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Item No.
Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee
November 19, 2015

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by

Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner and Director, Planning & Development

DATE: November 5, 2015

SUBJECT: Development Proposals at Birch Cove, Bedford Waterfront and Paper Mill Lake

ORIGIN

At the December 10, 2013 Regional Council meeting, the following motion was approved:

1. Adopt the staff recommendation to accept the Bedford-Halifax Mainland North Corridor Traffic Study Report (MRC, October 2013) for consideration in planning future transportation improvements; and defer consultation processes and deliberations for the development proposals for Birch Cove, the Bedford Waterfront and Paper Mill Lake (excluding the Motherhouse lands and the Transmitter lands), until the completion of the Regional Plan 5 Year Review, the 5-Year Transit Review, and the Commuter Rail Study; and a decision is made on development charges for charges for transit and transportation;
2. That staff report back to Regional Council at the completion of these studies or within two years, whichever occurs first; and
3. Request that staff seek a written update from the Province on the status and update on the implementation of Highway 113, Burnside Expressway and the Hammonds Plains interchange at the intersection of the Hammonds Plains Road and the Bicentennial Highway.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under Part VIII, Section 229, a municipal planning strategy may include:

- statements of policy regarding studies to be carried out prior to undertaking specified developments or developments in specified areas;
- the protection, use and development of lands within the Municipality; and
- municipal investment for public and private development and the coordination of public programs relating to the economic, social and physical development of the Municipality.

In accordance with Section 219, Council is required to adopt, by policy, a public participation program concerning the preparation of planning documents.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this Committee recommend to Regional Council that:

1. Further public engagement and preparation of plan amendments for the Birch Cove, Bedford Waterfront, and Paper Mill Lake lands be deferred until Council has reviewed the various transportation plans and a course of action agreed upon.

BACKGROUND

At the November 14, 2013 meeting, this committee received the Bedford-Halifax Mainland North Corridor Traffic Study and a staff report. The traffic study had been undertaken in response to four major developments in which higher densities than had previously been allowed for in his area were proposed through planning applications. The staff report provided an overview of the proposed developments and the findings and recommendations of the traffic study. The staff report and study can be found at the following link: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/SCcped/documents/131114cped71.pdf>

The key findings were:

- Applying the higher development scenario to each site did not have a significant impact to the road network relative to the low development scenario, other than on the Bedford Highway between Hammonds Plains Rd. and South Gate Drive. During the afternoon peak hours, some additional delays could be expected in the south-bound direction.
- Regardless of the level of improvements to the transit system, the road improvements identified in the Regional Plan will be needed to maintain an acceptable level of service on the road network.
- Both the medium and high level of transit provision were found to benefit auto users. Transit usage was found to be slightly better in the high level relative to the medium but at significantly higher cost.
- Ferry service does not appear to be a viable option.
- Commuter rail may be viable in the longer term if density increases along the corridor.
- Higher density mixed use developments that are walkable tend to reduce dependency on the automobile and encourage transit use.
- Higher densities also make transit provision more viable.

This Committee expressed the following concerns:

- In addition to the larger developments outlined in the report, there were also several smaller developments planned for this area which would contribute to traffic in this area which had not been accounted for in the study.
- Developers should be contributing to infrastructure costs through capital cost contributions. It was noted that there were several reviews ongoing, which are relevant to this matter, and that public consultation should wait until these are completed.

The Committee recommended to Regional Council that they:

1. Adopt the staff recommendation to accept the MRC traffic study for consideration in planning future transportation improvements;
2. Initiate a plan amendment process for the Motherhouse lands; and
3. Defer consultation processes and deliberations for the other development proposals until the completion of the Regional Plan 5 year review, the 5 year Transit Review, the Commuter Rail Study and a decision is made on development charges for transit and transportation.

Regional Council accepted the Committee recommendations with the exception that it allowed for approvals to be sought without deferral on the transmitter lands (Rockingham South). This report has been prepared in response to the Council motion provide a status update, within two years, on the studies and on the provincial transportation projects identified in the motion.

DISCUSSION

Status Updates:

Since direction was provided by Regional Council at their December 10, 2013 meeting, the following actions have taken place:

- The five year review of the Regional Planning Strategy was completed with Regional Council adoption of a revised document on June 25, 2014.
- The draft "Moving Forward Together" five year transit service plan was initiated in 2013. A draft plan was released in February, 2015, followed by a ten week public and stakeholder engagement process. The draft plan is currently being revised with the final plan expected to be tabled with the Transportation Standing Committee and then Regional Council later this year. Further information can be found at the following link: <http://shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/moving-forward>
- At the July 22, 2014 meeting, Regional Council approved adopting a regional development charge for transportation and transit services on all Greenfield developments within the Regional Transportation Rate Boundary and directed staff to consult with the development industry. In November 2014, the Province approved amendments to the HRM Charter which would enable charges to be collected for a broader range of services. At the January 27, 2015 meeting, Regional Council directed staff to develop an approach to collect charges for all services enabled under the Charter and approved funding for the study at the June 2, 2015 meeting. The study terms of reference have been drafted and the study is expected to be completed next year.
- The Commuter Rail Feasibility Study was initiated in the spring of 2015. A draft study was presented at a public open house and the final study with accompanying staff report presented at the September 24, 2015 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee. Further information can be found at: <http://halifax.ca/transit/commuterrail.php>

