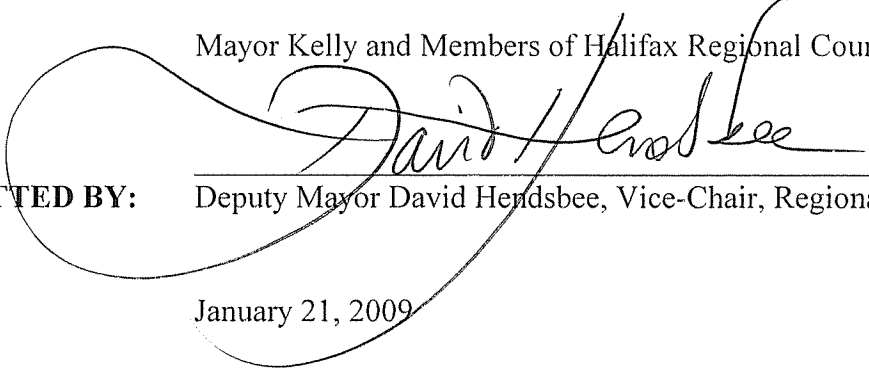


**Committee of the Whole**  
**February 3, 2009**  
**February 10, 2009**  
**February 17, 2009**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Deputy Mayor David Hendsbee, Vice-Chair, Regional Plan Advisory Committee

**DATE:** January 21, 2009

**SUBJECT:** **Regional Parking Strategy**

---

**ORIGIN**

Regional Plan Advisory Committee meeting of January 21, 2009.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council adopt in principle, the Regional Parking Strategy to guide the implementation of changes to parking provision within HRM.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Regional Plan Advisory Committee received a presentation from staff on the proposed parking strategy for HRM at their January 21, 2009 meeting. A staff report dated November 5, 2008 was before the Committee for consideration. The Regional Plan Advisory Committee agreed to forward a positive recommendation that Regional Council adopt in principle the Regional Parking Strategy to guide the implementation of changes to parking provision within HRM.

**DISCUSSION:**

See staff report dated November 5, 2008 attached as Attachment 1.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

See staff report dated November 5, 2008 attached as Attachment 1.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

See staff report dated November 5, 2008 attached as Attachment 1.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Staff report dated November 5, 2008.

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: Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant, 490-6732



PO Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Item No.**

**Halifax Regional Council  
January 27, 2009**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Regional Plan Advisory Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Phil Townsend".

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phil Townsend, Acting Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management  
Services

**DATE:** November 5, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Regional Parking Strategy

**ORIGIN**

Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, Transportation Chapter requiring a Regional Parking Strategy be created as part of the Transportation Master Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Regional Council adopt in principle, the Regional Parking Strategy to guide the implementation of changes to parking provision within HRM.

## **BACKGROUND**

Within HRM, the framework for promoting and encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation (such as ridematching, active transportation, transit) has been established within the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (to be referred to as the Regional MPS). The Regional MPS has also set out a framework for encouraging the use of parking policy and standards as a means of achieving the goal of reducing dependence upon single occupant vehicle trips, particularly for commuting purposes.

The amount, location and configuration of parking has a major impact on the form and character of land development. The demand for free on-site parking must be balanced with financial and environmental costs to the developer and the community. On-site parking does much to shape buildings and sites. Realistic requirements and careful design can do much to ensure that communities are built at a human scale to encourage walking and transit use. This is especially important in the fifty Growth Centres which form the building blocks of the Regional MPS.

The Regional MPS integrates land use and transportation planning allowing for improved management of travel demand and the strategic improvement of the transportation network. This approach allows for the integration of mixed use transit-oriented and pedestrian-oriented centres which are complemented by a multi-modal transportation system, which will encourage reduced parking demand and increased use of alternatives. The development of this plan commenced in 2007 with the award of the contract to IBI Group, in association with Terrain Group.

## **DISCUSSION**

### Overview of the Regional Parking Strategy

The Regional Parking Strategy is a comprehensive document designed to balance the need for parking with the desire to encourage and promote the use of alternative modes of transportation. The connection between the provision of parking and the number of commuters who choose to drive along to work is well founded. However, in order to alter travel behaviour, changes to parking policy and provision are required.

The parking strategy encourages and promotes a reduction in parking demand and supply through the use of techniques such as maximum parking standards, improvements to transit service and the development of programs such as HRMSmartTrip, the on-line ridematching program introduced in May 2008. Attachment 1 is the Executive Summary of the report.

Decisions on parking affect all aspects of development in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) including land use, built form, economic development, travel behaviour and financial health. The setting of parking policy is a complex issue involving many interests and stakeholders. In many urban areas throughout Canada, parking has been approached from a simple demand/supply problem without consideration of the many factors that influence the demand for parking or the impacts of the supply of parking. The HRM Regional Parking Strategy is based on the conviction that a balanced approach must be adopted for all facets of parking. It reflects

current trends in parking management that are moving away from a “more parking is better” approach, in recognition that too much parking is as harmful as too little. However, it is also recognized that having adequate parking supply is essential to the functioning of both commercial development and to the daily lives of residents of HRM

This plan is a high level document, developed to provide the framework for the development of more comprehensive parking policies and standards. As a result, amendments to planning documents and other municipal policies will be required to implement the recommendations in the report.

