

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

October 21, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor Jennifer Watts, Vice Chair
Councillor David Hendsbee
Mr. Walter Regan
Mr. Tom Boyd
Ms. Lauralee Sim
Mr. Ibrahim Orengo
Mr. Friedemann Brauer
Mr. Tom Boyd
Ms. Gai Thomas
Mr. Michael Beiswanger
Ms. Laena Garrison

REGRETS: Councillor Linda Mosher, Chair
Mr. Ted Scrutton

STAFF: Ms. Jessie Debaie, Assistant Regional Trails Coordinator
Ms. Hanita Koblents, Active Transportation Coordinator
Mr. Tylor McDuff, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m. at Bloomfield Centre, 2786 Agricola Street, Halifax.

Mr. Jonathan Weinberg, a Dalhousie student attending as part of an internship, was introduced to the Committee.

2. COMMITTEE UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Walter Regan reported that representatives from the Halifax Regional Trails Association (HRTA) and other local trail associations attended a Trails Conference in Cornwallis. He noted that it was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first Trails Conference in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Regan announced that all maintenance committees had submitted their requests for 2010-2011 and added that all capital requests had been submitted as well. He invited Committee members to the HRTA Christmas Party at 5:00 p.m. on December 13, 2010. Mr. Regan highlighted the HRM Volunteer Conference on November 20, 2010.

Mr. Regan announced that a meeting would take place between all the groups that attended the Trails Conference in Cornwallis on November 27, 2010. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to debrief the conference and discuss how the ideas could be applied to HRM. He added that all were welcome to attend and that those interested should contact Ms. Jessie Debaie for details.

Mr. Regan noted that the new Get Out, Check It Out pamphlets were available. He indicated that two public walks were planned as part of the release of the publications: Saturday, October 23 at Fairbanks and Sunday, October 24 at Lawrencetown Beach. He added that both walks began at 2:00 p.m. and that the DaPoPo Theatre group would be presenting the history of the different trails.

Mr. Regan reported that Nova Scotia Trails was developing a strategic plan to map out future initiatives. He indicated that the strategic plan arose from the Trails Conference and that the Committee should follow development of the plan as it pertains to Active Transportation.

Mr. Regan announced that Mr. Ken Lee, Health Prevention and Promotion, was updating all trails information on the provincial internet site. He suggested Committee members should contact Mr. Lee to update or add information.

Ms. Hanita Koblents, Active Transportation Coordinator, reported that she had attended a stakeholders meeting at Halifax Harbour Bridges (HHB) and indicated there was mention of a year five-year plan that involved replacing the entire deck of the

MacDonald Bridge, which would include the bicycling and pedestrian lanes. She noted that the plan did not include any expansion or widening.

Councillor Watts suggested inviting Ms. Allison MacDonald of HHB to present to the Committee regarding these plans. She also suggested the Committee discuss their position on this issue at a future meeting.

Ms. Koblents indicated that her title had changed from Transportation Demand Manager to Active Transportation Coordinator.

Ms. Koblents provided an update on the status of the Peninsula Screenline Bicycle Count. She indicated that volunteers observed cycling activity for two days during peak times in the morning and afternoon; adding that Mr. Jonathan Weinberg was compiling the information. She explained that the focus of the bicycle count was an attempt to build a profile of cycling in Halifax and that they would attempt to repeat the count on an annual basis to track data and progress as well as to monitor bicycle use in HRM.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 16, 2010

Councillor Watts requested an update on the status of the letter to Mr. Roger Wells and Mr. Austin French concerning participation from the Active Transportation Advisory Committee on the reviews of the Active Transportation Plan and Regional Plan. She noted that the issue was originally raised at the June 17, 2010 meeting.

MOVED BY Mr. Regan, seconded by Ms. Sim, that the minutes of September 16, 2010 be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Addition:

9.1 Pavement Renewal – Ms. Hanita Koblents, Active Transportation Coordinator.

MOVED BY Mr. Regan, seconded by Ms. Watts, that the order of business be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

5.1 Subcommittee Updates

5.1.1 Bike Week 2011

Ms. Sim reported that there were no updates from the Bike Week Subcommittee at this time.

