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**Active Transportation Advisory Committee
June 19, 2014**

TO: Chair and Members of the Active Transportation Advisory Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed by:

Peter Stickings, Acting Director, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE: May 27, 2014

SUBJECT: “Making Connections: 2014-2019 Halifax Active Transportation
Priorities Plan”

ORIGIN

Item 8.2, October 27, 2011, Transportation Standing Committee.

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 Active Transportation Advisory Committee recommend that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council approve the Active Transportation Priorities Plan (Attachment “A”).

BACKGROUND

In 2006 Halifax Regional Council approved the Active Transportation Functional Plan. This plan elaborated the approach that Municipality would take to support the 2006 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy objectives to increase the transportation modal share for walking and cycling.

The Active Transportation Functional Plan had the following objectives:

1. Establish a complete, integrated and readily accessible region-wide Active Transportation (AT) network serving urban, suburban and rural areas;
2. Double the number of person-trips using AT modes by 2026; and,
3. Make conditions for AT modes safer through the development of appropriate facilities in combination with promotion and safety education.

The Active Transportation Functional Plan included a recommendation that it be reviewed after five years. Furthermore, the 2014 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (RP+5) indicates a need to revise the 2006 Plan to “further advance the goals of supporting healthy lifestyles, enhancing mobility and public safety, improving environmental quality and reducing auto dependency” (Policy T-2).

The Transportation Standing Committee approved the Terms of reference for this review on October 27, 2011. The objectives of this review are to:

1. Engage stakeholders and the public to find out what is working and also where they feel the gaps are;
2. Review progress since the 2006 plan was approved; and,
3. Set priorities for the next five years.

The review process has resulted in the attached report, “Making Connections: 2014-2019 Active Transportation Priorities Plan.” This plan does not replace the original 2006 AT Functional Plan. Rather, it aims to provide strategic direction on how to attain Functional Plan goals over the next five years. Approval of the priorities plan by Regional Council will give staff direction and a guiding framework for implementing projects and programs described in the plan, but the individual projects and programs still need to be approved individually each year through the municipal budgeting process.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this priorities plan is to support Regional Plan objectives to encourage more residents to walk or cycle for everyday transportation purposes (for example to travel to work, school, shopping, transit stops or terminals, or to access services) in order to help reduce pressure for expansion of vehicle capacity and parking supply. The actions and proposed outcomes in this plan will also support other municipal objectives, including: healthy community and active

living; road safety; recreation; greenhouse gas emission reduction; open spaces; economic development; and, complete communities.

There is a range of factors which influence whether or not residents walk or cycle. This plan focusses on three factors:

1. The continued development of a connected network of facilities such as sidewalks for walking, on-road facilities such as bike lanes, paved shoulders and local street bikeways for cycling, and, active transportation greenways and bridges for both modes (and including residents using in-line skates, skateboards, wheelchairs and motorized scooters);
2. The continued provision of education and promotion initiatives to encourage safety and skills development as well as awareness of the active transportation network and the benefits of walking and cycling; and,
3. Policies and practices that would further encourage more walking and cycling in the municipality.

Probably the critical factor in whether residents walk or bicycle for transportation is the land use density and diversity of origins and destinations in a particular area. Those neighbourhoods and communities with a higher number of both residents and destinations such as employment locations, stores, recreation and services in close proximity are more likely to result in a greater number of trips by cycling and walking. This AT Priorities Plan and the settlement targets and objectives of the Regional Plan (RP+5) mutually support each other.

Stakeholder and Public Engagement

As noted above, this plan review had three objectives, the first of which was to engage with stakeholders and the public to determine what is working and where HRM should focus resources between 2014 and 2019 to encourage more walking and cycling. Dozens of stakeholders (from both within HRM and external groups and agencies as identified in Appendix A) and almost 800 citizens were consulted. The public was provided with the opportunity to learn and contribute at six community open houses and through an online survey. Section Three of the Priorities Plan details the results of this engagement. Some conclusions from the public and stakeholder groups include:

