

Item No. 1
Halifax Regional Council
January 18, 2011

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Director, Transportation and Public Works

DATE: December 21, 2010

SUBJECT: Bedford Traffic Safety Petition

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report originates with a 210 signature petition submitted by Councillor Outhit during Regional Council's September 14, 2010 session (Item 10.2.2).

BACKGROUND

The petition submitted requests HRM to make general improvements to traffic safety in the community of Bedford. Each of the issues raised is addressed in the discussion section of this report.

DISCUSSION

Each of the points raised in the petition is addressed below. Because the points raised are general in nature, the response is likewise general, however, specific examples have been provided to illustrate some of HRM's recent actions.

1. *"That Halifax Regional Municipality give consideration to installing safety improvements relating to the usage of bicycles in the Community of Bedford"*

HRM recognizes that improvements for active transportation, including bicycle infrastructure, need to be made. Regional Council approved an Active Transportation plan (the 'AT' Plan) in 2006 which provides direction for improvements to bike lanes, trails, sidewalks and other infrastructure to support human powered mobility.

Specific to the community of Bedford, several improvements have been made in recent years for cyclists, including the provision of bike lanes and trails:

a/ Bicycle lanes are continuous for almost 6 kilometers along the Bedford Highway from Kearney Lake Road to Meadowbrook Drive. This is the longest continuous stretch of bicycle lanes in HRM.

b/ Trails. HRM, in partnership with the Sackville River Association, planned and developed an AT Greenway Trail from Bedford Place Mall to Lynn Court. For the first time this created a safe cycling route between the communities of Bedford and Sackville. Additional AT Trails are also being developed at First and Second Lakes which link commercial, residential and institutional elements in the community.

2. *"More action needs to be taken on behalf of the government to improve road safety, not only for cyclists but also for pedestrians and motorists"*

In general, HRM Transportation and Public Works staff considers protecting the safety of all road users, (including pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, motorists, buses, transit passengers, etc.) as their highest priority. Action is taken on a daily basis to improve road safety by fixing potholes, resurfacing pavements, clearing snow and debris, installing sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, upgrading signals, painting lane markings, installing, maintaining, and replacing signs and signals, policing the streets, and more. HRM puts great effort into evaluating priorities and maximizing return on investment, while working within our fiscal capabilities.

In addition to the new bicycle lanes and trails listed above, many new sections of sidewalk have been built in Bedford in the last five years:

- Bedford Highway (at the intersection at Isleview Lane)
- Shore Drive (Fort Sackville to Wardour)
- Eaglewood Drive (Peregrine to Golf Links)
- Basinview Drive (Oakridge to Horizon)

- Sullivans Hill (Bedford Highway to Church d/w)
 - Shore Drive (Fort Sackville to Fish Hatchery)
3. *“Improving safety and reducing frequent collisions and near-collisions will not only increase the number of cyclists in our community but also make our community better as a whole”*

HRM staff is not aware of any evidence to suggest that collisions in the community of Bedford are frequent or any more frequent in that community than anywhere else. Near collisions may be impossible to define and since they are typically not reported, staff is not able to comment on this matter.

4. *“The government of HRM should require all major roads in our community to have bicycle lanes installed where possible along their entire length within ten years”*

The Active Transportation plan identifies streets that should be reviewed as candidates for on-road cycling infrastructure. In Bedford these streets are limited to:

- The section of the *Bedford Highway* described above. Bicycles lanes are nearly complete here;
- *Hammonds Plains Road*. While some bike lanes have been built west of Highway #102, east of the highway site conditions may limit the ability to easily accomplish bike lanes;
- *Shore Drive*. This street does not require bicycle lanes because low motor vehicle speed and volume allow it to be simply signed as a bike route; and
- *Rocky Lake Road*. Sections of Rocky Lake Road may be good candidates for paved shoulder bike lanes, however detailed investigation remains to be done.

In addition to these, HRM staff expects an AT link to be considered when the Highway #107 connector is built. In this case, an off-road multi-use trail separated from highway traffic would be preferred over on-street bicycle lanes.

5. *“Initiate consultations with cycling associations and the public at large regarding traffic and safety concerns”*

Bicycling groups are already engaged with HRM through the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, (ATAC) whose members include Bicycle Nova Scotia, the Halifax Cycling Coalition, the Ecology Action Centre TRAX (transportation) program, and the Halifax Regional Trails Association. These groups attend regular monthly meetings with staff and three members of Council to receive updates and provide direction for the advancement of AT in HRM. Minutes of ATAC meetings are posted online at: www.halifax.ca/boardscom/ActiveTransportationAdvisoryCommittee.html and anyone is welcome to make presentations to the Committee.

While consultation may be carried out in relation to specific projects planned in a community, or for general plan reviews such as the Bedford Waterfront Visioning and the

upcoming Regional Plan review, staff do not typically carry out consultation on broad issues such as ‘traffic’ or ‘safety’. These subjects may be included in town hall style meetings organized from time-to-time by area Councillors. Carrying out broad, unspecific consultation as this petition calls for may not be the most effective use of residents’ time and as such may be contrary to the direction in HRM’s Community Engagement Strategy.

6. *“Give cycling infrastructure improvements as equal treatment as motorized vehicle and pedestrian oriented infrastructure improvements”*

HRM Council makes decisions on how to spend the municipal budget based on the priorities they hear from their constituents and the advice of their staff. There have been improvements in Active Transportation spending over the past decade.

7. *“Promote and advocate the education of cyclist’s rights and responsibilities”*

HRM promotes cycling through its Regional Plan: “active healthy lifestyles can be achieved when walking, cycling or other active transportation modes are incorporated into everyday activities”. Staff has translated this statement into action through initiatives such as the HRM Bicycle Route Map which is free and includes information on rights and responsibilities; Bike Week, an annual celebration including events which educate cyclists and motorists; and annual safety campaigns including TV and bus shelter ads which have included promotion of safe night-time riding, avoiding common car/bike collisions, crosswalk safety, and more. Staff continues to be involved in such initiatives.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As stated in the report, engagement with the community is already provided through the Active Transportation Advisory Committee. The five-year review of the Active Transportation Plan is planned for this year and further community engagement will be part of that project.

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

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.

Report Prepared by: Hanita Koblents, Active Transportation Coordinator, 490-8474

Report Approved by: David McCusker, P.Eng., Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, 490-6696

Original Signed