#### Implementation

The parking study has been designed to be implemented in accordance with two factors. One is the need to alter land use bylaws and municipal planning strategies to reflect the recommendations within the study. The second is the need to make improvements to the provision of other modes of transportation so that efforts to encourage the use of alternatives are not done in vain. If the changes to the provision of parking are carried forth without the complementary enhancements to ridematching, transit, active transportation infrastructure as well as education and promotion of employer-based commuter options programs, the result will be frustration on the part of the commuters. It is therefore important that these changes occur in sync with one another. To accomplish this, cooperation among a number of business units and divisions will be required.

#### Integration with other Initiatives

Parking impacts many initiatives within HRM. HRM by Design, Community Visioning, and Streetscaping all involve parking to some degree. The need to accommodate the changes that will occur within HRM as these initiatives move forward have been instituted through recommended design guidelines, parking standards and parking technology. The use of various types of parking payment technology has also been discussed. Public consultation and meetings with community groups and various HRM Business Units have resulted in an integrated approach to parking which is based upon sustainability.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications at this time, therefore the approval of this plan does not represent a budget commitment.

**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**

Regional Council could choose to not adopt the Regional Parking Strategy. This is not recommended as HRM will not be able to move ahead with changes to the provision of parking within the municipality and therefore not meet one of the goals of the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy which is to reduce parking demand and increase the use of more sustainable modes of transportation.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Executive Summary

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

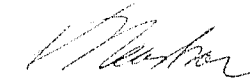
Report Prepared by: Roxane MacInnis, TDM Planner 490-4160

Report Approved by:



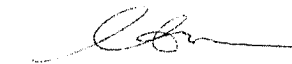
David McCusker, Manager Strategic Transportation Planning 490-6696

Report Approved by:



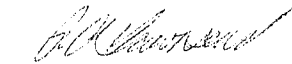
Ken Reashor, Manager Traffic and Right-of-Way Services 490-6637

Financial Approval by:



Catherine Sanderson, Senior Manager, Financial Services, 490-1562

Report Approved by:



Phil Townsend, Acting Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management Services 490-7166



# **REGIONAL PARKING STRATEGY FUNCTIONAL PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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AUGUST 2008

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

Decisions on parking affect all aspects of development in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) including land use, built form, economic development, travel behaviour and financial health. The setting of parking policy is a complex issue involving many interests and stakeholders. In many urban areas throughout Canada, parking has been approached from a simple demand/supply problem without consideration of the many factors that influence the demand for parking or the impacts of the supply of parking. HRM's Regional Parking Strategy is based on the conviction that a balanced approach must be adopted for all facets of parking. It reflects current trends in parking management that are moving away from a "more parking is better" approach, in recognition that too much parking is as harmful as too little. However, it is also recognised that having adequate parking supply is essential to the functioning of both commercial development and to the daily lives of residents of HRM.

HRM is at a critical point in its on-going evolution. The Regional Municipal Planning Strategy outlines a bold vision for the region that envisions a significant change in both urban form and transportation behaviour, with the over-arching goal of becoming a more sustainable region. It is therefore important that the issue of parking be approached carefully and comprehensively as HRM moves forward with the implementation of its Planning Strategy.

This parking strategy is one of five functional plans being prepared in support of the overall Transportation Master Plan (TMP). A key objective of the TMP is to improve traffic flow by shifting the trend away from single occupant vehicle travel. Other plans in various stages of completion include the Road and Road Network Plan, Public Transit Functional Plan, Active Transportation Plan, and the Transportation Demand Management Strategy. When complete, the TMP will provide a blueprint for the transportation system and related policies and programs for the next 25 years.

### STUDY OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Regional Parking Strategy is a 25 year plan developed to ensure that parking in HRM will be designed, managed and supplied to:

- **Support a choice of integrated travel modes**, emphasizing active transportation, public transit, and carpooling.
- **Encourage alternatives to the single occupant vehicle trip.**
- **Help mitigate traffic congestion** in the Regional Centre and outlying employment and retail centres.
- **Promote efficient land use** and support the development of mixed-use, transit- and pedestrian-oriented centres as outlined in the Regional Plan.
- **Operate efficiently and equitably** and be affordable to the Municipality and its citizens.



- **Support local business, tourism and service sectors** and the community's economic development.
- **Protect the environment** by minimizing impacts of parking facilities on air, water, land and other natural resources.
- **Link with other ongoing studies** such as HRM by Design, Public Transit Functional Plan and the Transportation Demand Management Strategy.

In support of these objectives, the following principles were developed to guide the identification and evaluation of potential parking strategies and solutions:

<b>1. Integration with other plans</b>	Parking strategies should integrate with and support land use and transportation objectives of related plans (e.g. Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan).
<b>2. Consumer Choice</b>	People should have a variety of parking and travel options from which to choose.
<b>3. Multi-modal interconnectivity and access</b>	Parking facilities are not only for automobiles and should be supplied and designed to support transportation linkages and travel by other modes (e.g. bicycle parking, convenient transit access).
<b>4. Efficient Utilization</b>	Parking facilities should be sized and managed so that spaces are frequently occupied.
<b>5. Flexibility</b>	Parking policies and plans should be flexible to appropriately and equitably deal with varying needs across HRM. A "one size fits all" approach will not achieve the desired outcomes.
<b>6. Pricing</b>	Users should pay directly for the parking facilities they use as much as possible.
<b>7. Quality vs. Quantity</b>	The quality of parking facilities (e.g. aesthetics, security, convenience) should be considered as important as quantity.
<b>8. Innovative Approaches</b>	HRM has the potential to be an innovator in terms of parking management, and parking solutions should make use of innovative approaches (e.g. electronic fee collection systems, wayfinding systems) wherever appropriate.
<b>9. Consultation</b>	Key stakeholders, including residential, business and institutional representatives should be involved in developing appropriate parking solutions.

