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Chebucto Community Council
January 5, 2009

TO: Chair and Members of Chebucto Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Mike Labreque, P.Eng., Director, Transportation and Public Works

DATE: December 9, 2008

SUBJECT: **Traffic Concern - St. Margarets Bay Road - Potential Truck Route Change**

ORIGIN

Item 12.3 raised at the September 8, 2008 meeting of Chebucto Community Council.

MOVED BY Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Walker, that the Chebucto Community Council request a staff report on consideration of making St. Margarets Bay Road a non truck route. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

BACKGROUND

The former City of Halifax Truck Route By-Law was originally passed in 1972 and became effective in 1973. HRM adopted a consolidated version covering the core service area in 1998 with an amendment in 2000. The 1972 by-law designated St. Margarets Bay Road from the Armdale Roundabout to the former boundary of the City of Halifax as a 24-hour truck route. As the by-law now stands, St. Margarets Bay Road is designated a 24-hour truck route from the Armdale Roundabout to Lakeside Park Drive in Lakeside in the former County.

Councillor Mosher was contacted to clarify what part of St. Margarets Bay Road was intended to be covered by the motion. The Councillor indicated the portion between the Armdale Roundabout and the connection to North West Arm Drive (Albert Walker Drive) was the area of particular concern.

DISCUSSION

Traffic counts, classified by vehicle type, were made to determine what volume of trucks subject to the Truck Route By-Law were using the subject portion of St. Margarets Bay Road at this time. The results showed there were about 150 trucks per day, total of the two directions, using this section of St. Margarets Bay Road. Some of these would be local service trucks and some travelling through. We do not have a split of through versus local service.

There is a sidewalk on one side of St. Margarets Bay Road from the Armdale Roundabout to the bridge over North West Arm Drive. The other side of the road mostly has a rural cross-section (shoulders - not curbs). Most of the length of this section has no sidewalk; some sidewalks exist or are now being added on the portion nearer to the Roundabout. The roadway alignment is somewhat winding and runs generally downhill toward the Roundabout although no portion is extremely steep. Some dwellings and a few businesses are located relatively close to the roadway. Weekday 24-hour total two-way volumes are about 15,000 vehicles per day. (Therefore, 150 trucks per day is 1 percent.)

St. Margarets Bay Road is an old road, being shown at least as far back as an 1860s map. While Highways 103 and 102 provide a modern by-pass, the road is still a main artery and is classified in the Regional Plan as an "arterial". It has functioned as a significant route into and out of Halifax from many years and still serves that function.

People who live and work in buildings beside this portion of St. Margarets Bay Road or who walk along the road would gain a better quality of life if most of the larger trucks were removed from the roadway.

Operators of trucks would have to pay more for the time their drivers and vehicles spend travelling via longer routes if the road were from the Truck Route list. The trucks would use more fuel travelling longer distances. The customers of these operations would ultimately pay for the increased costs of the truck operators.

Advertisements were placed in the November 5 issue of the Burnside News (which is also circulated in Bayers Lake) and in the Halifax Chronicle Herald (Saturday, November 8 and Saturday, November 15, 2008) asking for comments on the idea of changing the truck route designation of this portion of St. Margarets Bay Road. A copy of the advertisement is shown in Attachment A. CBC television ran an item on the idea during the evening local newscast. Coming out of the advertisements and media story were a number of telephone calls and emails. Summaries of the telephone calls and copies of the emails are included as Attachment B.

There were eight emails or phone calls in support of removing through truck traffic, and six emails opposed to changing the designation. Graham Steele, the area MLA, sent an email (included in the six opposed). Mr. Steele acknowledges the problem for St. Margarets Bay Road residents but is concerned about the proposed solution because that would send trucks past other residents on other streets.

Conclusion

The matter of through truck traffic on this portion of St. Margarets Bay Road comes down to a balance between the economic and fuel implications for the truck operators and the perceived quality of life for residents adjacent to the roadway and for pedestrians and cyclists using the roadway.

The truck volume is small, being only one percent of traffic. The geometric deficiencies of St. Margarets Bay Road are real, but the road is capable of handling the truck traffic with reasonable safety. The additional financial burden on truck operating companies that would follow a change does have an effect on their profitability and the proposed change would increase truck fuel consumption and emissions given the lengthy diversion that would result.

Therefore it is recommended that the truck route designation not be changed due to a relatively small benefit (less than one percent of traffic - and some trucks are local service) and cost implications to trucking firms serving consumers.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

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. It is recommended that the Truck Route By-Law not be changed.
2. Chebucto Community Council could recommend to Regional Council that the truck route designation of St. Margarets Bay Road between Albert Walker Drive and the Armdale Roundabout be changed to local-service-only trucks (remove this portion of the road from the full-time truck routes list). This is not recommended because of a relatively small benefit to residents and other road users and an appreciable disbenefit to truck operators.
3. Chebucto Community Council could recommend to Regional Council that the truck route designation of St. Margarets Bay Road between Albert Walker Drive and the Armdale Roundabout be changed to a daytime truck route. This is also not recommended because of a relatively small

benefit to residents and other road users and an appreciable disbenefit to truck operators. The problems residents and others cite are daytime problems so the benefits would be marginal.

ATTACHMENTS


Attachment A - Sample Newspaper Advertisement Requesting Comments.

Attachment B - Communications received regarding potential changes in the truck route designation of part of St. Margarets Bay Road.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

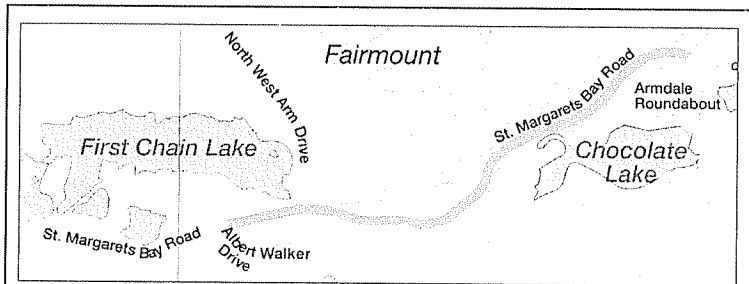
Report Prepared by : Alan Taylor, P.Eng., Transportation Planner

Report Approved by:


Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Manager, Traffic and Right of Way, 490-6637

ATTACHMENT A

Sample Newspaper Advertisement Requesting Comments (actual size)



Possible Truck Route By-Law Change – Comments Requested

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY is considering a request to change the truck route designation of **St. Margarets Bay Road between the Armdale Roundabout & Albert Walker Drive** (the connection to North West Arm Drive) from a full-time truck route to a non-truck route. The request is based on the narrow and winding nature of this part of St. Margarets Bay Road, with residences located close to the road, sidewalks very close to the road or not available at all, and some relatively steep portions of roadway.

A vehicle classification survey conducted in September 2008 showed that about one percent of the traffic was trucks large enough to be covered by the Truck Route By-Law, totalling about 150 trucks per 24 hour period. Some trucks which are engaged in local delivery or pickup would not be affected. Other trucks would be required to use an alternative route, which might be Herring Cove Road to the Armdale Roundabout, or Highway 102 to Joseph Howe Drive and then to the Roundabout.

Halifax Regional Municipality is requesting any person or company wishing to register a comment on the above request to please submit their comments or opinions before November 21, 2008 to the undersigned:

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