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Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
April 27, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Phil Townsend".

Phil Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

DATE: March 23, 2010

SUBJECT: **Maintaining/Clearing Key Urban Park Walkways on Year Round Basis**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

On Tuesday, December 8, 2009, Councillor Jim Smith requested a report from "Public Works on the issue of maintaining/clearing key urban park walkways on a year round basis. I would like to have the report address the costs involved so it can be discussed at budget time."

BACKGROUND

The Active Transportation plan envisages a connected and fully integrated on and off-road Regional AT trail network linking communities, neighborhoods and key commercial and institutional destinations. It will provide safe, economical, convenient and aesthetically pleasing alternative transportation opportunities integrated into the daily lives of our citizens. The goal is to double active transportation trips within ten years. The overall network is expected to develop over a twenty year period.

The designated off-road, active transportation network in the HRM's urban core is represented by four primary, greenway corridors linked together by a central loop around Peninsula Halifax. The four major spines are, 1) St. Margarets Bay, Beechville/Lakeside/Timberlea/ Chain of Lakes Rail trail, 2) Lawrencetown/Cole Harbour/Eastern Passage Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail, 3) Shubenacadie Canal Greenway corridor, from Waverley to Halifax Harbour and 4) Sackville/Bedford Connector. Additional important AT corridors include the Linear Parkway linking Clayton Park to Bedford West and Chain Lakes Trail, Portland Hills and Lakes network connecting to the Dartmouth Harbourfront and Feely Lake, Second Lake, Little Sackville River Loop. See Concept Plan Map attached.

Connecting to these corridors are a series of planned local routes which connect to major destinations and neighborhoods, thus creating a complete network of primary, secondary and tertiary AT trails. Together with on street bike lanes and sidewalks, these provide a network for Active Transportation. Over the past decade the Regional Trails Program, with Council's assistance, has focused on deliverable trail sections within the primary corridors. AT trails can travel through parks and contribute to active transportation. However, not all park trails form part of the primary off-road AT network.

Within the AT network, there are currently sections in various stages of completion, gaps and obstacles with no activity underway, sections under construction and sections in the planning stages. Substantial commitment from the volunteer and corporate sectors in combination with partnership from senior levels of government has resulted in much work being completed. Note the dark red lines on the map (Attachment A). Over two hundred and fifty kilometers of trails have been developed to date region wide, much of it in the rural areas. These have no winter maintenance.

The preferred urban/suburban active transportation trail standard for winter maintenance is 3.5 to 4 metres wide with a paved asphalt surface in areas which anticipate five hundred users or more per day.

Currently, in the urban core just a few sections of the overall system are paved and meet active transportation standards for year- round use. An asphalt surface is the basic requirement necessary for effective winter maintenance. Sections which meet the AT standard are a six kilometer section of the Shubenacadie Canal Greenway Corridor along Lake Banook, a newly constructed one kilometer section of the Halifax Urban Greenway along Beaufort Avenue, four kilometers of the Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail between Alderney Landing and the Woodside Ferry and four kilometer section of the Liner Parkway. These sections total approximately fourteen kilometers, and are considered an urban AT standard, therefore snow is cleared. The Linear Parkway in Clayton Park is an exception to the rule. It is maintained for winter use as a direct route linking 20,000 persons to three schools. It is 4m wide however it is not paved.

Regional Trails Staff have been working with Operations personnel to ensure long term sustainability of the network. A service delivery model for maintenance and operations of the primary corridors includes capital and maintenance agreements between HRM and community trail associations.

The majority of the park (non AT) trail network has been developed to a two to three (3) metre wide compacted crusher dust standard. Trails which flow through the 330 urban parks are maintained by Operations but do not receive winter maintenance. The exceptions are certain portions of Shubie Park and Point Pleasant Park and designated AT trail sections which travel through public parks. These “loop trails” which, in effect, deliver the park experience are not considered part of the regional trails network and are not plowed and salted.

DISCUSSION

Determining which AT trails receive winter maintenance can be difficult. Staff have developed the following approach to give them guidance:

The Regional Trails AT system is developed through building of new trail routes and recapitalization of existing trails to bring them to an AT standard. As each trail is constructed and designated as part of the active transportation network it is assigned a maintenance schedule which, depending on its status as a primary, secondary or tertiary trail, can include snow removal and salting. The class of trail is reflective of the level of use and contribution it makes in meeting municipal active transportation objectives. Currently just 14 kms of trail in the urban areas have been assigned this designation and are plowed and salted. These are all on primary AT trails which has been the focus for construction in the urban core. More are added each year as the next segment in the primary trail network is added or improved.

**Maintaining/Clearing Key Urban Park - 4 -
Walkways on Year Round Basis
Council Report**

April 27, 2010

At this time the focus is on the construction of primary AT trail routes. Secondary and tertiary AT trails are developed in the network as priority, opportunity and budget allow. Upon designation these secondary trails will also be given a level of winter maintenance reflective of their use and municipal budgets. To be designated and assigned a winter maintenance schedule, a secondary trail must either link significant populations into a primary AT trail with winter maintenance or connect a significant population to another established form of public transportation such as a park and ride. The first secondary trail to be designated for winter maintenance will likely be the Portland Hills trail being constructed in 2010. This trail will connect 5000 residents in Portland Estates and Portland Hills with the Metro Link Transit Station and eventually the Woodside Ferry and Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail.

The cost per km of AT standard trail for snow clearing is \$7000 per kilometer.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications to this report.

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.

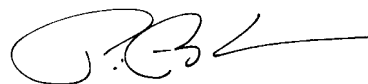
ATTACHMENTS

1) Urban off-road trails map.

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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