**STUDY SCOPE**

Consistent with the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, the Regional Parking Strategy covers the entire municipality including both urban and rural areas. It addresses all aspects of parking, including private parking for commercial and residential uses, on-street parking, off-street public parking and

related policies for the control, design and management of parking. In conjunction with other functional plans, the Parking Strategy also identifies options for promoting ridesharing and active transportation. One of the over-riding themes of the strategy is about balancing the needs of different stakeholders including residents, businesses, institutions and tourism industries.

#### **STUDY PROCESS AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**

The HRM Parking Strategy is the result of the efforts of a large number of people. Specifically, in order to facilitate and guide the development of the strategy, HRM established a Community Working Group comprised of representatives from HRM staff, community representatives, business associations, hospital and university representatives, the Waterfront Development Corporation and the Ecology Action Centre. This working group met four times during the study and had an opportunity to comment on the proposed study recommendations in draft form.

The Parking Strategy also incorporated several opportunities for public consultation, including two rounds of public open houses held at various locations throughout HRM.

The first round of public consultation was conducted in early March, 2007. These meetings were intended to inform the public about the Parking Strategy and the types of options being considered, and to give participants an opportunity to consider and recommend options that could be pursued to address current issues as well as future objectives. The key findings of the initial consultation were as follows:

- Parking management must support the competitiveness of downtown businesses;
- More transportation options are needed, particularly public transit;
- Residential on-street parking management needs to be improved;
- The design and appearance of parking is important; and
- Parking pricing should be fair and equitable.

A second round of public open houses was held in June 2007 to obtain feedback on the key strategy recommendations. In general, the draft recommendations were well received by the public, noting the following:

- If parking standards are reduced, viable options to the car must be provided, including rapid transit;
- As development occurs downtown, there will be a need for more parking;
- The layout of sites should be improved to ensure that parking does not affect the pedestrian environment, and sites should include bike parking, preferential parking for carpools and other supportive measures; and
- Parking standards should be simplified so that they are more understandable for developers and the public.

Many people suggested that there is a need to look into the future where cars may not be as prominent as they are today, and ensure that this is taken into account in present day decisions on parking.

## Existing Conditions and Identification of Issues

### EXISTING PARKING STANDARDS

Based upon a comparison of HRM parking standards with 11 other Canadian jurisdictions, minimum requirements in Halifax Mainland and other more suburban and rural HRM communities required the highest parking levels of jurisdictions assessed for general office, government office, general retail, large retail, grocery store, and restaurant uses in many instances.

With the exception of the Halifax Peninsula and Downtown Dartmouth, parking standards for general office uses range from 4 to 6 spaces per 100 m<sup>2</sup> of floor area, which by most accounts, translates into more than one space per employee. This existing requirement to require "more than ample" employee parking is a major barrier to achieving more compact and pedestrian friendly built form objectives, and a disincentive to transit and other forms of sustainable transportation. It is also an unnecessary financial burden given the increasing cost of constructing parking.

### EXISTING TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR

Overall, HRM residents are fairly dependent on private automobiles with approximately 78% of all commuting trips taking place by car, and 68% of commuting trips by cars with only one occupant. However, for commuting trips to the urban core (Downtown Halifax and Downtown Dartmouth), there is substantially less reliance on passenger cars. Almost half of the work trips originating in the urban core are made by public transit, walking, cycling or other non-auto modes. This reduced reliance on private automobiles for trips to the urban core is not doubt a function of the availability and quality of public transit services and walking/cycling environments, but it is also a function of parking pricing and supply. Although there are high rates of free parking in Downtown Halifax (40%) and Downtown Dartmouth (54%), parking is almost never priced for commuter or shoppers outside of the urban core. It is noteworthy that based on an attitudinal survey conducted for this study, 29% of auto commuters responded they would shift to another mode of transportation if parking was priced.

### OBSERVED PARKING DEMAND AND UTILIZATION

Observed parking utilization rates mirror the trends in existing parking standards and travel behaviour with the core areas experiencing the highest utilization rates for public and private parking lots.

Based on surveys undertaken for this study, average occupancies for public parking lots in Downtown Halifax and Downtown Dartmouth were 66% while lots near the university and hospital areas were 70% on average, with some lots approaching 100% occupancy. Similarly, on-street parking in Downtown Halifax was almost always full when surveyed. Parking utilization in Downtown Dartmouth was observed to be slightly lower with public lots averaging 42% utilization and peak on-street occupancies averaging 68%.

Outside the urban core, the majority of parking is provided in the form of private off-street parking. As part of this strategy, parking occupancies were sampled at 45 commercial retail lots throughout

the region at different times of the day and during different seasons. On average, these lots were less than 40% full indicating that parking is significantly over-supplied. Only one lot (Sunnyside Mall) was observed to have a high rate of utilization (95% at the peak).

#### **SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

HRM is a large and diverse region with many different transportation and parking needs. To guide development of the Regional Parking Strategy, key needs and priority areas were identified based on the review of existing conditions, policy considerations and extensive consultation with members of the public, HRM staff, and other key stakeholders. Exhibit ES.1 provides a summary of existing/future needs and opportunities together with a listing of key policy directions grouped according to six categories.

