard to guide students safely across Dartmouth Road. With the upgrade to a fully signalized intersection with pedestrian control, this intersection remains as a location which students from the Ridgevale subdivision shall continue to use to cross Dartmouth Road.

One suggestion within the petition is to paint a crosswalk across Dartmouth Road at Eaglewood Drive. Due to the numerous requests for the marking of crosswalks, it has been necessary to establish criteria which provide an objective basis for evaluation as to where marked crosswalks are installed on HRM roadways. Given that it is not practical to mark crosswalks at every intersection, most jurisdictions use some form of evaluation criteria to determine which crosswalks will be marked and which will not. The Motor Vehicle Act provides pedestrians with legal right of way at intersections whether or not crosswalks are marked, and marking is not a requirement for enforcement purposes.

The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) guidelines for marked crosswalk installation have recently been adopted for use in HRM. The TAC guidelines require that the volume of traffic results in fewer than 120 crossing opportunities per hour and there be a minimum of 20 pedestrians per hour crossing. Numerous visits to the site by staff from both Traffic Services and the supervisor with the Crossing Guard program indicated little to no crossing activity between Eaglewood Drive and Brentwood Drive. It was also noted that those pedestrians witnessed crossing Dartmouth Road had practically no wait time and plenty of gaps.

The petition also suggested turning the left eastbound lane (heading up the hill) into a dedicated 2-way turning lane to *'make it safer for residents to turn into and out of their driveways and decrease the temptation for drivers to break the speed limit when travelling uphill'*.

Dartmouth Road is designated as a full-time truck route. The grade of Dartmouth Road is in the range of 7% and therefore large trucks take a long time to reach the top of the hill. This fact is even more true with the new set of traffic signals at Ridgevale Ave. meaning that trucks are starting from stop at this intersection. This would be very detrimental to traffic trying to exit Bedford via Dartmouth Road and the congestion would spread to the Bedford Highway, seriously affecting traffic capacity in Bedford.

Traffic Volumes - The section of Dartmouth Road in question is three lanes wide. Beginning past Ridgevale Drive, heading eastbound towards Dartmouth (uphill), there are two lanes. Westbound traffic (downhill) towards Bedford has one lane. Traffic counts from 2002 indicate volumes as follows: 17,500 vehicles/day between Brentwood Drive and Eaglewood Drive; 22,300 vehicles/day between Golf Links Road and Wardour Street; 22,500 vehicles/day between Wardour Street and Bedford Hwy. A count conducted in 2004 between Wardour Street and Bedford Hwy totalled 22,300 for this location, basically unchanged over two years.

Engine Braking - Section 181A(1) of the Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act provides that: "No Person shall use a diesel engine enhanced braking system while operating a vehicle on a highway for which the speed limit is fifty kilometres per hour or less unless the use of the braking system is required for an emergency."

Therefore, the use of engine enhanced braking systems on Dartmouth Road is illegal except in an emergency. The "No Engine Braking" sign which was approved by the Province in conjunction with this legislation is not regulatory, has no legal implications, and is not required for enforcement purposes. There is one of these signs currently posted at the top of the hill for traffic heading westbound into Bedford at the beginning of the 50 km/h zone.

Sidewalk Request - The requested sidewalk is on the northeast side of Dartmouth Road, from Brentwood Drive to Eaglewood Drive, and is approximately 250 metres in length. The work would consist of installing concrete curb & gutter, concrete sidewalk and some storm sewer to control drainage. As part of the detailed design, it may also be determined that a retaining wall is necessary to facilitate installation of the sidewalk. The estimated cost for this sidewalk is \$250,000 however it should be expected that this cost will increase over time as construction costs rise incrementally each year. This sidewalk has been added to the list of proposed sidewalks for the HRM and referred for consideration as part of HRM's normal Capital Budget process.

Drainage Swale - Investigation by Public Works Operations indicate that further drainage work will be undertaken in the spring of 2006 by continuing the asphalt swale further up the hill on Dartmouth Road.