Ms. Thomas noted that she had been approached regarding the possibility that HRM consider three-wheel bicycles for seniors. She explained that three-wheel bikes would allow for motorized scooter users to exercise. Ms. Thomas suggested that perhaps an activity could be planned during Bike Week 2011.

A discussion ensued regarding current initiatives promoting three-wheel bikes. It was noted that Capital Health had adult three-wheel bikes for rental and that there was a group in Portland, Oregon called 'Seniors, Stop Your Engines' that maintained a fleet of three-wheel bicycles. It was suggested to contact local bike shops to see what was available.

Ms. Thomas offered to follow up on the suggestions and report back at the November meeting.

5.1.2 Safety/Education

Councillor Watts reported that the Safety/Education subcommittee met on October 7, 2010 and added that the next meeting was scheduled for November 10, 2010 in room 108 of the Bloomfield Centre.

Mr. Brauer entered the meeting at 4:32 p.m.

Councillor Watts indicated that the subcommittee was attempting to ascertain what was being done around the safety, education and promotion of active transportation. She noted that Ms. Jennifer McGowan was going to revisit the proposal put forward by Ms. Janet Barlow and assess the status of the various initiatives. Councillor Watts reported that Ms. Koblents was looking at the website to see what information was available on-line.

Councillor Watts mentioned 'cyclovia', a concept being discussed at the Dalhousie Focus Group on Sustainability, which involved shutting down a major street regularly for use as an active transportation corridor.

Councillor Watts reported that the subcommittee discussed the request for licensing of bicycles to track inappropriate uses. She indicated that the opinion of the subcommittee was that the financing required for such a program would be better spent on education and promotion.

There was a call for volunteers for the standing subcommittees.

Mr. Boyd offered to join Mr. Ted Scrutton, Ms. Jennifer McGowan, Ms. Koblents, Mr. Regan, Ms. Thomas, Mr. Steve Bedard, and Ms. Rachel Beddingfield on the Safety/Education subcommittee.

Ms. Garrison indicated that the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) would appoint a representative to sit on the Bike Week subcommittee with Ms. Sim.

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

7.1 Correspondence - None

7.2 Petitions - None

7.3 Presentations

7.3.1 Roundabouts – Ms. Tanya Davis, HRM Traffic Services Supervisor

An extract of the Halifax Regional Council Minutes – June 15, 2010 were before the Committee.

‘Putting It All Together’ – overhead visual example of a roundabout was submitted.

‘Wayfinding’ – Current Design Guidance was submitted.

Councillor Watts introduced Ms. Tanya Davis, HRM Traffic Services Supervisor. Councillor Watts explained that the issue of roundabouts had come before Council on June 15, 2010 and that staff was asked to present at a future Active Transportation Advisory Committee meeting concerning pedestrian and bicycle use. Councillor Watts also noted the petition submitted by Councillor Jerry Blumenthal indicating opposition in the Community to the proposed roundabout at the corner of Duffus Street and Novalea Drive.

Ms. Davis explained that a roundabout was a circular intersection where vehicles and bikes travelled one way in a counter-clockwise direction. She noted that the principle of roundabouts was adopted for use on municipal roads, where appropriate, on May 11, 2010.

Ms. Davis described how pedestrians and cyclists would move through a roundabout. She explained that pedestrians would be provided with an access ramp and added that cyclists could travel through the roundabout with vehicular traffic or dismount and walk their bike as a pedestrian. Ms. Davis noted the speed in a roundabout would be twenty to twenty-five kilometres an hour.

Ms. Davis explained that roundabouts improved safety by lowering speeds and simplifying decision making. She added that they reduced right angle and head on collisions. Ms. Davis reported that there were only sixteen conflict points in a roundabout compared to fifty six at a regular intersection.

Councillor Hendsbee entered the meeting at 4:47pm.