**Exhibit ES.1: Summary of Needs and Priority Areas**

Category and Issue/Opportunity	Proposed Policy Direction
<p><b>Growth Management</b>  <i>The Regional MPS outlines that future population and employment growth will be directed towards the Regional Centre (25%), suburban areas (50%) and rural areas (25%). A key aspect of the plan is the centres, envisioned as mixed-use transit oriented areas, which will accommodate most of this growth. There are several key areas in which parking policies and parking management need to be improved upon to help achieve the land use and transportation objectives outlined in the Regional Plan.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify parking requirements to support the Regional Plan objectives</li> <li>• Accommodate growth in the regional centre.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Governance and Public Parking Supply</b>  <i>HRM currently has a fragmented approach to parking management, both in the downtown areas, as well as across the municipality. The fact that HRM currently only plays a small role in the provision of collective off-street parking limits opportunities for shared parking and pricing strategies to encourage efficient use of off-street parking.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance parking administration</li> <li>• Increase municipal role in providing public parking.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhanced Transportation Choice</b>  <i>Parking can be managed to support and encourage a variety of transportation options and reduce the number of commuters travelling in single occupant vehicles. Potential strategies to promote transportation choice include preferential carpool parking, bicycle parking, enhancing park and ride facilities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify parking requirements to reduce auto dependency</li> <li>• Use parking to support improved transportation options</li> </ul>
<p><b>Efficient and Cost Effective Parking Supply</b>  <i>Parking is a valuable resource and should be managed to maximize its efficiency and usefulness for both businesses and residents and to ensure its availability for intended users.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt innovated solutions for on-street parking management</li> <li>• Address residential on-street parking issues</li> <li>• Enhance parking experience for the downtown discretionary traveller</li> <li>• Refine and harmonize mobility disabled parking standards</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improved Urban Design and Environmental Performance</b>  <i>Parking has a significant impact on urban design . In particular, the need to supply parking can impact the shape of buildings resulting in conditions that are neither transit-supportive nor pedestrian friendly.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve urban design and environmental performance</li> <li>• Improve urban design of parking facilities</li> <li>• Mitigate environmental impacts of parking facilities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Funding and Fiscal Tools</b>  <i>The cost of constructing parking is increasing significantly, yet most parking in HRM is “free”. It is in the interest of all residents, businesses and HRM to develop a parking strategy that is financially sustainable.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve funding and fiscal tools</li> <li>• Promote full-cost pricing of parking</li> <li>• Develop improved funding mechanisms</li> </ul>

## Proposed Parking Strategies

Addressing existing and future parking needs within HRM will require a comprehensive set of strategic initiatives aimed at addressing the needs and opportunities identified previously. Reflecting a holistic approach to parking management, these strategies focus on increasing parking supply options as well as managing the demand for parking.

Based on input from all stakeholders, this study developed a comprehensive set of potential recommendations under the following categories:

- Strategies that increase the efficiency of the existing "parking system";
- Strategies that reduce parking demand; and
- Supporting strategies.

Strategies under these three categories are discussed in the following sections. These strategies have been translated into a set of specific recommendations as detailed in Exhibit ES.3 at the end of this Executive Summary.

### STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PARKING CAPACITY AND EFFICIENCY

Several strategies are proposed to increase parking capacity and efficiency. These strategies focus on maximizing the efficiency of the existing on-street and off-street parking supply, ensuring that a reasonable amount of parking is provided for new development, and strategically increasing HRM's role in providing public parking to support existing and future development in a manner that reflects the overall goal of reducing automobile dependence.

#### Revise Parking Zoning Standards

Parking standards are an important tool for achieving the overall directions outlined in the Regional MPS for land use, particularly with respect to the "Centres". Significant revisions are proposed for parking standards in HRM as detailed in the main report incorporating the following policies:

- Shared parking provisions and other mechanisms for flexibility in required parking;
- Reduced minimum parking requirements; and
- Maximum parking standards.

Revised parking standards will allow for:

- Consistent standards for mobility disabled parking across HRM;
- Shared parking provisions that specify reductions in required parking where parking is shared
- Reductions in required parking where off-street or other collective parking is available;

- Reductions in required parking given good transit or other Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures (i.e. preferential car pool parking, priced parking, bicycle parking, transit pass programs, etc.);
- Allowances for off-site parking at a reasonable distance; and
- Reductions in parking standards for lower income and seniors housing.

Exhibit ES.2 provides a description of the proposed changes to existing parking standards while the actual recommended standards are included in the main report.

#### **Improve User Information**

A comprehensive information system that includes vehicle and pedestrian wayfinding systems can help to maximize the efficiency of the parking system. A lack of signage and wayfinding can cause confusion and frustration for drivers and in turn hurt retailers. User information can also help make it easier for people who are unfamiliar with available parking options to determine which one best meets their needs.

A comprehensive strategy is required to improve parking user information, addressing signage, printed materials (e.g. maps) and internet resources. It is recommended that HRM work in partnership with the private sector and local business areas to develop a "common look and feel" for parking signage and related information. Dynamic wayfinding systems in Downtown Halifax and Downtown Dartmouth could be pursued in the long term.

