

Info Item # 1



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Transportation Standing Committee
June 23, 2011

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Reashor".

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Director, Transportation & Public Works

DATE: June 7, 2011

SUBJECT: Vehicle Traffic Opportunities – CN Rail Cut

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the May 26, 2011 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, a request was made for information on various investigations of the feasibility of accommodating vehicle traffic in the CN rail cut through the Halifax peninsula.

BACKGROUND

Recently, and on other occasions in the past, suggestions have been made in the local media that the use of the CN rail cut through the peninsula for vehicle traffic is a missed opportunity.

DISCUSSION

The CN main line, as it crosses the Halifax peninsula, travels through what is referred to as “the rail cut”. The corridor, constructed primarily during the First World War, is mostly within a rock cut, but has sections that are at, or above, natural grade. Between the south end port and Bayers Road there are 14 road crossings, all except Chebucto Road being road overpasses.

A study was undertaken by HRM in 2004 to determine the feasibility of using the rail corridor for truck traffic. This study determined that there was sufficient room for a single rail line and a one-way road at a cost of \$40 to \$50 million.

A follow-up study in 2006 determined that the benefit in reduced travel time of a one-way road would not be sufficient to justify the cost. Constructing a two-lane roadway instead of a single lane would require all of the road crossing bridges to be reconstructed and the walls of the rock cut to be moved back through many sections. It was assumed at the time that this would be cost-prohibitive.

A third study, undertaken by the Province in 2009, considered the implications of constructing that two-lane roadway alongside the rail line for the use of trucks and potentially transit buses. The cost of this undertaking was estimated to be \$210 million and the cost-benefit ratio was, again, very low.

Since the purpose of each of these assessments was to determine basic financial feasibility, no public consultation was undertaken. Nevertheless, it was evident that the noise and emissions impact of adding vehicular traffic to what would be an expressway corridor would have a profound effect on adjacent residential communities, particularly those at the same elevation, or below the elevation of the corridor.

A basic premise of each of these assessments was that the corridor would continue to include a single rail line to allow the south end port to be serviced by rail. If, however, the port was to be relocated and the rail line no longer required, the cost of converting the corridor to a two-lane roadway would be significantly decreased (but has not been determined). The reasons why the Halifax Port Authority insists that a functional port must remain at its current south end location are numerous and sometimes complex. The key consideration, however, is that with increasing ship size our harbour bridges become a limiting factor and alternative sites outside of the bridges can't provide all of the functionality required.

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

No specific community engagement has been undertaken on this issue. During the consultation process leading up to the 2006 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, this issue was the focus of some discussion.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments.

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.

Report Prepared by: David McCusker, P.Eng., Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, 490-6696

Report Approved by: 
David McCusker, P.Eng., Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, 490-6696
