



Information Café: Crosswalk Safety Workshop Report

Halifax Regional Municipality Crosswalk
Safety Advisory Committee

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2007 and 2011, over half of the vehicle-pedestrian collisions recorded occurred at a crosswalk. Crosswalk safety is both the pedestrian and drivers responsibility. To engage the community in the growing concerns regarding crosswalk safety, DalTRAC and Halifax Regional Municipality's Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee partnered to conduct a workshop that facilitated conversations and ideas on what is working well, what is missing and what needs to be prioritized to address pedestrian safety in our community.

THE WORKSHOP

The workshop began with opening remarks from Dr. Ahsan Habib. Dr. Habib introduced the Nova Scotia Share the Road campaign. He also presented research findings of crosswalk collisions and the importance of discussing crosswalk safety. He proceeded to acknowledge and thank all the knowledge dealers that were joining the event and provided instructions on how the event would proceed.

THE PROCESS

For this workshop there were five themes that were to be discussed regarding crosswalk safety in Halifax. These themes were: Engineering Plans, Enforcement Plans, Education Plans, Evaluation Plans and #SharetheRoadNS movement. Each theme had a specific knowledge dealer from the transportation planning and road safety community who began the conversation regarding the topic to be discussed.

The community members that arrived for the event were invited to choose a topic they were interested in and engage in a free flowing conversation with the knowledge dealer and other participants for approximately 20 minutes. After having the discussion, participants were encouraged to write an important idea from the conversation and place it under the heading "*What's working well?*" "*What's missing?*" or "*What needs to be prioritized?*" regarding their topic. After this participants moved around the room to discuss two more themes for 20 minutes each.

There were approximately thirty-five participants in attendance. Each topic table had a designated note taker to record the discussions. Following the three discussion rounds, knowledge dealers summarized the key points under each heading. The DalTRAC team then synthesized the information gathered throughout the information café.



The discussions between the knowledge dealer and participants for each theme are summarized below. The important ideas that participants identified as “*What’s working well?*” “*What’s missing?*” or “*What needs to be prioritized?*” are also included under each theme heading.

1. Engineering Plans – Knowledge Dealers: Roddy MacIntyre & Tanya Davis

The participants and knowledge dealers discussed the projects that HRM are currently working on, including: pavement marking and signage improvements, increasing pedestrian crossing time, making the “push button” for crosswalks more accessible for all users and adding ‘zebra’ crossings to more crosswalks. Other ideas that were discussed were the need for more data and research regarding consistent signage, pedestrian preference between zebra crossings and lit pedestrian crossings and which lights are more visible at crosswalks, yellow or white. There was also discussion concerning whether people would be more cautious and careful if there was no signage, if they had to determine when it was safe to cross themselves.



The responses from the participants discussing engineering plans are as follows:

What’s working well?

- More lighting on RA5’s zebra crossings
- Upgrading all markings, signs and increasing walking time
- More responsive crosswalks; push buttons that respond quickly to pedestrian presence

What’s missing?

- Data
- Public input into capital budget or operating decisions on traffic engineering improvements
- Pedestrian push buttons need to respond to pedestrians needs
- Fluorescent crosswalk signs
- Reporting obstructions at crosswalk (light poles blocking visibility)
- Education around pressing signal button - not to walk right away
- Education to public around reporting incidents in crosswalks – how to report a near miss

What to prioritize?

- Walk signal at every green

2. **Enforcement Plans** – Knowledge Dealers: S. Calder & L. Roberge

The participants and knowledge dealers discussed the new CROMS system that the Halifax Regional Police are using to record collisions that happen in Halifax Regional Municipality. Once fully operational this database will be able to show problem areas for collisions. Participants had many questions about this new CROMS system including how the public could access the data and if it was possible to install cameras at trouble areas to possibly catch the cause of the accident first hand. Another topic that was discussed were the fines for pedestrians and how they are almost too expensive that officers may not want to hand them out and instead just discuss the safety issues with the individual. Subsequently, from that discussion came the idea of an option of ‘Pedestrian safety school’ instead of having to pay a fine. That way the person will be educated on why it is important to cross the road safely.



The responses from the participants discussing enforcement plans are as follows:

What's working well?

- Partnerships
- CROMS – Resource management collection
- CROMS (targeted data collection) by HRP
- Enforcement near crosswalks with past fatalities
- HRP monitoring of crosswalks with collision risks

What's missing?