**Exhibit ES.2: Proposed Framework for Parking Standards**

Area	Approach to Parking Management	Minimum Parking Standard	Maximum Parking Standard
Downtown Halifax	Emphasize public parking and TDM	Private parking banned for non-residential development <sup>1</sup>	
Halifax Peninsula and Downtown Dartmouth <sup>2</sup>	Emphasize public parking and TDM	Lower minimum requirements for most developments above a certain size	Tight parking maximums for most uses
Regional Centre - Dartmouth	Allow flexibility in private parking provision/emphasize public parking and TDM	Low minimum requirements for most uses	Parking maximums for most uses
Outer Urban	Allow flexibility in private parking provision	Mid-level minimum requirements for most uses with adjustment factors	Graduated parking maximums
Outlying Areas	Require ample private parking/allow flexibility in private parking provision	Mid-level minimum requirements for all uses with adjustment factors	Graduated parking maximums
Urban/Suburban District Centre	Allow flexibility in private parking provision/emphasize public parking and TDM	Low minimum requirements for most uses	Tight maximum standards for surface parking
Urban/Suburban Local Centres	Allow flexibility in private parking provision/emphasize public parking and TDM	Low minimum requirements for most uses	Maximum standards for surface parking
Rural Commuter Centres <sup>3</sup>	Allow flexibility in private parking provision	Mid-level minimum requirements for most uses	Parking maximums for some uses

**Optimize On-Street Parking Management**

Recommended strategies for on-street parking generally attempt to maximize on-street parking opportunities for all users where it can be done without impacting the integrity of residential areas.

<sup>1</sup> Parking lots and structures are currently banned in Downtown Halifax and the Halifax Waterfront through the Land Use By-law and may only be permitted through direct Council approval. It is proposed that this approach be maintained.

<sup>2</sup> In the Capital District, outside of Downtown Halifax, a minimum of 50% of required parking must be provided as short-term, public parking

<sup>3</sup> Rural Commuter Centres include Rural Commuter, Rural Commuter District and Rural Commuter Local Centres



This approach is consistent with the overall principle of promoting shared parking and efficient land use. However, it is also recognized that residents should not be penalized for living in urbanized areas such as the Peninsula.

Key recommended strategies related to on-street parking include:

- Introducing parking pricing on selected streets on weekend to discourage long-term parking and to ensure availability for visitors.
- Improving user information to better explain parking regulations along with policies to reduce parking fines for first time offenders.
- Modifying the existing residential parking exemption program to allow implementation over a multi-block permit zone.
- Increasing the use of the "Parking by Permit Only" program in residential areas that have a high occurrence of employees using on-street parking, if desired by residents.

A typical urban parking space has an estimated annualized value of \$,1000 to \$2,000, which suggest it is important that on-street parking is priced equitably and fairly.

#### **Expand Municipally Owned Public Parking Supply**

Public parking plays an important role in helping to achieve development objectives in a sustainable manner since shared parking is one of the most desirable ways to reduce "peak" parking demand. Other than park and ride facilities, HRM currently operates very few public off-street parking facilities. Aside from the MetroPark, which is a public-private operation, HRM owns and operates only six lots, totalling approximately 100 spaces.

As areas such as the Spring Garden Road area and the waterfront areas of Downtown Halifax and Dartmouth are developed, existing surface lots will be lost and there will be increasing pressures for public parking. While it is not the role for HRM to make up for this loss of parking, it is appropriate that HRM ensures there is a basic amount of parking available for public use. By taking on a greater role in providing public parking, HRM can ensure that parking is not over-supplied. The development of funding mechanisms for parking provision will not initially be applied to the development of parking structures. Any funds from parking will be applied to public transit and other alternative modes of transportation.

#### **STRATEGIES THAT REDUCE COMMUTER PARKING DEMAND**

Reducing the number of commuters travelling in single occupant vehicles is a key strategy of the Regional Plan and will help to reduce the overall need for parking. This strategy is contingent on the availability of travel alternatives that are financially viable, safe and convenient along with appropriate incentives to use them. Strategies proposed for reducing commuter-parking demand relate to many areas of transportation demand management, including improving transit, promoting active transportation, encouraging ridesharing and developing more progressive approaches to parking pricing. Overall, parking management in HRM needs to be viewed as a key component of the TDM program.

### Improve Transit Options

HRM has made considerable strides in improving transit services with the introduction of the MetroLink and other innovative improvements such as the University Transit Pass and the proposed downtown shuttle. The Rural Transit and Park and Ride Study will result in even more transit options for HRM travellers. However, these improvements may not be enough to break the cycle of auto dependence that currently exists in many parts of HRM.

It is estimated that HRM's employment will grow by about 40,000 workers by 2026. Assuming an average cost of \$60 per month per parking space, this translates into a direct capital cost of \$30 million for new parking annually! It is therefore important to consider a range of alternatives to accommodate transportation needs.

Consistent with the overall directions of the Regional MPS, key recommendations to improve transit options are as follows:

- Involve Metro Transit in site design decisions to ensure that transit needs are considered in advance of development.
- Expanding and improving regular transit services, particularly to under-served employment areas such as Burnside.
- Improve access to trunk transit services by improving feeder bus services and walking and cycling connections to park and ride lots.

### Promote Active Transportation

HRM approved its Active Transportation Plan (ATP) in 2006. This plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for improving conditions for walking and cycling in the region, both from an infrastructure perspective as well as a policy perspective. Amendments were made to the urban and suburban land use bylaws to include requirements for bicycle parking for new developments. The amendments are among the most progressive in Canada and include provisions such as a reduction in auto parking spaces (up to 10%), where sheltered bicycle parking and showers or clothes lockers are provided.

