

Item No. 11.1.3
Halifax Regional Council
November 2, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

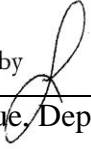
Original Signed by



SUBMITTED BY:

Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by



Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 8, 2010

SUBJECT: Halifax Cycling Coalition Petition - Cross Town Connector Proposal

ORIGIN

At the July 6, 2010 Regional Council meeting, Councillor Watts presented a petition on behalf of the Halifax Cycling Coalition (HCC) with 1,418 signatures in support of “the installation of an active transportation corridor in the form of a bike lane that connects South End Halifax to the North End and (eventually) Bedford” and supports the planning and implementation of the corridor by the end of year 2011 (Item 9.2.3).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to pursue the implementation of a Cross Town Connector bike lane on the Halifax peninsula by completing their evaluation of potential routes and bringing the matter back to Regional Council following public consultation, and discussion and recommendation by the Active Transportation Advisory Committee and Peninsula Community Council.

BACKGROUND

The petition presented to HRM Council by the Halifax Cycling Coalition (HCC), the “Cross Town Connector Proposal” encourages the municipality to stripe bicycle lanes on one north-south corridor on the Halifax peninsula by 2011. According to its website, the Halifax Cycling Coalition is a 250 member organization of concerned citizens formed in 2007 who are “dedicated to improving cycling conditions and raising awareness of cycling issues in the Halifax Regional Municipality”.

In addition to the petition submitted, the HCC has prepared a report which is available online at www.cyclehalifax.ca/ which describes the rationale for the petition and puts forward a proposed route for consideration as the “Cross Town Connector”. The proposed route extends from the Fairview Interchange in the north along Windsor Street to Almon Street; east on Almon Street to Agricola Street; south on Agricola Street and North Park Street; then along Trollope Street/Ahern Avenue (a one-way pair) to Bell Road, and finally on South Park Street to Inglis Street (Attachment #1). The proposed route seeks to link and extend two sections of existing on-road bicycle lanes.

The HRM Active Transportation (AT) Plan identifies a number of roads which are priority routes for establishing on-street bicycle facilities, and includes all the streets put forward by the HCC in its Cross Town Connector Proposal. As such, the proposal and petition are very much in line with Council approved policy in the AT Plan.

DISCUSSION

To date, only a small fraction of the roads identified in the AT Plan have been evaluated for the development of bicycle lanes due to staffing and budgetary constraints, resulting in a fragmented on-street bicycle network. The number of persons using Active Transportation in HRM will be less than it could be until the bicycle network is fully connected. Therefore connecting these fragments is an operational priority for staff to ensure the policy directives of Council are implemented. From this perspective, encouraging the municipality to focus on the creation of at least one, connected peninsula bike lane, should represent an achievable goal.

Before this petition was submitted, staff in Traffic and Right of Way Services had already identified this goal as a priority because a reasonably high density of residences and workplaces within a relatively small area on the peninsula make it an ideal location to encourage bicycle use through the improvement of infrastructure. Staff has already begun a technical evaluation of some peninsula streets with a view to creating connected on-street cycle routes. Staff will ensure that an assessment of the route proposed by the HCC in the Crosstown Connector Proposal is given consideration among the alternate routes to be evaluated. Staff will be able to determine where the installation of a bicycle lane would be most appropriate and feasible once the evaluation is complete.

One of the challenges to implementing a bicycle lane on many of the streets identified in the AT Plan is the presence of on-street parking. According to the AT Plan “on proposed bikeway routes in the Halifax Region where on-street curb parking exists, an assessment should be undertaken to determine whether the parking can be removed or relocated.” (Technical Recommendation #35, Appendix E)

The HRM Regional Parking Strategy, approved in principle by Council on February 24, 2009, echoes this approach: “Implementing bicycle lanes in some of the corridors identified in the AT Plan may require the elimination of on-street parking on one or both sides.”... “In these cases, tradeoffs need to be made to balance the desire to accommodate active transportation and the need to ensure parking for businesses and residents.” ... “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.” (Page ES11).

Following the completion of a technical review of several proposed routes, staff intend to carry out a public consultation program which will notify affected stakeholders of the potential changes to road allocation, as well as seek feedback which may serve to fine-tune and improve the proposal. Since the removal of at least some on-street parking is very likely to be required to implement continuous bicycle lanes, the matter will be brought back to Council for a decision on whether or not to proceed, once the analysis and consultation is complete.

Proposed Work Plan

Phase I: Preliminary Analysis

Staff will complete data collection and analysis over the remainder of summer and early fall. More detail about this process can be found in Attachment #2. The information gathered will be used as a starting point for public engagement to be conducted in the late fall.

Phase II: Public/Stakeholder Engagement and Policy Framework

The details regarding the type of consultation have not been finalized as yet, but consultation will follow principles in HRM's Community Engagement Strategy and will be determined through discussions with district Councillors. It is anticipated, however, that public input will be obtained through direct discussion with some stakeholder groups as well as abutting land users, and with the general public through public meeting(s). A communication plan will be developed to educate and inform stakeholders prior to consultation. The HRM web-site will also be used to disseminate and receive information.

The purpose of this phase of the work will be to get feedback which will help staff assess and mitigate any negative effects of implementing an AT corridor, as well as to achieve some level of understanding of which routes may be most preferred by the public.