1. There is recognition that there has been progress meeting AT Plan objectives and an expectation to continue to expand the AT network and supportive programs;
2. There is a need to focus on some of the more challenging measures required to increase walking and cycling rates. This includes addressing gaps in the sidewalk network and focussing on walkability; the need to rapidly expand and connect bicycle routes; and, the requirement to address some key and complex connectivity barriers (e.g. rail and highway crossings, Macdonald Bridge bikeway access);
3. Effective co-ordination between HRM business units and with the provincial government is essential to advancing municipal AT objectives. Similarly, co-ordination with the

community organizations, businesses and institutions which are contributing to making walking and cycling safer and more convenient is beneficial;

4. It is important to provide complete AT networks in all community types in HRM (rural, suburban, Regional Centre). There is a specific interest in focusing on the Regional Centre as this is where the land use type is the most favourable to increasing AT modes and this is the a targeted area of growth in the revised Regional Plan;
5. Skills training and promotion are important to increasing AT modes and improving safety; and
6. Making walking and cycling as accessible to the widest range of citizens was a common theme. For example, the physical AT network and supportive programs should enable children to walk or bicycle to school, adults to start bicycling again, and seniors to remain active and comfortable moving in their communities.

Review of Progress of the 2006 Active Transportation Functional Plan

The second objective of this review was to consider what has been accomplished since 2006. In assessing progress, changes to the AT network (e.g. additional kilometres of new sidewalks or bike lane) could be measured, but changes to AT modal share could not.

Changes to the physical network include:

1. Gaps in the sidewalk network have been closed and amenities such as accessible curb ramps at intersections and modern pedestrian signals (e.g. with countdown timers and audible cues) are gradually being added to the inventory where appropriate.
2. The off-road greenway network has grown from 68 km to 135 km.
3. The number of kilometres of on-road bike lanes has grown from 15 km to 108 km.
4. There have been new initiatives to foster pedestrian and crosswalk safety.
5. Safety promotion and skills training is expanding.

Due to methodological changes in the 2011 census, modal share comparisons with the 2006 census is an unreliable way to measure change in AT modal share. A new approach relying on locally-derived travel information is proposed for the next five years.

Despite the inability to provide comparable information, the Census and other surveys demonstrate the significant role AT modes play in travel to work trips on the Halifax Peninsula. Here, over 30% of residents walk to work. Bicycle to work rates are as high as 5%, which is significant considering there is a limited bicycle network.

The 2014-2019 Active Transportation Priorities Plan report proposes a clear set of targets and monitoring approach for all of the projects and recommendations identified in the implementation plan.

Priorities for 2014-2019

The third objective of the review was to establish priorities for the next five years. The implementation section of the report identifies the proposed priority projects. These are based on resident and stakeholder preferences as described in the consultation section of the report. They are also based on research into the peninsula bike route network, integration opportunities with forthcoming HRM and Province of Nova Scotia projects, and staff assessments. A strong focus is placed on projects that address barriers to AT and that offer the maximum connectivity. The plan calls for both the continuation of approaches that have successfully supported AT since 2006 and recommends the piloting of new approaches.

Approval of this plan does not constitute approval to implement these priority projects and recommendations. Rather it provides strategic direction for staff to initiate planning processes and to inform annual project budgeting processes.

Walking

In the next five years, promoting and accommodating walking will continue to be a critical objective. Walking is the transportation mode that all residents use for at least part of their transportation needs. In some areas of the Regional Centre, walking is the number one choice for travel to work. Most transit trips in the Municipality begin and end with a walk.

In the next five years the continuation of the new sidewalk program is recommended. It is also proposed that the municipality consider a special sidewalk program to close key gaps, particularly on higher order streets and roads outside the Regional Centre. Furthermore, a “Walkability” program would be developed to fund enhancements such as pedestrian refuges, shorter crossing distances and other physical improvements where possible and where the benefit could be the greatest. This Plan recognizes that the Municipality’s co-ordinated approach to pedestrian safety rests with the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.