- Lower fines for pedestrians and issue more tickets in addition to pedestrian ticket school
- Lower fines so officers write more tickets (high fines lead to more legal challenges, so disincentive to write tickets)
- More enforcement
- Education programs (mandatory ones) in lieu of parking tickets

What to prioritize?

- Safety school in addition to fines

3. **Education Plans** – Knowledge Dealers: Jonathan Wilkie & Breton Murphy

The participants and knowledge dealers discussed ideas around the Heads Up Halifax campaign. This included the importance of talking to youth about crosswalk safety and using the campaign to reduce the blame game between drivers and pedestrians, emphasizing that it is the responsibility of all road users. They also discussed places to include signage about road safety including schools, malls and senior homes. Another idea was to include the proper images for unmarked crosswalks in the Drivers Handbook for new drivers to learn properly. Lastly, it was discussed to better collaborate with other crosswalk safety events including Nova Scotia Walk Day.



The responses from the participants discussing education plans are as follows:

What's working well?

- Shift to individual responsibility is a good thing
- Doing things as cautiously as though through the eyes of kids... what are other things that will make people take that next step and be more cautious?
- Changing message so that the individual takes responsibility and doesn't lay blame with the other road users

What's missing?

- Look at other locations to promote (e.g. malls)
- Proper unmarked crosswalk diagram example in drivers handbook
- Educate from the school level
- Target new drivers - high school and younger students
- Get to the youth - tap into social media
- Long journey to change attitudes – normalize through holding one another accountable (peer pressure)
- (Mindfulness training – being present) to be more attentive/aware
- Educate “in the moment” e.g. ‘look up’ signs at the crosswalks

What to prioritize?

- NS walk day May 13th
- The on the road/ sidewalk reminders to pedestrians – in the moment reminders

4. **Evaluation Plans** – Knowledge Dealer: Taso Koutroulakis

The participants and knowledge dealer discussed the data being collected regarding crosswalk collisions and how this data is evaluated. Currently the data that is being recorded on collisions is showing a pattern with the time of day or year they occur but is not specific to a certain location or intersection. It was suggested that in order to gain the rate of collisions there will have to be pedestrian counters implemented to determine how many people are walking in an area and of those people walking, how many are actually getting involved in an accident. Some other ideas were to introduce a ‘near miss hotline’ of some sort where pedestrians or drivers could report the specific intersection and time of day that a near miss occurred as there is currently no way to record this. Lastly, it was stated that visibility in crosswalks is a must and that the winter season is creating issues with crosswalks due to high snowbanks and lack of lighting.



The responses from the participants discussing evaluation plans are as follows:

What's working well?

Nothing Reported

What's missing?

- Place cameras to see what is happening and to determine what distractions pedestrians and drivers are facing – Does not just relate to enforcement
- Better visibility? Paints or lights?
- Better data collection by police at scene
- Crosswalk hotline to report near misses
- There are too few or no pedestrian counts available to evaluate collision rates
- Question use of resources dedicated to low frequency events. How to capture a more lively experience?
- Getting better data for analyzers – complete police data through better technology
- Make more unmarked crosswalks marked - 'Zebra' like in the U.K.

What to prioritize?

Nothing Reported

5. #SharetheRoadNS Movement - Claire Van Leeuwen & Dr. Ahsan Habib

The participants and knowledge dealers discussed the Share the Road movement and how to move forward with this initiative. The ideas were to target more audiences such as school aged children and the aging population, through marketing at schools, libraries, nursing homes and workplaces. Currently, the movement is good at using social media to promote certain events and ideas however this may limit the people that can access the information. The participants also suggested exploring opportunities for partnership, including involving community groups and encouraging volunteers from local high schools to help with events.



The responses from the participants discussing the Share the Road Nova Scotia movement are as follows:

What's working well?

- Car magnets – in HRM

What's missing?

- Crossing education on local, arterial, etc.
- A means of community involvement that records problems, that would make its way to those in charge
- More education on sharing the road to all demographics

What to prioritize?

- Messaging via: Libraries, Transit, Car dealers, Social Media, Posting photos, etc.
- Community group action plans, safety champions, community group engagement
- Targeted messaging groups



Partners

HALIFAX

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Energy

Nova Scotia Moves Grant

Crosswalk Safety
Advisory
Committee

Imperial

Contributors

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