Building on the recommendations of the ATP, this parking strategy recommends expanding bicycle parking throughout the region and particularly at HRM-owned buildings and parking facilities.

One area where there is overlap between providing facilities for active transportation and ensuring sufficient parking is in corridors with on-street parking. Implementing bicycle lanes in some of the corridors identified in the ATP may require the elimination of on-street parking on one or both sides. Examples of these corridors include Connaught Avenue, Inglis Street, Windsor Street and Quinpool Road. In these cases, trade-offs need to be made to balance the desire to accommodate active transportation and the need to ensure parking for businesses and residents. As part of this Parking Strategy, a preliminary set of evaluation criteria has been developed which can be used by HRM in making such trade-offs. It is also recommended that residents and businesses along active transportation corridors have input into the final design, while recognizing the overarching goal of creating a series of AT corridors throughout the region. In some cases, more innovative techniques such as shared bike lanes or narrow bike lanes (1.2 metres vs the standard 1.5 metres) could be implemented to allow bike corridors to continue through constrained areas without affecting parking for businesses.

### Encouraging Ridesharing and TDM

Transportation demand management (TDM) is a set of strategic initiatives geared at improving the efficiency of the transportation network, encouraging alternatives to the single occupant vehicle trip and encouraging behavioural change. It also includes the use of policies, programs, services and products to influence whether, why, when and how people travel. Potential TDM initiatives range from incentive programs that encourage people to carpool or take transit, to regulatory and pricing measures. HRM is currently undertaking a Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan, one of five functional plans of the Transportation Master Plan.

Many people may not be aware that a landowner would need to charge about \$40 per month or \$0.50/hr to recover the construction costs for a surface parking space. This increases to \$120/month or \$1.50/hr for about grade parking structures and up to \$200/month or \$2.50/hr for below grade parking.

One recommendation included in this parking strategy that could be implemented in advance of the TDM plan includes the provision of dedicated parking space(s) in HRM surface lots for licensed van pools (e.g. Green Rider) as well as for car share vehicles (on an interim basis).

#### Parking Pricing

Though often controversial, charging for parking is one of the most effective ways to ensure its efficient use. In areas of high demand, parking should ideally be priced so that on average, spaces are 85% occupied. Charging for public parking also has been shown to reduce the amount of

complaints, since the action of paying for parking services alerts people to parking time limits and other restrictions.

Within HRM, parking is generally priced within the Capital District, but most parking outside of this area is free. Even within the Capital District there are a high number of employees who report receiving free parking. Ultimately, the cost of this parking is borne by employers, businesses or HRM.

As an overall direction, this parking strategy recommends moving towards a parking pricing system that better reflects the true cost of parking. Short-term recommendations in support of this objective would include:

- Continuing to price on-street parking in commercial areas according to demand while ensuring frequent turnover.
- Expanding the extent of parking pricing as appropriate and in consultation with business associations.
- Improving signage to better explain time restrictions and pricing.
- Providing discounts to fuel-efficient vehicles and high occupancy vehicles.

Over the longer term, the proposed strategy of reducing minimum parking requirements and implementing parking maximums in the centres will also help to create a market for priced parking.

## SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

### Update Parking Governance Structure

Within HRM, a number of distinct groups are responsible for various aspects of parking including on-street parking regulations (Transportation and Public Works), parking standards (Community Development) and revenue collection (Finance). The Real Property Division of Transportation and Public Works is responsible for HRM owned parking lots. Metro Transit is responsible for managing park and ride lots.

Unlike many other municipalities, there is no distinct parking department, nor does HRM have a parking authority or commission. As a result, the private sector plays a significant role in providing parking for the general public. This condition is advantageous in that the private sector tends to manage parking efficiently and price parking according to market rates. One disadvantage is that HRM has less control over issues such as signage and wayfinding and the design of parking facilities. The lack of a central department responsible for parking, also makes it more difficult to plan for and construct public parking, where required, to support the development of the centres in a form that is supportive of transit.

Several options were considered for the management of parking in HRM, including:

- Maintaining the status quo;
- Maintaining the status quo, in conjunction with a parking advisory committee;
- Establishing a parking corporation or parking authority;
- Establishing a distinct parking department or division;
- Establishing a Parking District (for specific areas); or
- Designating a Parking Manager.

A hybrid parking committee/parking manager model is recommended for HRM as an interim step towards evolving the parking system. The Parking Advisory Committee would act as a guide regarding parking-related issues and make recommendations to Council. It should consist of members of the public and stakeholders across HRM, such as business associations, universities and resident groups. The parking manager would be responsible for implementing policy and planning direction received from Council and coordinating efforts between the various municipal departments. This blended approach also allows departments that have particular expertise (such as public works) to continue to be responsible for aspects of the parking system that they are best suited to handle.

### Funding Parking Management and Development

There are a wide variety of fiscal tools available to support parking management. There can generally be grouped under three categories: i) user pricing; ii) financial incentives; and iii) parking taxes. All of these strategies are currently in place to some degree in HRM.

As a general strategy, it is recommended that the parking system is, at a minimum, financially sustainable. This means that the cost of constructing new parking should be recovered through user

fees or other revenue sources. In a broader sense, it also means that those who use or benefit from parking should bear most of the cost of constructing and maintaining parking.

