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Item No. 9.1.1
Transportation Standing Committee
February 26, 2015

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Bob Bjerke, Director, Planning and Development

DATE: Dec. 16, 2014

SUBJECT: Request for Reinstatement of Three Roads as Candidate Routes in the
2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan

ORIGIN

Sept. 9, 2014 Halifax Regional Council Meeting, Item 11.4.1 *2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan*. Council requested that a staff report be brought forward in regard to the Windsor Junction Road, Ross Road and Cole Harbour Road being removed from the list of roads included in "Roads to be removed- candidate on-road bike routes" within 3 months (Appendix D pg. 90).

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

From section 229 of the Halifax Charter:

229 (1) A municipal planning strategy may include statements of policy with respect to any or all of the following:

- (b) the physical, economic and social environment of the Municipality;
- (i) the provision of municipal services and facilities;
- (q) any other matter relating to the physical, social or economic environment of the Municipality.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council maintain the recommendation of the *2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan* to remove the following roads from the "candidate On-Road Bike Route" list: 1) Cole Harbour Road (between Bissett Road and Ross Road); 2) Ross Road; and, 3) Windsor Junction Road.

BACKGROUND

The *Making Connections: 2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan* was approved by Regional Council September 9, 2014. The purpose of the Plan is to support Municipal Planning Strategy objectives for mobility and land use. A key objective of the Plan is to attract more residents to walking and bicycling and to focus on the areas and facility types which offer the greatest probability of doing so. Given limited resources, the Plan aims to provide a clear and strategic foundation for budget planning and project implementation.

The Priorities Plan recommended the removal of about 40 roads or streets from the list of “Candidate On-Road Bike Routes” that had been established in the 2006 Functional Plan. The rationale for removing these routes was to help prioritize project planning and budgeting in the next five years. The three routes identified in this report were removed for a number of reasons, but in particular, because they have a low density of origins and destinations.

Wider paved shoulders are not a formal active transportation facility type and they may not be suitable for all ages and abilities because they offer minimal separation from faster moving motor vehicles. However, in rural areas they may be the only viable option to provide more space for walking and bicycling. While the Plan only identifies one shoulder paving project (Hammonds Plains Road was previously approved), Recommendation #26 states that:

The municipality should work with rural communities and the Province to identify good candidate routes for paved shoulders that provide AT connections to local destinations. Halifax should also work with the Province and Bicycle Nova Scotia to identify preferred routes through the municipality to be followed by the Nova Scotia Blue Route. Council should consider amendments to Maps 2A, B and C as needed, resulting from this process.

The provincial government has not yet formalized which corridors will form the “Blue Route”.

DISCUSSION

The *2006 Active Transportation (AT) Functional Plan* identified an extensive network of candidate on-road bicycle routes. Since 2006, as these roads come up for upgrading or “state of good repair” capital projects, bicycle facilities (e.g. painted bike lanes) have been added if there is sufficient space. This approach has resulted in approximately 90 new kilometers of on-road bicycle lanes across the municipality, primarily in areas outside of the Regional Centre. A key benefit of this approach has been the ability to add bicycle facilities in conjunction with other capital projects and to realize cost savings through project integration. One disadvantage of this approach is that the on-road bicycle route network is scattered and disconnected.

Following extensive public and stakeholder engagement as well consideration of “best practices” in bicycle facility route design and implementation, the *2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan* proposed a five year strategic approach to developing the on-road and off-road (AT Greenway) bicycle route network. Some characteristics of this approach include: a focus on connecting existing fragments; an emphasis on route types that accommodate the broadest range of cycling abilities (e.g.; that serve

residents of all ages and abilities, not just those who are currently cycling), and a more proactive approach that doesn't rely solely on project integration opportunities to build on-road bicycle facilities.

A key part of this strategic approach was to carefully review and revise the on-road bicycle candidate network. The revised candidate network aims to provide adequate coverage of the municipality, to accelerate implementation of facilities in the Regional Centre, and to be sensitive to limited capital budgets. The revised approach also identifies off-road greenway facilities (e.g. the Chain of Lakes AT Greenway) as the preferred facility type for bicycle routes in more rural communities in the municipality, primarily because they accommodate all ages and abilities. This is particularly the case in rural areas due to the higher motor vehicle speeds on rural roads.

The three roads discussed in this report were removed from the list of candidate routes because they did not align with strategic approach identified above. Some considerations for each route include:

1) Cole Harbour Road (between Bissett Road and Ross Road).

This area was suggested for shoulder paving in the Cole Harbour Open Space Plan. Concerns have also been raised about areas of the road prone to wash out. A key reason that this route was not prioritized as part of the AT Plan is that there are two existing parallel Active Transportation Greenway corridors that connect Dartmouth with communities further east and that provide community connections in the area. These alternatives are:

- a) The former rail corridor starting in Shearwater and extending east about 65 km to near Meaghers Grant in the Musquodoboit River Valley and connecting to Lawrencetown, Porters Lake, and Musquodoboit Harbour. About 75% of this facility is built. The AT Priorities Plan identifies the remaining section between Porters Lake and Musquodoboit Harbour and a connection between Shearwater and the Woodside Ferry Terminal as the priorities through to 2019; and,
- b) The Old Lawrencetown Road Greenway runs parallel to Cole Harbour Road for about two kilometres and provides a connection from Cole Harbour almost to Ross Road and connects with residential neighbourhoods in the area.

2) Ross Road.

This road provides an important connection between Highway 7 and Highway 207 (Cole Harbour Rd.) It was not prioritized because the recommended facility type identified in the plan is a parallel AT Greenway corridor that would be developed through the Regional Trails Program using the Community Development Model with the Lawrencetown Cole Harbour Trail Association; and,

3) Windsor Junction Rd.

This road connects Cobequid Road with Fall River Road between Second and Third Lake. The main proposed AT corridor through the Waverley, Windsor Junction and Fall River areas is an Active Transportation Greenway on the west side of Lake William and Lake Thomas. SWEPS (The Shubenacadie Watershed Environmental Protection Society) is currently developing design plans to implement this corridor through the Regional Trails Program using the Community Development Model. There are also "signed only bike routes" on corridors such as Cobequid Road and Rocky Lake Drive that

will be reviewed for the potential to better accommodate active transportation in conjunction with other capital projects (e.g. bridge replacements or resurfacing).

Wider paved shoulders are not currently identified in the Municipal Design Guidelines (the “Red Book”). However, the *AT Priorities Plan* does recognize that such facilities may be beneficial. As noted in recommendation #26, in cases where the Blue Route enhancements within the municipality are desirable or strategic benefits could be realized in rural communities, the technical feasibility of adding shoulders would be reviewed and a cost/ benefit analysis carried out. Such consideration would typically take place in conjunction with other road “state of good repair” capital work. Wider paved shoulders can cost between \$75,000 and \$300,000 per kilometre depending on the context. If improvements are technically feasible and affordable, a recommendation for enhancements would be incorporated into the annual capital budgeting process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was extensive community engagement as part of the development of the *2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan*. There were 800 participants in six open houses and an online survey. These roads were not identified as priorities in this engagement process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan aims to develop active transportation facilities that can help to reduce motor vehicle use and therefore contribute to emission reduction.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council may choose to reinstate these three roads or road sections as candidate on-road bicycle facilities in the *2014-19: Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan*.

ATTACHMENTS

n/a

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.

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