Ms. Davis reported that roundabouts reduced delay by promoting a continuous flow of traffic. She noted that shorter delays decreased fuel consumption and lessened

greenhouse gas emissions. Ms. Davis added that roundabouts also included more greenspace for improved aesthetics.

Ms. Davis explained that pedestrians would have the benefit of a more speed controlled environment with no signal delay and added there was also splitter islands midway through the intersections. She reported that studies show that a pedestrian's risk of being in a collision is significantly less in a roundabout.

Ms. Davis addressed the difficulties for visually impaired pedestrians, which included locating the crosswalk and listening for a crossable gap. She indicated that design recommendations included well-defined walkway edges and walkways separate from the street edge at the beginning of each sidewalk to identify crossing locations. She explained that high-contrast tactile surface indicators should mark the beginning and end of each sidewalk to identify crossing locations and splitter islands. Ms. Davis noted the importance of sufficient lighting.

Ms. Davis indicated that a study was being released in March of 2011 that tested the effectiveness of various treatments for roundabout cyclists. She noted that the study looked at cyclists, pedestrians and the visually impaired. She highlighted the need for continued studies.

A discussion ensued regarding the importance of educating cyclists and drivers about travelling through a roundabout. It was noted that cyclists are often expected to travel along the sides of the road.

Ms. Davis indicated that many promotional and educational pieces were being prepared. She added that the Armdale Roundabout was not a good example as the new roundabouts would be much smaller.

Ms. Davis concluded that diligent design and review must be undertaken for all intersections. She explained that roundabouts give HRM another method to ensure the highest level of safety for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists.

A discussion ensued regarding the merits of roundabouts. It was noted that there were operational savings due to an absence of traffic lights and that there would be no four-way stops during power outages. It was also suggested that roundabouts need to be designed with those that have the most difficulty in mind and that children, the elderly, and the disabled need to be considered. There was also concern about the ability of a pedestrian to cross two or four lanes of traffic without causing a backup.

Ms. Davis added that the public education program was not in place yet. She reported that roundabouts in HRM could be single-lane or double-lane; however, the study was not complete.

Ms. Koblents indicated that the Motor Vehicle Act allowed for sidewalks to be designated as dual use for pedestrians and cyclists and added that this could be done by the Traffic Authority.

Mr. Boyd expressed concern regarding roundabouts with more than four points of entry. He also stressed the importance of sufficient lighting for visually impaired pedestrians and to allow for plenty of time to cross the lanes of traffic. He requested Ms. Davis present to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities and suggested other organizations may benefit as well.

Ms. Davis stated that the criteria for determining whether a roundabout was necessary included the amount of traffic and whether it was one directional or not. She explained that Devonshire Avenue was identified as traffic volumes were lower and the infrastructure was aging. She added that all intersections currently being looked at were over 30 years old.

Ms. Davis noted that snow removal would have to be trucked out as it could not be put in the central island as it would obstruct sight lines.

Councillor Watts asked Committee members to inform Ms. Davis if there were any groups who would benefit from her presentation.

8. REPORTS - NONE

9. ADDED ITEMS

9.1 STREET REPAVING - Ms. Hanita Koblents, Active Transportation Coordinator

Ms. Koblents reported that a review was underway of the list for areas requiring pavement renewal. She noted that this would be of interest to anyone concerned with bicycle infrastructure. She indicated that some areas have already been short-listed, including a portion of Chain Lake Drive and intersections of the Chain of Lakes Trail, as well as Dunbrack Street as far as Radcliffe with the potential of implementing a bike lane.

Ms. Koblents explained that repaving work was planned on Purcell's Cove Road outbound towards Ferguson Road and that she was planning a site visit to assess whether the shoulders were wide enough to accommodate a bike lane. She added that there were still several site visits to be done; however, she invited anyone who wished to review the long-list and provide feedback to contact her.

10. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one willing to speak at this time.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting was scheduled for November 18, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

Tylor McDuff
Legislative Support