



Halifax Regional Police
1975 Gottingen Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 2H1

Item No. 8.1.8

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 24th, 2014

To: Halifax Board of Police Commissioners, Chief Blais, D/Chief Moore

From: Supt. S. Auld

RE: Crosswalk Staffing Criteria Review

Board Members;

Origin:

On September 8th, 2014 the Board of Police Commissioners passed a motion directing a review of the current staffing criteria for crossing guards be undertaken with Traffic Management staff. Specifically, the latest edition of the Transportation Association of Canada Pedestrian Crossing Control Guide (TAC Guide) was to be assessed.

MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Commissioner Read that the Board of Police Commissioners request a staff report outlining HRM's current Crossing Guard Staffing Policy including updates to the Transportation Association of Canada guidelines.

Discussion:

While the TAC Guide did outline a set of criteria for the inclusion of a crossing guard, including; pedestrian age, street width, vehicular speeds, sight distance, safe gaps, collision history, and general observations, it did not outline recommended vehicular and pedestrian minimums. As a result, a jurisdictional survey was completed and subsequently reviewed on November 19th, 2014. A review of the received responses did not point to deficiencies within the current criteria, as there were jurisdictions that used lower and higher volumes, both for students and vehicles to determine staffing. Additionally, the manner in which jurisdictions assessed staffing also varied greatly, with some using complicated formulae to determine risk exposure and others using simple minimum volumes combined with collision histories and other environmental considerations. Some jurisdictions were also found to rely on dated reports for their decision criteria and so the simple age of a report was not deemed to be a significant factor. A review of the data received found the following:

Student Volumes:

Minimum students crossing varied from a low of five per peak hour to a maximum of 35 for those jurisdictions that used minimums. For those that used risk exposure levels, the minimum number of students varied from 27 through to 95 depending on the nature of the intersection involved.¹ The mean for all jurisdictions using minimum pedestrian volumes was 14.75 student crossings with a mode of 10 student crossings per peak hour. For those using a risk exposure formula, the mean was 57.5 student crossings per peak hour using the same 200 vehicle volume.

Vehicle Volumes:

¹ (based on a vehicle volume of 200 vehicles per peak hour)

The mean minimum vehicle volume for those using the minimum methodology was 225 vehicles per peak hour with the mode being 200 vehicles per peak hour. For those using a risk exposure methodology, the minimum vehicle volumes varied significantly dependant on the number of students crossing. For example, for a side street with stop control, minimum pedestrian multiplied by vehicles needed to reach a value of 10,000 for staffing to occur. Those jurisdictions using minimums student crossings also imposed an additional minimum of between 3 and 4 safety gaps per 5 minute interval during peak hour crossing times.

Our current decision criteria is as follows;

- 20-60 elementary school children crossing per peak hour
- 300-500 vehicles per peak hour
- If minimums are met, then safety gaps of less than one per minute
- Geographical conditions, number of traffic lanes, visibility of intersections, etc.
- Accident experience and traffic enforcement statistics
- Overall general traffic flow
- Traffic volume
- Age and volume of students
- Existing marked crosswalk
- Traffic speeds
- Local police concerns
- Input from Traffic and Planning
- Budget availability

As noted, our current criteria was not found to be deficient but there are changes that could be made to better align with both other jurisdictions and the TAC Guide. It is important to note that should the noted changes be made, it would not affect the previous decision as to the removal of staff from the eight crosswalk locations, as each of the eight crosswalks would fall significantly below even the proposed changes.

Budget Implications:

Without an assessment of all crosswalks, it is difficult to determine implications to the budget. A full review of all crosswalks will be undertaken next year, and therefore the recommended changes should not be undertaken until a full review has taken place to confirm any budget implications.

The survey revealed that in many jurisdictions to the West, paid crosswalk guards are not employed to staff crosswalks, but rather school safety patrol volunteer members act as crossing guards. For example, in Saskatchewan, the school safety program is administered by the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) who staff 161 schools in 68 communities with student safety volunteers. They advise that there has never been a serious injury or fatality at a CAA staffed crosswalk since its inception in 1951. It is similar for Alberta where school safety volunteers are also utilized. As it is outside the scope of this report, a move from the current staffing model did not form part of the recommendations.

Recommendations:

The TAC Guide states, "The conditions under which a crossing guard is assigned to a particular location vary around the country. The decision to use a crossing guard at a particular location should be made based on local conditions, need, and available resources."

Upon reviewing the data received, the following criteria are recommended for the staffing of crosswalks;

- Utilized in relation to elementary schools and their students
- A minimum of 10 students AND 200 vehicles during peak hour (this would be independent of other factors)
- Elimination of gap analysis (if minimum volumes are met crosswalk will be staffed regardless of the number of gaps)
- Collision history of greater than 1 collision per year over last three years where the actions of a crossing guard may have prevented same.
- Geographical conditions; for example number of traffic lanes
- Traffic speeds, understanding that no crossing guard will be placed at any location with a speed limit of higher than 60 Km/hr.
- Input from Traffic Management

As noted, if approved, the recommended changes should take place after the full assessment of all current crosswalks is undertaken, so that any budgetary issues can be addressed. This time lag should not be an issue given the fact that the current manner in which locations are assessed was found not to be deficient. The recommended criteria will better align HRM with other jurisdictional criteria and the TAC Guide.

Respectfully Submitted;

Original Signed

Supt. Sean Auld
O.I.C. Operational Support
Halifax Regional Police