Phase III: Preliminary Report to Councils

Staff will prepare a report to summarize the technical overview and public engagement. The

report will be presented to the Peninsula Community Council and the Active Transportation Advisory Committee for review and recommendation to Regional Council for endorsement. At this point completion of this report is anticipated for Winter 2011. Actual implementation of the proposed route will be subject to the annual capital budget review process. Implementation may also be subject to certain operational constraints, for example repainting of pavement markings may need to wait until the next road resurfacing can be done.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Analysis of the proposal can be carried out by regular staff through regular operating budgets. Should Council decide to proceed with implementation of a Cross Town Connector bike lane budgets may need to be approved for implementation of capital improvements.

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.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement will be undertaken in the manner described above in the "Discussion" section.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council may direct staff not to pursue the implementation of a connected on-street bicycle lane on the Halifax Peninsula. This alternative is not recommended, as it would not be consistent with goals set out in the Active Transportation Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment #1: HCC Proposed Route for the Cross Town Connector
- Attachment #2: Details of Proposed Work Plan

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.

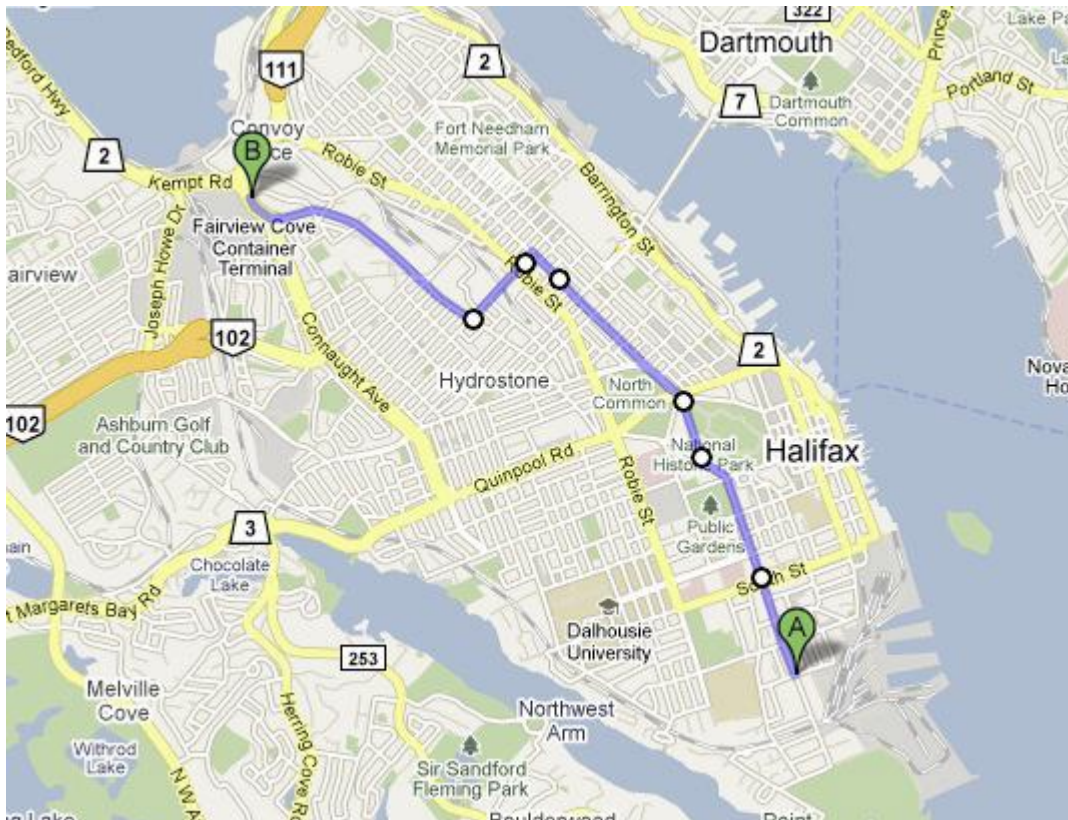
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Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Director of Transportation and Public Works, 490-4855

Attachment #1
Route Proposed by the Halifax Cycling Coalition for the Cross Town Connector



Attachment # 2 Cross Town Connector Evaluation

The following information must be collected along all streets identified for the potential installation of bicycle lanes:

1. Street width; traffic signs (e.g. parking; no parking; loading zones); driveway curb cuts, bus stops, fire hydrants, crosswalks, pavement markings and anything else which influences use of the street.
2. If parking must be removed on one or both sides of the street to install a bike lane, staff will also carry out:
 - a survey of adjacent uses and their access to off-street parking;
 - a survey of how heavily used on-street parking is;
 - a determination of the availability of other nearby parking to support adjacent land uses, e.g. municipal lots, private lots, or other nearby on street parking.
3. Bicycle Counts will be done to determine which routes are currently used or not among the alternate routes to be evaluated.

The information collected will be used to analyze various routes to determine where a bike lane would be most appropriate and feasible. Analyses undertaken will look at:

1. Options to mitigate any negative effects of loss of on-street parking.
2. Options to shift the route off the street (onto nearby parkland for example).
3. Public and stakeholder feedback on proposed routes and effects.
4. Consultation with relevant HRM departments and Committees of Council as needed (Planning and Development Services; Regional Trails, Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee, Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, etc.).
5. Cost estimate and phasing plan for implementation.

Staff will formulate a recommendation for consideration by the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, Peninsula Community Council, and ultimately Regional Council based on the outcome of this process.