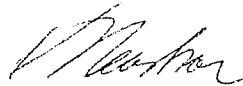


Chebucto Community Council
March 5, 2012

TO: Chair and Members of Chebucto Community Council



SUBMITTED BY: _____
Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Traffic Authority

DATE: February 20, 2012

SUBJECT: Dakin Drive – Increasing Traffic Shortcutting

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 12.4 raised at the December 5, 2011 meeting of Chebucto Community Council.

BACKGROUND

Dakin Drive is a short, narrow and winding street that runs between Bedford Highway and Kearney Lake Road north-west of the Bedford Highway at Kearney Lake Road intersection. Residents have recently complained that short-cutting traffic volumes during the morning commute period have recently greatly increased and should be removed or discouraged by Halifax Regional Municipality.

DISCUSSION

Drivers travelling on Bedford Highway towards Halifax in the morning commute time often have to wait upstream of the traffic signal at the intersection of Kearney Lake Road and Bedford Highway. For drivers who intend to turn right onto Kearney Lake Road from Bedford Highway an alternate route to avoid the traffic signal and the queue of stopped vehicles is to use Dakin Drive. Dakin Drive is an HRM municipal street but does not have a cross-section and alignment that meet current HRM standards. It is relatively narrow for most of its length and has some short radius curves. Dakin Drive is lined with low-density residential housing.

For many years short-cutting traffic using Dakin Drive has had a low volume and was not perceived as being of a particular concern. In 2007, some residents suggested the short-cutting was becoming a problem and asked for HRM consideration of measures to reduce the short-cutting.

Normally, short-cutting traffic problems are addressed using the HRM Neighbourhood Short-Cutting Policy. The policy does not apply to Dakin Drive because the Policy recognizes that local residential streets can be expected to handle up to 3000 vehicles per day. Dakin Drive in 2007 had only 120 vehicles per day.

In 2007, of the 120 vehicles per day, there were 27 between 0700 and 0800 hours, and 46 between 0800 and 0900 hours, or 73 vehicles in two hours, which is 61 percent of the 24 hour volume. Observations showed most of the 73 vehicles' drivers did not stop on Dakin Drive but were short-cutting. Obviously there was a peak period increase in traffic compared to the rest of the day but the actual volumes were still small. Speeds were measured at a location that appeared to have the fastest speeds on Dakin Drive. At that spot the average speed of drivers was only 31 kph and the 85th percentile speed (the speed 85 percent of drivers travel at or below) was 40 kph. Therefore, speed was not a concern.

Since 2007, development of the Bedford South and areas around Larry Uteck Boulevard has progressed. The Larry Uteck Boulevard interchange at Highway 102 was opened in October 2010 and Larry Uteck Boulevard is complete between Bedford Highway and Highway 102. Notwithstanding the opening of the Larry Uteck Boulevard interchange traffic on Bedford Highway has likely increased as development has occurred. (It is likely the increase is smaller than what it might have been if the interchange were not in operation.)

In the fall of 2011, residents of Dakin Drive perceived a significant increase in the volume of short-cutting traffic during the morning commuter peak period and again several residents requested HRM take action to reduce the short-cutting traffic volumes and speeds.

A count of traffic on Dakin Drive near Bedford Highway was taken on Tuesday, November 15, 2011 between 0730 hours and 0900 hours. In the sixty minutes between 0730 and 0830 there were 168 vehicles counted, all of them southbound (towards Kearney Lake Road), The busiest 15 minutes had 49 vehicles and the least-busiest had 38 vehicles. Between 0830 and 0900 there were only 4 vehicles.

A speed survey using an automated radar speed detector (with the speed-display turned off) was done on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 20 and 21, 2011 over a 24 hour period. Volumes of traffic were lower than the November count, which was expected due to the closeness of Christmas, but average speeds are likely to be unaffected by the time-of-year (or maybe higher with less traffic). The radar speed detector was located on Dakin where speeds appear to be the highest. The results showed an average speed of only 26 kph and an 85th percentile speed of 38 kph. These are lower than the 2007 speeds were and do not show any particular need for concern.

Some residents have complained of bus traffic, including school buses and Metro Transit buses. Investigation showed that there are typically five school buses travelling from the Acadian School Board schools on Larry Uteck Boulevard to areas to the south to make more student pickups. Two of the five school buses actually pick up children who live on Dakin Drive. The reported Metro Transit bus is actually a small Access-a-Bus vehicle serving a client who lives on Dakin Drive.

An analysis of the 2011 traffic volume counts and speed survey results shows that in terms of actual performance on Dakin Drive there is no significant operational problem, even accounting for the less-than-standard roadway geometry. Notwithstanding this finding, because there is a sharp peak in short-cutting traffic on a street that has very little traffic outside of the weekday morning peak period, staff will install turn prohibition signs with the legend “No-Right-Turn 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM Monday to Friday except buses” at the Bedford Highway end of Dakin Drive, facing drivers travelling southbound on Bedford Highway. This will be a trial of the restriction that is intended to run for 12 months to see if the residents’ concerns are eliminated. If the trial is judged sufficiently successful in the opinion of the HRM Traffic Authority the turn restrictions can be made permanent (or adjusted as needed).

Posts are required to install the required signs which cannot be done until such time as ground frost is no longer present. Thus, it is anticipated that the signs will be installed in April, 2012.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

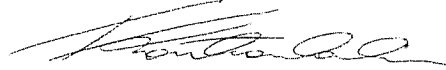
This report complies with the Municipality’s Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There has been no formal community engagement but email exchanges and telephone conversations were carried out by HRM Traffic and Right of Way Services staff and by the area Councillor and some residents. This report is itself part of the community engagement intended to communicate the data and findings of the Traffic Authority.

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.

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