At the October 20, 2015 Regional Council meeting, a motion was approved that Regional Council:

- (a) Receive the report of the Commuter Rail Feasibility Study;
- (b) Direct staff to develop a strategic plan specifically aimed at increasing the modal split of sustainable forms of transportation as per the Regional Plan which integrates both land use and transportation planning and includes comparative costing analysis of road and right of way infrastructure upgrades and widening as compared to other forms of transportation and report

back to Regional Council by April 30, 2016 (dependant on appropriate project scoping and funding source as identified through Audit & Finance); and

- (c) Direct staff to continue consultation with CN in terms of receiving information on cost implications.

The Road Network Priorities Plan

The 2014 Regional Plan identifies the major projects included in the Road Network Priorities Plan but the Plan states that none of these road projects are to be approved for construction until a public consultation process has been undertaken that provides a rationale for the projects and considers growth targets outlined in the Regional Plan and sustainable transportation initiatives (policy T-13).

An excerpt of the Regional Plan pertaining to the Road Network Functional Plan is presented in Attachment A. A number of these projects would clearly have significant implications for servicing development in the Halifax Mainland North – Bedford corridor.

Further work on this plan will be integrated with the strategic plan as directed by Council at the October 20, 2015 meeting.

A status update requested by Council on the implementation of Highway 113, Burnside Expressway and the Hammonds Plains interchange at the intersection of the Hammonds Plains Road and the Bicentennial Highway is presented as Attachment B.

A Strategic Approach

As the population in the area has grown rapidly in recent years, issues have arisen regarding infrastructure capacity. Of specific concern is the ability of the transportation network in its current form to accommodate the amount of traffic on the Bedford Highway and its surrounding road network. While the issues regarding transportation infrastructure in the area have been acknowledged, and studies have begun to identify solutions to these issues, these studies, as referenced earlier within the report, are at various stages of completion. Further, upon completion, these studies will need to be evaluated by Council and specific initiatives selected and funded so that the current circumstances can improve.

In light of the on-going transportation initiatives, reinitiating public engagement processes for the Birch Cove, the Bedford Waterfront or Paper Mill Lake developments would seem premature. Current planning policy provides for multiple opportunities for development in this area including the remainder of Bedford South, Bedford West, Rockingham South, undeveloped lands in the vicinity of the Mainland Common and potentially on the Motherhouse lands where Council has initiated a plan amendment process.

Given these existing opportunities, the situation is not one where there will be an absence of development in the next several years; therefore it is advisable that Council not add to the existing complement of development potential without identifying a solution for existing capacity issues. Further to this, it is likely that community engagement for development along this corridor is much more likely to result in positive feedback if a transportation plan has been agreed to and commitments made to implementation.

A recommendation is therefore being made to defer further public engagement on these development projects

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the staff recommendation to defer community engagements. Any financial implications associated with the Dartmouth Cove Plan will be reported to Council as the information becomes available.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

If the staff recommendations are accepted, a community engagement strategy for the Birch Cove, Bedford Waterfront, and Paper Mill Lake lands would be brought forward in a separate report at a future date.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

If a strategic plan could be developed to integrate land use planning and transportation planning so as to achieve the modal split targets established by the Regional Plan, significant reductions to greenhouse gas emissions could be expected.

ALTERNATIVES

This Committee could recommend that Regional Council re-commence community engagement for development of the Birch Cove, Bedford Waterfront, and Paper Mill Lake lands at this time. For the reasons outlined in this report, this course of action would be premature, unnecessary and could hinder the chances for a successful outcome.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Excerpt from the Regional Plan re: Road Network Priorities Plan

Attachment B: Correspondence from N.S. Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Paul Morgan, Senior Planner, Community & Regional Planning, 902.490.4482

Original Signed by

Report Approved by: _____
Carl Purvis, Supervisor, Community & Regional Planning, 902.490.4797

Attachment A: The Road Network Priorities Plan (Regional Plan Excerpt)

A Road Network Priorities Plan will be prepared to facilitate the effective and efficient movement of people and goods and services. The plan shall consider a road classification system, street standards, emergency preparedness and hazardous goods routes. The plan will also identify growth related capital road construction projects and priorities under the categories of programmed, planned, and future potential road construction projects.