Several potential funding approaches are outlined in the main report including:

- Implementing appropriate **user fees** for public parking (current practice in the Capital District).
- Implementing **parking tax reforms** which would more directly reflect the cost of parking (or impacts of parking) on the Region (e.g. commercial parking taxes, parking levies or stormwater management fees).
- Establishing a **fund** to allow HRM to direct revenues from the parking system to a dedicated fund.

The selection of the preferred strategy, or combination of strategies, is somewhat contingent on the outcome of the on-going HRM Tax reform process.

Any strategy would need to be implemented in a manner that would not affect regional competitiveness nor result in a more complex tax regime for businesses.

#### **Parking Payment Technology**

Parking revenue collection technology has implications for parking administration, use convenience, parking utilization, and costs and revenues, among other factors. HRM currently derives the vast majority of its parking revenue from on-street parking. At the present time, single space parking meters are used exclusively for on-street parking payment.

There are many existing and emerging technologies for on-street parking payment: pay and display machines, pay by cell phone or in car parking meters. Many cities have also implemented combinations of these technologies.

The preliminary recommended approach for on-street parking payment systems is to maintain the existing parking meters in the short term, and to make way for next generation technologies as they become more prevalent. In the interim, adding an option to pay by cell phone to existing parking meters is technically feasible and would serve to increase user convenience.

#### **Urban Design**

There is a desire among all stakeholders to significantly change the design of parking facilities throughout the region, focussing on treatments that reduce the environmental impacts of parking and provide improved amenities for pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders.

Approaches to parking lot design and location include:

- Locating surface lots behind buildings and inside city blocks to avoid large gaps in building and public realm continuity and orient building fronts towards the street;
- Ensuring architectural quality of parking structures;
- Providing clearly marked pedestrian aisles in surface parking lots;

- Designing parking facilities to provide as much barrier free access as possible in compliance with the Nova Scotia Barrier Free Standards; and
- Using low-impact development practices to reduce stormwater runoff from parking lots and remove pollutants and sediments on site.

## Implementation Considerations

The Regional Parking Strategy is intended to be a forward-looking plan that will guide decisions on parking over the next 25 years. The Parking Strategy presents a series of comprehensive recommendations to improve parking conditions in the downtown for consideration by HRM and other stakeholders. This program of strategies and actions would be carried out over the short, medium and longer term through further planning and budgeting processes.

An over-riding recommendation of this parking strategy is for HRM to recognize the many benefits of involving business owners, private developers, all business units and the public in decisions on parking. There are tremendous opportunities for growth in HRM and this parking strategy should be used as a guide to ensure that parking decisions are made so as to foster and promote new development in a manner that ensures the long term environmental, economic, and social sustainability of the region.

### SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

In effort to build capacity and gain momentum for the implementation of the full parking strategy, several short term actions are proposed:

- Hire a parking manager and develop a Parking Advisory Committee.
- Develop "model" parking standards for all of HRM, with active ground floor uses at street level.
- Implement pay by cell phone for on-street parking.
- Develop a parking portal through HRM's website.
- Modify on-street residential parking programs.
- Incorporate the recommended parking strategies into other functional plans and the overall Transportation Master Plan.

**Exhibit ES.3: Summary of Recommended Strategies and Implementing Actions**

Strategy	ID	Implementing Actions
<i>Strategies that Increase Parking Capacity and Efficiency</i>		
A.1 Revise Parking Zoning Standards	A.1.1	In the short term, adopt proposed adjustment factors as guidelines to be implemented by staff on a case-by-case basis. They should be formalized into the new land use zoning by-law.
	A.1.2	Implement changes to parking standards in conjunction with on-going reviews of zoning standards and the development of the centres plans, consistent with the proposed framework.
	A.1.3	Modify parking space dimension requirements for standard and accessible parking spaces.
	A.1.4	Adopt consistent set of mobility disabled parking standards across HRM.
A.2 Improve User Information	A.2.1	Work in partnership with the private sector to develop common formats, colours and logos for collective parking signage including directional signage, location/identification signage and wayfinding signage. Signage can be tailored to local business areas (e.g. Spring Garden Road, Quinpool Road, Downtown Dartmouth, etc.)
	A.2.2	Develop pedestrian oriented signage throughout existing and proposed Centres to direct pedestrians to/from parking areas
	A.2.3	Develop a parking portal through HRM's website to be a "one-stop-shop" for parking information. The portal should include information on publicly accessible parking, links to available monthly parking for commuters, parking maps, details on prices, regulations and fine payment, and future plans, among other relevant information.
	A.2.4	Establish a database of all public and private parking that can be used in developing the above materials.
	A.2.5	Develop improved signage for park and ride facilities that is clearly visible, and consistent with Metro Transit logos, particularly where such facilities are shared with other uses (e.g. Penhorn Mall).
A.3 Optimize On-street Parking Management	A.3.1	Continue to price on-street parking in commercial areas according to demand while ensuring frequent turnover through enforcement and pricing.
	A.3.2	In consultation with businesses, introduce parking pricing in busy commercial areas on evenings and weekends to discourage long-term parking and to ensure availability for visitors.
	A.3.3	Ensure priced on-street parking in HRM is patrolled several times daily to discourage violations, particularly in central Halifax.
	A.3.4	Provide enforcement officers with real-time wireless information and ticketing systems to automate enforcement and allow each officer to patrol a larger area.
	A.3.5	Offer "First Free Time" exemptions of parking infractions along with brochures explaining parking regulations.

