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Item No. 1

**Halifax Regional Council
April 14, 2009**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Taso Koutroulakis, P.Eng., Deputy Traffic Authority

DATE: March 26, 2009

SUBJECT: Petition - Traffic Signals at Primrose/Victoria

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 10.2 raised at the March 3, 2009, meeting of Halifax Regional Council.

BACKGROUND

Councillor Smith presented a petition signed by 340 residents of District 9 requesting the lights at the crosswalk at Primrose and Victoria be made longer to enable residents time to safely cross the street, and that a crossing guard be present during school hours.

DISCUSSION

Signal Timing

Complaints received about the shortness of pedestrian 'Walk' signals at many wide, signalized intersections are common, but are almost always due to a misunderstanding of the way pedestrian signals are designed to work.

The pedestrian 'Walk' and 'Flashing Don't Walk' signal timings at the majority of signalized intersections in HRM are calculated to be consistent with a formula based on national traffic signal standards used by most cities and municipalities across Canada. At locations where pedestrian push buttons are provided, a 'Walk' signal is displayed for a minimum of 7 seconds to allow pedestrians to start crossing. At the end of the 'Walk' signal, the 'Flashing Don't Walk' signal is displayed. The 'Flashing Don't Walk' signal remains on long enough to allow even slow pedestrians who have already started to cross the road to safely complete their crossing before opposing traffic receives a green signal. Pedestrians who have not yet started to cross when the 'Flashing Don't Walk' signal comes on are not legally permitted to enter the crosswalk, but anyone already within the crosswalk has the legal right of way until they complete their crossing.

Regardless of how long the 'Walk' light is displayed, at some point, the 'Flashing Don't Walk' light (which is simply a clearance interval equivalent to the amber signal for drivers) must come on. When it does, there needs to be enough time provided for a pedestrian who has already taken a step into the crosswalk on the 'Walk' light to complete their crossing before opposing traffic gets a green light. Although pedestrians crossing during this 'Flashing Don't Walk' signal continue to have the legal right of way over turning vehicles, staff often receives complaints about sometimes obnoxious and unsafe behaviour on the part of turning drivers who do not understand that pedestrians already within the crosswalk when the signal display changes from 'Walk' to 'Flashing Don't Walk' are not "crossing against the light".

Crossing Guard

Subsequent to a request from Councillor Smith as a result of a recent pedestrian-vehicle collision, crossing guard program supervisors conducted pedestrian counts over the period of January 28-30, 2009 during school arrival and dismissal times in order to evaluate the need for a crossing guard at the signalized intersection of Victoria Road at Primrose Street. Observations confirmed that there were not enough elementary school-age children crossing at the intersection to justify assigning a crossing guard, and also that the existing overhead pedway nearby that was built specifically as a safer alternative route was well utilized, not only by elementary school children, but also by students from nearby John Martin Junior High School. It was noted that the pedway route from Harbourview Elementary School to Primrose Street was only a couple of minutes longer than the at-grade route and eminently safer.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

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.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

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

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Report approved by:

Supt Robin McNeil, HRP Shared Services, 490-4817