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Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
June 8, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ken Reashor".

Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Acting Director, Transportation & Public Works

DATE: May 18, 2010

SUBJECT: Future Potential Harbour Crossing Location

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

A presentation was made to Halifax Regional Council at its March 25, 2008 meeting, item 9.3.1, by the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission [now Halifax Harbour Bridges (HHB)] regarding the Cross-Harbour Traffic Needs Assessment. Regional Council passed a motion directing staff to prepare a report on the municipal perspective as it related to the presentation coming back to an in-camera session or Committee of the Whole.

BACKGROUND

Integration of regional transportation projects and policy have been dealt with by the Strategic Joint Regional Transportation Committee (SJRTC) since its inception in 2006. Staff developed a response to Cross Harbour Traffic Needs Assessment in the context of the HRM Regional Plan and other regional transportation planning initiatives in consultation with this Committee.

DISCUSSION

The Cross-Harbour Traffic Needs Assessment included a number of technical analyses including a projection of future traffic demands on the harbour bridges using growth scenarios and other assumptions from the HRM Regional Plan. The study suggested that, using the aggressive targets set in the Regional Plan for the shifting of trips to transit, an additional harbour crossing will be needed by 2026. This is more or less consistent with the modeling undertaken for the Regional Plan which indicated that a new harbour crossing would not be required within the 25 year horizon (to 2026) of the plan, but would be required just beyond that horizon. The Needs Assessment challenged the ability of HRM to meet its transit modal split targets and showed that a less aggressive assumption of transit shift would result in the bridges exceeding their capacity in a time frame of five to ten years.

SJRTC continues to work actively on projects and policies that help to increase the percentage of trips that use sustainable modes of transportation such as transit, bicycle, walking and ridesharing. We believe that effort and investment in these areas will help us to delay, or possibly avoid, the need for major roadway and bridge projects such as this. Nevertheless, we believe the HRM, HHB and Nova Scotia Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal (NSTIR) must continue to keep themselves in a position where infrastructure needed to manage future vehicle demands are understood and where opportunities to implement these facilities with minimal disruption to the lands on which they are located are minimized. Preserving corridors for such facilities, for example, does not lock us into constructing any specific facility, but does ensure that if it must be constructed in the future, steps have been taken to facilitate that.

Prior to the completion of the Needs Assessment, there was an appreciation that regional growth would eventually necessitate a third crossing of the harbour, but no understanding of where that crossing would be best located. At some of the possible locations for harbour crossing, measures have been taken, and may continue to be taken, to preserve it as a viable crossing location “just in case”. The benefit of having the best crossing location identified and agreed to, means not only that efforts can be channeled into preserving the viability of that location, but that similar efforts can now be abandoned at what were previously other potential locations.

In summary, by endorsing the Highway 111 crossing location, Regional Council is not committing to a bridge or tunnel necessarily being constructed, or diminishing ongoing efforts to maximize the number of cross-harbour trips being made by more sustainable modes of travel. By endorsing the crossing location, Regional Council allows HHB and HRM to take the steps necessary to ensure that future development will complement, and not interfere with, a future ability to construct this crossing if deemed necessary.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate budget implications with this report. The cost of any short-term measures needed to secure the opportunity to construct a crossing at the Woodside locations rests with Halifax Harbour Bridges (HHB). In the future, should construction of the crossing be contemplated, negotiation will need to be undertaken between HHB and HRM regarding the connection of the crossing to the municipal street network.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A Highway 111 Woodside Bridge Option
Attachment B Highway 111 Woodside Tunnel Option

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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