Bicycling

In the next five years, the implementation of on-road bicycle facilities will become more proactive. In the past, most new bicycle facilities were implemented because other capital projects (typically resurfacing projects) were taking place. Going forward, the municipality will continue to take advantage of such opportunities, but will prioritize the implementation of on-road bicycle facilities. There is a target to implement 50% of this network in the Regional Center by 2019. Outside the Regional Centre, the plan focuses on making connections to local destinations, transit hubs, and the regional AT greenway network. The maps located in Section 13 represent the candidate routes and projects.

This plan is proposing a network of connected “Local Street Bikeways” as a key means of rapidly adding dedicated bike routes and providing facilities aimed at the broadest range of users (e.g. children, newer cyclists, families). While these routes will not be on main commercial streets, they will run parallel to them with easy access to shopping, employment and school destinations.

The plan also identifies a number of “main” streets where painted bike lanes or protected bike lanes should be considered. In the Regional Centre, these routes will typically involve trade-offs with other road uses (e.g. parking). Such routes will be subject to a full planning and evaluation process and Regional Council will make the final decision on implementation. Planning criteria for such facilities are identified in Appendix E.

Multi-Use Facilities

Multi-Use Active Transportation facilities are off-road, separated routes that accommodate the widest range of AT users and modes. These facilities are primarily greenways and bridges. These provide regional connections, surmount key barriers and serve both rural and urban communities. Going forward, the plan calls for connecting greenways with the broader AT network (e.g. Chain of Lakes Greenway to the peninsula bicycle network), completing missing links (e.g. between Lawrencetown and Musquodoboit Harbour), addressing some of the more challenging projects that have the highest potential for use (e.g. along Pleasant Street between the Woodside Ferry Terminal and the Shearwater Flyer Greenway) and taking advantage of other capital projects to expand the network and connect the region (e.g. Burnside to Sackville Greenway adjacent to the proposed Highway 107 extension). Both the community development model and direct delivery by HRM are proposed as the approaches to develop multi-use AT facilities.

AT Safety and Promotion

While the focus and financial resources in this plan tends toward physical infrastructure, it is recognized that AT Safety and Promotion as well as policies and practices are equally important in meeting AT Plan objectives. The priorities for AT Safety and Promotion are to build on current approaches and to consider how to be more effective in such areas as skills training, marketing, and safety education. Currently, the Municipality is one of many actors that are engaged in this area. The recommendations in this AT Priorities Plan identify actions that HRM should consider to ensure that policies (e.g. pedestrian facilities at or near new developments) and practices (e.g. provision of rural AT facilities or co-ordination with other jurisdictions) fully support AT plan goals.

The budget provided in this priorities plan is intended to give Council an understanding of the magnitude of financial requirements over the next five years to meet the objectives of this plan. The “Class D” estimate for the AT Capital Project priorities identified in the implementation plan is \$42.5 million over five years. Much of this proposed investment is to address significant

AT barriers where one time investments will provide long-term benefits. These include proposed AT crossings of the CN rail cut, new options to access to the Macdonald Bridge bikeway, and challenging gaps in the sidewalk network. As projects are planned and prepared for approval, opportunities to reduce costs (e.g. through combining with other capital projects) and funding from other sources will be pursued.

This Priorities Plan identifies a clear set of targets and evaluation criteria to assess progress in the next five years. Regular reviews of these targets will inform project development, budgeting and help refine implementation approaches.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to the approval in principle of this priorities plan. Approval will give direction to staff in preparing the five-year Project Budget which is the key mechanism through which individual projects or programs receive approval.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The engagement for this plan consisted of meetings or interviews with about 60 stakeholders from non-profit organizations, businesses, HRM officials, the provincial government, trails associations and health agencies. Approximately 200 citizens attended public open house sessions hosted across the municipality and 586 citizens completed an online survey to provide input. A detailed consultation report was prepared and posted on the HRM web site and is included in Section Three of the attached report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This plan aims to encourage the greater use of sustainable transportation modes. Such modes help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants.

ALTERNATIVES

The Active Transportation Advisory Committee may:

- 1) Recommend that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend the approval of this priorities plan to Regional Council. This is the recommended alternative.
- 2) Forward this report to the Transportation Standing Committee with suggested changes and request changes before Council considers the plan; or,
- 3) Recommend against adoption of the plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: “Making Connections: 2014-2019 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan”

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.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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