

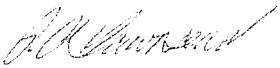


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Item No. **10.2.2**

Chebucto Community Council
August 10, 2009

TO: Chair and Members of Chebucto Community Council

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

DATE: July 7, 2009

SUBJECT: **CN Rail Line- Potential Active Transportation Corridor and
Community Committee**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the June 1, 2009 Community Council meeting, Councillor Mosher requested a staff report regarding:

“The initiation of a Committee of Chebucto Community Council to liaise with the community and staff in reference to the potential CN Rail Line active transportation corridor”.

BACKGROUND

Subsequent to the disposal announcement, two HRM organized community public sessions regarding the abandonment of the Rail Corridor were held in Fairview and in the Empire Theatre in the Bayers Lake Industrial Park on February 18th and 21st 2008, respectively. As a result of these meetings HRM, Tom Crouse, Acquisition and Disposal Manager, sent an offer of purchase letter to Francois Alexandre, CN Business Development and Real Estate Office. The letter, dated December 2, 2008, was entitled "Proposed Municipal Land Purchase - Chester Spur Line, Halifax". Since that time, negotiations have been ongoing with Canadian National Railways, (CN) and the financial 'gap' for the purchase price is continuing to narrow. The abandoned rail line corridor under consideration stretches from the Atlantic Superstore on Joseph Howe Drive, where the spur line joins the CN main line, to Lakeside Drive in the Lakeside Industrial Park, for a total of approximately 8.5 km.

When purchase negotiations are complete, the intention will be to come to HRM Regional Council for approval.

Abandoned rail line corridors in HRM total over one hundred kilometres form the "backbone" of HRM's Regional Trails, Active Transportation Network. HRM has been the principle government partner involved in the development of all the rail line sections as active transportation corridors. Five volunteer community trail associations currently participate in a formal maintenance agreement between the Halifax Regional Trails Association and HRM. The groups oversee day-to-day maintenance and operation of the majority of the one hundred kilometre corridor.

When acquired, the Chester Spur will be HRM's ownership contribution to this regionally significant AT corridor. At the western end, the Chester Spur connects to the Beechville/Lakeside/Timberlea Trail. This acquisition will form a continuous active transportation link between Peninsular Halifax and South Shore Communities. An HRM study is currently underway, "Chester Spur Line Functional Alignment", to examine possible AT connections between the Chester Spur and Peninsula Halifax.

On April 22, 2008 Council approved a report titled, Committee of the Whole Report - Regional Trails Program. The report contained two Regional Council recommendations, 1) Recognize the Halifax Regional Trails Association (HRTA) as the principle partner to plan, develop and operate HRM's regional trails system, and 2) Approve funding criteria and disbursement process for trails maintenance funds. The report highlighted the need for Regional Council's continuous support to volunteer community trail groups as one the principal challenges of the Regional Trails Program.

DISCUSSION

When the acquisition agreement for the Chester Spur Corridor is confirmed by HRM Regional Council, staff are suggesting that the established procedures and processes of the Regional Trails Program be initiated for community engagement. Planning, development and management of the Chester Spur Line AT Trail should be implemented through the leadership of a new community based volunteer trail association. The Chair of the 'Chester Spur Association' would participate at the Halifax Regional Trails Association meetings and function as a full voting member.

HRTA is formally constituted under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia; has an elected board of volunteer directors; meets once a month at various community venues and distributes minutes to its members and interested members of the public. It is the role of HRTA to work with HRM staff and other trail partners to bring system wide coordination to the trails program. Each of the HRTA trail groups has a voice in decision making that includes planning, education, funding, policy and promotion.

Staff concur with Councillor Mosher that from a community perspective all stakeholders along the 8.5 km of the corridor should be represented. The Fairmount Subdivision, the Joseph Howe Dr. area, Halifax Water and the Bayers Lake Industrial Commission should all be represented on the new volunteer trail group. The goal will be to establish a balanced and functional community trail association that is responsive to all community interests. A formal call will be made for interested public participants. Staff and the area Councillors will review the applications to ensure that proper representation is allocated to a wide scope of issues and interests.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications associated with this information report.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

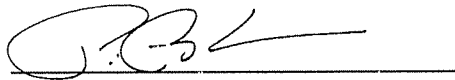
This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

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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