

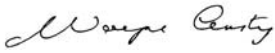


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Item No. 11.1.8

**Halifax Regional Council
July 7, 2009**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 23rd, 2009

SUBJECT: McNabs Island Trail

ORIGIN

An application for Regional Trails funding was received from the Friends of McNabs Island Society through the Halifax Regional Trails Association/HRM process.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Regional Council;

- 1) Approve a reduction in capital account CPX01196, Regional Trails Active Transportation in the amount of \$50,000.
- 2) Approve an increase to capital account CPX01185, New Parks and Playgrounds in the amount of \$50,000. The transfer will allow for Phase 1 development of a proper parks trail system on MacNabs Island.

BACKGROUND

MacNabs Island is a 400-hectare formally constituted Natural Environment Provincial Park with a Management Plan that was approved in 2005. It is located at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, contains significant cultural and historical features and attracts roughly 20,000 visitors per year. The Friends of McNabs Island Society is a registered charity that has been incorporated under the Societies Act since 1990. The Society is dedicated to preserving and protecting the island park and has managed the system of trails on McNabs Island for over a decade through agreements with the provincial and federal governments that own the island.

The Friends of McNabs Island Society became a member of the Halifax Regional Trails Association two years ago, in an attempt to advance their knowledge and understanding of trail planning and development. Trail maintenance is a volunteer activity on the island and a key component of the Society's mandate.

After participating regularly at HRTA meetings, the Society submitted a trails proposal at the October deadline. The proposal addressed in detail HRTA's capital funding criteria for community trail projects including active transportation and connectivity. The focus of the proposal is to upgrade the main Garrison Road, the old military road on the island which is in significant disrepair. Garrison Road stretches from the Landing Site on the eastern side of the island, which is accessible by boat from Eastern Passage, to Fort McNab National Historic Site in the south end of the island. The road then runs the full length of the island going past Garrison Pier, which is the main landing site for boats from Halifax and Purcell's Cove, and extends to Fort Ives in the north end of the island. It forms the backbone trail corridor for the island to which all other trails connect.

The Friends of McNabs Island Society is proposing to work on rebuilding trails on McNabs Island in 2009-2010. Work would begin first on the main Garrison Road corridor trail that runs the length of the island. This trail is an old military road that needs extensive work. There are several culverts that need to be repaired and work is needed on the section of the trail that is adjacent to McNabs Cove. This area suffered extensive damage during Hurricane Juan when beach cobble was thrown up on the trail during the storm.

One element related to trail development on McNabs Island which is considered atypical is the potential for elevated construction costs. Past experience with tendering projects on the island have resulted in additional costs for accessing equipment and materials.

The Friends of McNabs Island have an approved trail plan for McNabs Island that was prepared by the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources. The Province of Nova Scotia committed \$70,000 through the Facilities Development Program to the McNabs Island trail project. The McNabs Island Society is also making application to the NS Trails Federation and the National Trails Coalition for matching Federal capital funding, thereby leveraging any municipal contribution. No commitments have been received prior to writing this report.

DISCUSSION

While the project is certainly worthy and supported by HRTA, the critical program consideration in considering the McNabs application within the Regional Trails budget is program consistency. Limited financial resources are dedicated to delivering active transportation elements of the system in the most effective manner possible.

Approximately 30% of the Regional Trails Network is complete. However, there are major gaps in the regional trails system that connect communities and represent the funding priorities. The goal is to make the off-road trail network a continuous system. Without a focus on filling the present gaps in the system, the network will function as a fragmented system. As a result the ability of HRM to build consistency for active transportation is restricted. The ability to double active transportation user trips over the next decade depends to a large extent on creating continuity and connectiveness in the network. McNabs plays very little role in overall regional continuity for AT. McNabs Island trails can connect the trails in Eastern Passage to the future Halifax Urban Greenway as well as to trails in Purcell's Cove via water access. However, under HRM's definition of active transportation as outlined in the Active Transportation Plan, the McNabs Island trails only meet the requirements for active recreation and do not provide opportunities for active commuting, active workplace travel or active destination trips.

Much of the discussion associated with the McNabs proposal with the Halifax Regional Trails Association and HRTA's Capital Funding Committee centred on the merits of the proposal and a lack of clarity as to whether the project would be supported through the Trails Budget. Clearly the proposal contains substantial public merit, particularly from a recreational, education and tourism destination perspective. The question is whether it is a Parks proposal or a Regional Trails proposal. HRM staff have been consistent over the years in that trail projects which develop looping trail systems within a park are park projects. Linear trails which connect communities and other destinations qualify as Regional Trails projects. Staff can cite several instances where park projects have been refused or transferred to the Parks Capital budget and several instances where HRM has funded AT trails which move people directly through municipal and provincial parks but not those that create loops within the park. Without this consistent divide the park requests would consume the Regional Trails/AT budget. In this case a lack of communication and understanding led to a two year participation by the Friends of McNabs on HRTA prior to making an application. Given the merits of the project, the leveraging ability of the HRM contribution and the earnest efforts of the McNabs volunteers, staff and HRTA are willing to recommend the transfer of \$50,000 from the Regional Trails Budget to the Parks Capital Budget on a one time basis.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Monies will continue to be administered through the IAM Capital Budget and matching cost sharing commitments with other funding partners remains feasible. The budget availability has been confirmed by Financial Services.

Budget Summary: Account No. CPX01196 - Regional Trails Active Transportation

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Cumulative Unspent Budget | \$738,700 |
| Less: Transfer | <u>\$ 50,000</u> |
| New Balance CPX01196 | \$688,700 |

Account No. CPX01185 - New Parks and Playgrounds

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Cumulative Unspent Budget | \$943,600 |
| Add: Transfer | <u>\$ 50,000</u> |
| New Balance CPX01185 | \$993,600 |

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

Council not approve the recommendation and the funds remain with the Regional Trails Program and be administered as part of the Halifax Regional Trails association's community allocation.

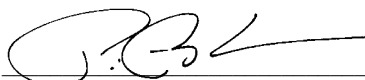
ATTACHMENTS

None

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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