T-13 Table 4-1 and Map 6 present the road network projects that may be required to meet future vehicle demands. No projects shown on this table shall be approved for construction until the Road Network Functional Plan is prepared that:

- (a) has included a public consultation process that provides rationale for the projects as they relate to one another;
- (b) considers growth targets outlined in this Plan;
- (c) considers sustainable transportation initiatives; and
- (d) provides capital and operating costs for road construction projects.

Table 4-1: Road Network Projects

Project Description and Rationale	Status in 2006	Status in 2014
<p>Lacewood Drive/MacKay Bridge Approach <i>Improve connectivity from Lacewood Drive to the MacKay Bridge in four phases - fix Robie/Windsor Street Merge (phase 1); improve Windsor/Kempt Intersection (phase 2); Joseph Howe Ramp Changes (phase 3); Lacewood Four Lanes to Dutch Village Road (phase 4)</i></p>	Programmed	Phase 1 - Completed Phase 2 - Completed Phase 3 - Programmed Phase 4 – Being Re-examined
<p>Mount Hope Interchange and Extension <i>Create interchange on Highway 111 and connect Mount Hope Avenue to Baker Drive (phase 1) and extend to Caldwell Road (phase 2). This project addresses existing over-capacity issues on Portland Street by creating a parallel route.</i></p>	Programmed	Phase 1 Completed Phase 2 Planned
<p>Bayers Road/Highway 102 <i>Widening to six lanes from Hammonds Plains Road to Connaught Ave and to four lanes from Connaught Ave to Windsor St. The need for this project results from planned growth of centres in the Mainland Halifax North - Bedford Corridor.</i></p>	Planned	Planned (partially Provincial project)
<p>Highway 107 Extension (Burnside Expressway) <i>New highway connecting Akerley Blvd to Highways 101 and 102 necessitated by limited accessibility from the growing Burnside Business Park to the</i></p>	Planned	Provincial project being re-examined

Project Description and Rationale	Status in 2006	Status in 2014
<i>regional highway network.</i>		
<p>Herring Cove Widening <i>Widen to four lanes from Armdale Roundabout to Old Sambro Road. This project completes a four-lane corridor needed to deal with volumes approaching corridor capacity.</i></p>	Planned	Programmed
<p>Bedford South Interchange <i>Interchange on Highway 102 at Larry Uteck Blvd (phase 1) and extension to Kearney Lake Rd (phase 2)</i></p>	Planned	Phase 1 - Completed Phase 2 - Programmed
<p>Middle Sackville Connector <i>Interchange on Highway 101 at Margeson Drive with connection to Trunk 1 (phase 1) and extension to Lucasville Road (phase 2). This project provides connectivity to Highway 101 from a growing residential area and relieves demand on Hammonds Plains Road which has exceeded its capacity.</i></p>	Planned	Phase 1 - Completed Phase 2 - Programmed
<p>Barrington Street <i>Widen to four lanes between the bridges</i></p>	Future Potential	Future Potential
<p>Beaver Bank Bypass <i>New roadway parallel to Beaver Bank Road as an extension of Margeson Drive</i></p>	Future Potential	Future Potential
<p>Highway 113 <i>Highway connection between Hwy 103 at Hubley and Highway 102 near Hammonds Plains Road</i></p>	Future Potential	Provincial project with environmental impact assessment complete, but not yet programmed
<p>Highway 107 Extension (Cherry Brook By-Pass) <i>New highway connecting Main Street to Forest Hills Extension (Highway 107)</i></p>	Future Potential	Provincial project - Future potential
<p>Bedford Highway <i>Four lanes from Kearney Lake Road to Bayview Road</i></p>	Future Potential	
<p>Lawrencetown Connector <i>New interchange on Highway 107 connects to Trunk 7 and Route 207</i></p>	Future Community Connector	

Project Description and Rationale	Status in 2006	Status in 2014
Sussex Drive Extension <i>Connects Stillwater Lake Area to Exit 4 (Hubley) on Highway 103</i>	Future Community Connector	
Wellington Connector <i>Connects Wellington Area to Exit 5A (Aerotech) on Highway 102</i>	Future Community Connector	
Cobequid Road Interchange <i>New interchange on Highway 102 at Cobequid Road</i>	Future Community Connector	

Programmed: Projects which have been identified in the immediate three year capital budget;

Planned Projects which are anticipated to be built within the 25 year time frame of this Plan, when needed;

Future Potential Projects which have been identified to be constructed beyond the 25 year horizon of this Plan.

Future
Community
Connector Projects which improve access of communities to the road network anticipated to be built within 25 year time frame of the Plan.

T-14 A *Road Network Priorities Plan* will be developed to account for all mobility demands not anticipated to be accommodated by modes other than vehicle. The plan shall:

- (a) determine where additional vehicle capacity is required to meet demand and to prevent existing congestion levels from increasing; and
- (b) establish a road hierarchy for the purposes of design and servicing standards.