Police Enforcement - The Dartmouth Road area has a long history of complaints regarding speeding. These complaints were reported to and enforced by the Bedford Police Department prior to amalgamation in 1996. These complaints have continued as this roadway remains a very busy thoroughfare connecting other areas of HRM. Also area growth, new housing starts along the upper portion of the Dartmouth Road and increased traffic volume on this roadway have increased complaints. Both enforcement and information garnered from the use of the radar trailer from 2003-2005 indicate vehicles at times reached speeds as high as 100 kph and it was common to record speeds between 70 and 90 kph in both directions on the Dartmouth Road.

Since 2004, there have been traffic initiatives and increased enforcement that have targeted this portion of roadway regarding speeding. These initiatives were to provide high profile and visibility, focusing on safety for area children, parents and the community.

Operation "Slowdown 2004" - was a week-long, region-wide speeding initiative that was very successful. Dartmouth Road was a targeted area and was chosen as the location to kick off this campaign in West Division. The area was monitored twice during the operation as it was identified as an area requiring further enforcement.

Operation "School Zone" was a three (3) day initiative from September 7-9, 2005. The media coverage was excellent and the project a success. Again the aim was to reduce speeding and

crosswalk violations in the vicinity of schools. This initiative was in response to concerns raised by citizens at the 2004 Town Hall Meetings. This initiative had a proactive and reactive component. Police members were requested to interact with parents, students, teachers, crosswalk guards and, of course, motorists.

Police members handed out several hundred traffic safety pamphlets to drivers during this initiative. The primary goal of this project was achieved as there were no students injured in motor vehicle accidents during the opening week of school.

Both West Division Community Response Officers and Registry of Motor Vehicle Compliance Branch Officers have worked early morning and late evening hours in an attempt to ticket violators for illegal use of jake brakes. These efforts have resulted in violations being issued for jake brakes and weight restrictions. These initiatives are on-going.

Dartmouth Road will be placed on the 2006 list as an enforcement site for roadside inspections which are highly visible.

West Division Community Response Officers (CROs) have also utilized the radar trailer in a proactive approach to remind and warn drivers about their speeds. This equipment will continue to be utilized in this area and will be used to determine if the enforcement initiative is lowering speeds. These results will be shared with HRM Traffic Authority.

From January 1, 2004 - December 4, 2004, Halifax Regional Police officers collectively issued 60 violations in total. From January 1, 2005 to November 30, 2005, Halifax Regional Police officers have collectively issued 269 violations in total.

On October 10, 2005, the Halifax Regional Police Traffic Unit became operational. To date this section has done an outstanding job in targeting those areas of the municipality that are deemed chronic. This target specific strategy has proven very effective in the Dartmouth Road area. Between October 11, 2005 - November 30, 2005, the Traffic Unit had issued one hundred and sixty-six (166), motor vehicle violations, predominantly speeding.

Continued dedicated enforcement by Halifax Regional Police, on-going traffic initiatives and compliance checkpoints in 2006 should have a positive impact on the Dartmouth Road complaint.

Halifax Regional Police is committed to working with the community to provide safe neighbourhoods and quality of life.

Conclusion - The continuation of the drainage swale will be implemented in 2006 as requested in the petition. The sidewalk request has been noted and this location has been added to the list of potential locations for new sidewalks under consideration as part of HRM's normal Capital Budget process. Halifax Regional Police will continue to monitor this area, targeting speeding motorists. No further changes to traffic controls are recommended at this time.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Sidewalk

New sidewalks and new concrete curb & gutter require the recovery of Local Improvement Charges (LIC's). However, since there is existing concrete sidewalk on the southwest side of Dartmouth Road, LIC's only apply to the new concrete curb and gutter. The 2005 rate for new concrete curb and gutter (one side) has been established at \$15.12 per lineal foot of frontage. We would note that the residents of Dartmouth Road have not been petitioned to determine their acceptance of this frontage charge. Alternatively, the LIC's may be recovered by an area rate over a part or all of the district area. Based on the 2005 rates, the required Local Improvement recovery for this project is estimated at \$20,810. The LIC rates change yearly and it is likely that the rates will be higher when these projects are approved in the Capital Budget.

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.

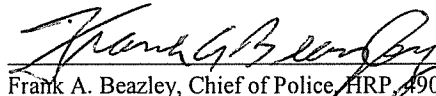
ATTACHMENTS

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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Financial Review:


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