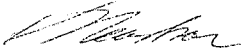


**Transportation Standing Committee
February 23, 2012**

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: 
Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Director of Transportation and Public Works

DATE: February 8, 2012

SUBJECT: Crosswalk Flags - Final Results

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 10.1.1 raised at the June 14, 2011 meeting of Halifax Regional Council.

MOVED by Councillor Dalrymple, seconded by Councillor Fisher that Halifax Regional Council not object to local community groups/organizations installing, maintaining, and using crosswalk flags at marked crosswalks or traditional sites of significant pedestrian crossing within their community, provided there will be no cost implications to HRM with the exception of Councillor's funds. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Further to the above motion, Mr. Reashor pointed out that staff sought a legal opinion on this issue and it was presented to Harbour East Community Council, and the opinion is that this clearly lies under the responsibility of the Traffic Authority. Mr. Reashor explained that the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) is reviewing the matter of crosswalk flags and a report will be presented at the fall session of the TAC Conference. He advised that if the Association makes a recommendation which differs from his decision, then he would take this into consideration. Mr. Reashor added that there is an opportunity for future debate on this matter when that information comes forward.

At the suggestion of the Mayor, there was general consensus to refer this matter to the Transportation Standing Committee for review and response back to Council, once the report on this matter being prepared by TAC is issued.

BACKGROUND

August 2008 - A trial pedestrian crosswalk flag program on the Waverley Road was implemented by Norm and Gayle Collins.

February 10th, 2009 - In an effort to expand the Waverley Road crosswalk flag program, Mr. Collins approached Council requesting an application be made to TAC and the Province to approve crosswalks flags as a traffic control device in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices Canada (MUTCDC).

February 23rd, 2009 – Mayor Kelly sent letter to TAC.

May 27th, 2009 – TAC responded to Mayor Kelly’s letter. A review of this request was completed at the TAC spring meeting and crosswalk flags are not recommended for inclusion in the MUTCDC

July 16, 2009 – Traffic Authority sent a letter to the crosswalk flag group informing them to terminate the crosswalk flag program by July 31, 2009 based on TACs findings.

April 1, 2010 – Harbour East Community Council received an Information Report which clearly determined the roles and responsibilities of Council, Community Council, and the Traffic Authority. According to the governing legislation, the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA), it was determined a Traffic Authority has the power to establish, designate, and maintain by appropriate devices, marks or lines upon the surface of highways, crosswalks at intersections where, in his opinion there is particular danger to pedestrians crossing the highway, and at such other places as he may deem necessary. Choosing what markings or devices are utilized at any given crosswalk is within the jurisdiction of the Traffic Authority. However, any device used would have to comply with the specifications contained in the Traffic Signs Regulations, the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada or be approved by order of the Minister. A community council has no power to interfere with the discretion of a local traffic authority on any issue involving the exercise of his or her powers under the Motor Vehicle Act. Council has not been granted any powers which would permit it to usurp the powers and duties of its Traffic Authority. Furthermore, there is no provision which allows for a review or an appeal to Council of decisions made by a local Traffic Authority.

DISCUSSION

According to the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Pedestrian Crossing Control Guide: Technical Knowledge Base, “pedestrian crossing flags are brightly coloured (typically orange, yellow, or florescent yellow-green), stick mounted flags held by pedestrians while waiting to cross and crossing the street”.

Although the Pedestrian Crossing Control Guide is not officially available, it has been approved by the Chief Engineers and is currently in its final editing. Since it may take up to two years to get the final version of this document, it was determined that the results could be shared as HRM has a representative on the Project Steering Committee.

The Pedestrian Crossing Control Guide: Technical Knowledge Base is a comprehensive literature review and jurisdictional survey. The report includes a comprehensive review of:

- The existing pedestrian crossing control practices in Canada and internationally;

- Existing research on the most effective means of implementing pedestrian crossing control; and
- Safety impacts of different pedestrian traffic control devices.

The report also identifies the necessary updates to TAC's 1998 Pedestrian Crossing Control Manual and the rationale for the updates.

Crosswalk flags was one of the traffic control devices reviewed and it was determined that they would not be included in the updated manual as an approved pedestrian crossing device. The comprehensive literature review and jurisdictional survey determined the following in why they would not be included:

1. Moderately Effective in Improving Driver Yielding Behaviour

Based on field studies from several US cities that have implemented pedestrian crossing flags at unsignalized crossings it was concluded that the crossing flags were "moderately effective", with motorists yield rates ranging from 46 to 79 percent at the six sites included in the field studies. These same field studies observed that pedestrian flags on lower speed roads yielded higher compliance rates.

2. Flag Theft Has Been a Problem

3. Very Low Usage of Flags (Nine to Fourteen Percent)

Based on a social marketing campaign in 2007, at several crossing flag locations, in one US city, 3000 pedestrians were observed. Of those 3000 pedestrians observed and interviewed, the flag usage rate was nine percent. After a thorough marketing campaign to help increase flag usage, an evaluation conducted six months after the program implementation indicated that flag usage had increased to eleven percent.

A survey was completed of Canadian jurisdictions and it determined that none of the 58 responding jurisdictions use crosswalk flags.

4. Higher Compliance Rates on Lower Speed Roads

See item 1

5. No Collision Modifications Factor (CMF) Found

A CMF is a quantitative measure of safety derived from a non-rigorous study. A CMF is a multiplicative factor that indicates the change in the number of collisions that can be expected with the implementation of a safety countermeasure. The literature review determined no CMF for the safety effects of pedestrian crossing flags.

The rationale for the rejection of including pedestrian crossing flags in the Pedestrian Crossing Control Guide are summarized as follows:

- Lack of effectiveness in improving driver yielding behaviour;
- Flag theft;
- No obvious safety benefits; and
- Low usage.

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

The Waverley Road Crosswalk Flag Group has had several opportunities to present to Community Council and Council. They have had the opportunity to talk directly with the Traffic Authority and his staff. They have initiated a trial crosswalk flag program, completed a petition, and had letters written by the Mayor to TAC and been responded to by TAC. The community has been heard by Council, the Traffic Authority, and staff and have been involved in all aspects of this initiative.

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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