Strategy	ID	Implementing Actions
	A.3.6	Improve signage to better explain on-street time restrictions and pricing.
	A.3.7	Develop promotional material to make employees in Downtown Halifax aware of the problems caused by "meter feeding" and available off-street parking options.
	A.3.8	Consider on-street parking in all new developments and street design projects, particularly in the Centes.
	A.3.9	Modify the Residential Parking Exemption program to be in line with the proposed changes detailed in the <b>Residential On-Street Parking Management Report</b> (based on the active management approach).
	A.3.10	Modify the Parking by Permit Only Program to be in line with the proposed changes detailed in the <b>Residential On-Street Parking Management Report</b> .
	A.3.11	Increase use of Parking by Permit Only Program in residential areas that have a high occurrence of employees using on-street parking.
	A.3.12	Increase enforcement of residential parking programs.
	A.1.13	Increase options for applying for and renewing permits and for obtaining visitor parking permits, including provisions for on-line application
A.4 Expand Municipally-Owned Public Parking Supply	A.4.1	Increase the role of HRM in providing public parking, particularly in the Centres where parking facilities can serve multiple users and destinations, thereby lowering overall parking supply required
	A.4.2	Locate and design public parking to establish transportation nodes, including transit and pedestrian connections
	A.4.3	Seek opportunities for additional municipally-owned public parking, particularly in Downtown Halifax.
	A.4.4	Consider the needs of tour bus parking in developing municipally-owned public parking.
<b>Strategies the Reduce Commuter Parking Demand</b>		
B.1 Improve Transit Options	B.1.1	Increase the involvement of Metro Transit in site design decisions, particularly in the Centres
	B.1.2	Expand and improve transit services, particularly with MetroLink extensions to suburban and rural areas (MetroX service).
	B.1.3	Improve access to trunk transit service through strategic park and ride expansions, improved feeder service, walking and cycling connections, and transit-oriented development.
	B.1.4	Support development of the proposed downtown shuttle service.
B.2 Promote Active Transportation	B.2.1	Provide bicycle lockers and other amenities (e.g. showers at office buildings, benches, etc.) throughout the Centres.
	B.2.2	Install additional secure bicycle parking facilities in municipally-owned parking lots and in key areas.



Strategy	ID	Implementing Actions
	B.2.3	Consider active transportation corridor needs in on-street parking design and regulation.
	B.2.4	Continue to promote integration of cycling with transit services (e.g. bicycle facilities at park and ride stations).
	B.2.5	Implement active transportation infrastructure and improvements as specified in the Active Transportation Plan.
B.3 Encourage Ridesharing and TDM	B.3.1	Provide preferential parking for licensed vanpools on HRM surface lots.
	B.3.2	Foster the development of car sharing.
	B.3.3	Promote and encourage the use of the on-line ridematching system, HRMSmartTrip.ca
	B.3.4	Expand, upgrade, and promote the network of carpool lots in HRM.
	B.3.5	Through the TDM Functional Plan, establish and support Transportation Management Associations (TMA's) to provide transportation and parking management services in specific areas.
B.4 Parking Pricing	B.4.1	Provide discounts to fuel-efficient vehicles and high-occupancy vehicles at public off-street lots.
	B.4.2	Require that parking costs be identified separately from occupancy costs in centres for both commercial and multi-unit residential developments.
	B.4.3	Develop a detailed parking plan for each centre identifying strategic parking locations, outlining how parking will be used to support transportation objectives and the steps to establish a market for priced parking, where feasible.
<b>Supporting Strategies</b>		
C.1 Updated Parking Governance Structure	C.1.1	Create a parking manager position with appropriate support staff to oversee parking and coordinate activities between relevant municipal departments.
	C.1.2	Create a Parking Advisory Committee and appoint members from across HRM including members of the public and key stakeholders.
C.2 Funding Parking Management and Development	C.2.1	Implement a stormwater management fee based on the amount of impermeable surface on a site (pending HRM tax reform review).
	C.2.2	Establish a mechanism to direct surplus parking revenues into a dedicated capital fund to support the development of TDM related projects, including the downtown shuttle.
	C.2.3	Develop a business plan for developing municipally-owned parking in Downtown Halifax, developing Centres and other commercial and transit corridors that incorporates parking planning, rate structure, funding with future development and transit/TDM investment, moving towards full cost recovery for publicly-owned parking.
C.3 Parking Payment Technology	C.3.1	Enhance existing single-space on-street meters with pay by cell phone technology.
	C.3.2	Adopt alternative revenue collection technologies for on-street parking in the future when existing equipment needs to be replaced and more innovative solutions are proven and more affordable.
	C.3.3	Move to pay-on-foot for all HRM operated, access-controlled lots.

Strategy	ID	Implementing Actions
	C.3.4	Implement pay-and-display for HRM -operated surface lots without access control.
	C.3.5	Consider proximity cards for monthly parkers in HRM-operated lots.
C.4 Urban Design	C.4.1	Develop educational material regarding good parking design and require parking facilities to consider key urban design issues (e.g. location, architecture, pedestrian facilities) during site plan approval process. This material should be incorporated into the land use bylaw.
	C.4.2	Provide direction regarding parking location and design in new form-based zoning for the Regional Centre.