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**Item No. 12.1.2**  
**Transportation Standing Committee**  
**June 23, 2016**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Bruce Zvaniga, P.Eng., Director, Transportation & Public Works

**DATE:** June 6, 2016

**SUBJECT:** **Crosswalk Flag Program**

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**ORIGIN**

Item 17.3 of the January 26, 2016 session of Halifax Regional Council:

MOVED by Councillor Karsten, seconded by Councillor Nicoll THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report to update Council on the Crosswalk Flag Program. The report to include the following:

- Definition of community group including the required number of individuals supporting the request to install, or to remove crosswalk flags;
- Statistics about the number and type of locations currently with crosswalk flags, any available data about the observed behaviour of pedestrians and motorists at those locations;
- Location specific considerations of whether crosswalk flags should be permitted, including traffic controls, pole locations, sight obstructions;
- Relationship of crosswalk flags to overall pedestrian safety action plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Part XII, Section 318 (2), "Streets Vested in Municipality" of the HRM Charter: "In so far as is consistent with their use by the public, the Council has full control over the streets in the Municipality."

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Transportation Standing Committee forward a recommendation to Regional Council directing staff to prepare an administrative order outlining a policy, process and criteria for the allowance of crosswalk flags to be placed at crosswalks.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee (CSAC) was established by Halifax Regional Council on March 5, 2013 with the following mandate:

*The CSAC will serve as a forum to develop and present input and advice with respect to crosswalks, with the objective of improving the safety of pedestrians using crosswalks in HRM;*

*The CSAC will develop a report, along with action plans to improve the safety of pedestrians using crosswalks, both marked and unmarked;*

*Issues to be addressed in the report include, but are not limited to education, enforcement, traffic control measures and standards and consistency, as they relate to crosswalks, including budget implications.*

As part of their mandate the CSAC produced a report "Making Our Communities Safer – Crosswalk Safety Work Plan" (The Work Plan), which was presented to Regional Council on March 4, 2014, and identified six goals, each outlining several specific actions to be taken in achieving the goal. One of the action items under the goal titled, "Traffic Control" included:

*"Approving the use of crosswalk flags in HRM at crosswalks where the community takes on the responsibility of installing and maintaining them."*

In relation to the above noted CSAC work plan goal and action item, a recommendation report was approved by Regional Council at the August 5, 2014 council session which indicated that:

*"Community groups would be allowed to implement crosswalk flag programs with input from HRM staff to help ensure programs are carried out appropriately and safely."*

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Definition of Community Group**

After receiving Council direction to begin flag installations at municipal crosswalks, staff began to receive requests to review potential locations for crosswalk flags. However, Council's intended definition of community group has been unclear and this has led to uncertainty about the appropriate process within the flag installation framework. The only clear requirement was that those within the community making the request were responsible for the installation of the containers/flags and any costs.

Potential options that could be considered in defining a community request in this context could include:

- a petition signed by a set number or percentage of residents living within a pre-determined radius of a particular crosswalk (e.g. minimum of 10 residents within 500m of a crosswalk);
- a request on behalf of the community made by a Councillor; or,
- a request made by a school, church or other such community organisation/institution within a set radius of a particular crosswalk.

Similarly, requests for removal of crosswalk flag installations would be considered from a group meeting the same requirements as used for installation of flags.

Crosswalk Flag Statistics and Observations

At the time this report was written, there were 78 crosswalks throughout HRM with crosswalk flags in place. The breakdown of crosswalk type is shown in the following table.

<b>Crosswalk Type</b>	<b># of Locations</b>
Pavement Markings with Ground Mounted Signs (RA-3 / RA-4)	54
Pavement Markings with Overhead Illuminated Signs (RA-5)	4
Pavement Markings with Overhead Illuminated Signs and Flashing Beacons (RA-5)	18
Unmarked	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>

As part of the 2015 traffic data collection season (May to December), staff undertook some observations and assessments of crosswalk locations with flags. Information on the use and impact of crosswalk flags was gathered. Nine sites were assessed with locations representing different crosswalk and roadway types.

Based on observations and data collected, staff was able to identify the following:

- 8% of all pedestrians observed used the flags;
- Where overhead RA-5 crosswalk signs with pedestrian activated beacons were installed, 7% of pedestrians were observed using the flags. All pedestrians observed at this location activated the flashing beacons;
- Flag usage was observed to be most common among young children and seniors;
- Overall driver yielding behaviour was good with 87% of all crossings resulting in proper driver yielding.

Given the observed usage rate for crosswalk flags, it was difficult to make any determination as to the effectiveness of the flags. It was also observed that there were instances where the flags at some locations were all on one side of the crosswalk or there were no flags in the containers at all.

Location-specific Considerations

Upon initiation of the program, staff met with the citizen leading the crosswalk flag campaign to discuss and agree on an approach to be used when requests were received for the installation of crosswalk flags. It was agreed that the flags would only be allowed at uncontrolled, marked crosswalks (crosswalks not associated with another traffic control device such as stop signs or traffic signals). Crosswalk flags are not permitted at controlled crosswalks (stop signs and traffic signals) because these locations already represent high levels of vehicle / pedestrian control and it is important to maintain the purpose and intent of traffic controls at these locations. Placement of crosswalk flags could lead to misinterpretation of the “authority” associated with the use of the flag and result in uncertainty about driver or pedestrian behaviour.

Installation of flags at unmarked crosswalk locations would be considered if infrastructure was already in place (utility poles or posts not already used for a regulatory traffic sign such as stop signs or speed limit signs) that would allow flags to be located as if the crossing was marked. If no adequate infrastructure existed, the municipality would not install posts nor would residents be permitted to install posts within the right-of-way for the purpose of placing the flags. Based on the Council direction, Staff understood that requests for installation of flags at unmarked crosswalk locations were to be considered. However, there has been some question about this interpretation. The proposed administrative order would reduce any confusion and be specific within Council’s direction.

It has been the practice to date, that crosswalk flags are not permitted at any crossing location within the downtown business area because of concerns about theft, misuse, as well as uncertainty about defining

the community group. The proposed administrative order would provide clarity about any areas where crosswalk flags would not be permitted as well as the process to address circumstances where crosswalk flags may need to be removed.

When reviewing a request for placement of crosswalk flags, staff look at the crossing to confirm the crossing type is in keeping with the agreed upon approach and ensure there is appropriate infrastructure in place on which to install the flag containers. The location is also reviewed to determine if the placement of the containers and flags will cause sight obstructions, interference with the operation of any existing equipment (i.e. push buttons at RA-5 crossings) or would result in any access issues on or along the adjacent sidewalk, crosswalk or roadway. Staff do not assess the need, priority, or value of the location.

#### Relationship to the Overall Pedestrian Safety Action Plan

The use of crosswalk flags was identified in the Crosswalk Safety Work Plan, produced by the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee, which was submitted to Regional Council on March 18, 2014. Based on a subsequent report approved by Regional Council on August 5, 2014 staff included collaboration with community groups and crosswalk safety advocates in relation to the placement of crosswalk flags as part of the engagement initiatives set out in the 2015/2016 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

#### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement was not undertaken as this report responds to a request for information from Council.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. The Transportation Standing Committee could forward a recommendation to Regional Council directing staff to continue allowing the installation of crosswalk flags as per the current approach being followed.
2. The Transportation Standing Committee could forward a recommendation to Regional Council directing staff not to allow any further installations of crosswalk flags.
3. The Transportation Standing Committee could forward a recommendation to Regional Council directing staff not to allow any further installations of crosswalk flags at crosswalks and order the removal of flags from all locations where they are currently installed.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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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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