




PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 11.3.1

Halifax Regional Council
May 13, 2008

TO: Mayor Peter Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Helen McFadyen, Chair
Advisory Committee for Persons With Disabilities

DATE: April 24, 2008

SUBJECT: Hybrid Automobiles

ORIGIN

April 21, 2008 meeting of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities

RECOMMENDATION

The Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities recommend that the Mayor, on behalf of Halifax Regional Council write to manufacturers and trade associations within the automobile industry, urging them to adopt a standard for the emission of sound from all hybrid vehicles.

DISCUSSION

At the April 21, 2008 meeting of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, the re-drafted recommendation outlining the danger posed to pedestrians, particularly those who are blind or partially sighted, by the quiet characteristic of hybrid vehicles was discussed (see attached). Loughie Rutt (HRM Diversity Consultant) gave a verbal report of a meeting with Steven King, Manager of HRM Sustainable Environment Management Office (attended by Mr. Rutt and Ms. McFadyen) on March 31, 2008 at which time, any apparent contradictions about the intent and integrity of the recommendation were clarified and resolved. Following discussion, the committee put forward a recommendation that the Mayor and Council forward a letter(s) to the automobile industry and trade associations urging them to adopt a Standard for audible emission in the production of hybrid vehicles

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications associated with this request.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

None suggested

ATTACHMENTS

1. Detailed recommendation to the Mayor and Council from HRM Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (April 21, 2008).

<p>Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208 Report prepared by: Barbara Coleman, Legislative Assistant</p>

Recommendation to Mayor and Council from HRM Advisory Committee for Persons
with Disabilities (ACPWD)

2008-04-21

In recent discussions, the HRM Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities concluded that the quiet characteristic of hybrid vehicles poses a significant danger to pedestrians, particularly those who are blind or partially sighted.

Consider that individuals, who have vision loss, rely predominately on the sound of traffic flow to determine when to cross at an intersection or crosswalk. If there is no sound produced from the approaching vehicle, and the pedestrian can not see it, the risk factor for being struck by the vehicle is significant.

We also are of the opinion that the danger of 'quiet vehicles' extends to other groups; example: children on bicycles and distracted pedestrians (using MP3's, iPods).

Many organizations, such as the NFB (National Federation of the Blind) in the United States and the AEBC (Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians) are advocating for legislation which would mandate the automobile industry to adopt a standard for the level of sound emitted from hybrid vehicles. {An indicator of this issue's significance is the Maryland Senate's recent preliminary approval of a bill to study how to deal with the danger posed by hybrid vehicles.}

The HRM ACPWD is supportive of this effort. The popularity of hybrid vehicles is rapidly increasing in HRM. As the number of hybrid cars on the road increases, so does the risk to pedestrians. We want to emphasize that the issue is the specific quiet characteristic of these vehicles, not the hybrid technology itself. The efficiency and emission-reduction aspects of hybrid vehicles are essential to the technology. They are necessary if we want to regain and sustain a healthy environment. The ACPD fully supports the dedicated effort for environmental sustainability in HRM including the use and purchase of hybrid vehicles.

The requirement that a vehicle be 'audible' does not mean that it must be a 'noise maker'. The technology required to modify existing hybrid vehicles currently exists. Developments in this field (creating modifying devices) are being aggressively pursued. The ACPWD sees the modification of hybrid vehicles, including any vehicles owned or leased by HRM, as part of the ultimate goal of having safe (audible) vehicles on the roads. This should not take the focus away from the urgent need to ensure that a standard is put into place by industry, for current and future production of hybrid vehicles. We encourage HRM to take the lead in planning for what will likely become legislated criteria for hybrid vehicles.

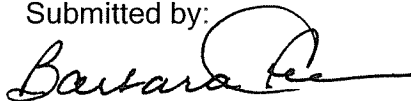
On March 31st, members of the HRM ACPWD met with Stephen King, Manager of HRM Sustainable Environment Management Office. The discussion was very positive. Any miscommunication about the intent of the ACPWD recommendation was clarified.

The HRM ACPWD recommends that Mayor and Council write to the appropriate manufacturers and trade associations within the automobile industry, urging them to adopt a **standard** for the emission of sound from all vehicles, particularly hybrids. This is an opportunity for HRM to be proactive in the movement for setting audible vehicle emission standards. By doing so, HRM will help to ensure the safety of all its citizens. When the bar is set, all Canadian cities can look to the leading role HRM played in achieving this standard.

Stephen King can provide clarification on the conformity of this recommendation with the Sustainable Environment Management Office's initiatives in HRM.

The Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities is looking forward to timely endorsement and action on this recommendation by Mayor and Council.

Submitted by:



Helen McFadyen (Chair ACPWD)

f12