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**Item No. 2**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**January 18, 2011**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by Director  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phillip Townsend, Director, Infrastructure & Asset Management

**DATE:** January 5, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Motorized Use of Rails to Trails Corridors in HRM

### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

Councillor Reg Rankin requested a report on the use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) on Rails to Trails Corridors.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The development of a public trail network in HRM is a partnership between the twenty three community trail organizations, under the umbrella of the Halifax Regional Trails Association, the Halifax Regional Municipality, and the Province of Nova Scotia (in particular the Office of Health Promotion and the Department of Natural Resources).

Trail corridor networks involve both private lands and public lands from all three levels of government. The first regional trails to be developed were the former rail corridors acquired by the Province for trail use throughout the Province. In HRM, the Municipality has been the primary funding contributor and coordinator in the development of these rails to trails corridors, primarily in an effort to develop a region wide active transportation network. The Province of Nova Scotia, as the rail corridor owner, has favoured a multi-use trail approach which accommodates non-motorized (walking, biking, horseback) and motorized (ATV's, Off Road Motorcycles) access along the former rail lines. In some areas this has worked well. In other areas there have been conflicts created by motorized use including noise in proximity to homes, late night use, unsafe behavior, destruction of trail beds and other infrastructure. The community groups, who manage, build and maintain the trails on behalf of the public, have felt caught in the middle as the conflicts often pit one user against another and reduce support for their work in their communities.

## **DISCUSSION**

HRM staff, along with staff of the Office of Health Promotion and Department of Natural resources, has been meeting in a series of facilitated sessions to determine where the Provincial multi-use approach might be altered in recognition of some of the unique circumstances found in HRM.

The sessions to date have focused on identification of the issues, separation of emotions from facts and development of a series of maps, to demonstrate where the conflicts have occurred, and the physical types of communities that coincide with those conflicts.

The joint team has reached a stage where it is clear that there are areas where motorized vehicles should not be permitted on the Rails to Trails corridors, owing to density of development and number of non-motorized users on the trails. However, at the outer edge of these areas there is a “grey zone” where outright prohibition may not be the best solution. The preferred approach in these areas is to engage the community in a decision making process. To that end, a sub team has been formed to develop a process for decision making which will involve all communities of interest. The terms of reference can be found as Attachment A. The Beechville/Lakeside/Timberlea (BLT) Rails to Trails corridor has been chosen as the pilot case for investigation and development of a decision making process. It is expected that the pilot decision making process will take about four months to develop, beginning in January.

Once completed, the entire approach to motorized use of Regional Trails will be brought to Council and to Provincial Cabinet for presentation and discussion. The hoped for result will be an agreement between the Province and HRM on Provincially owned Multi-Use Trails in HRM.

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications at this point.

## **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**

The community of motorized and non-motorized trail users, as well as adjacent land owners and interested citizens, will be engaged as part of this process.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Terms of Reference – Multi-Use Trail Community Engagement Sub-Team

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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: Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning, IAM – 490-6047

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## HRM/Province of NS Abandoned Rail Corridor Project Team Terms of Reference

### Purpose

The ARC Project Team is responsible to develop a recommended process, using the Beechville/Lakeside/Timberlea Trail as a case study, through which governments and communities will determine the use of an abandoned rail corridor within HRM.

### Background

The Project Team is being established as a component of a larger process that has been underway since the fall of 2009 in response to a request from HRM to address questions related to the co-management of ARCs within the HRM. The purpose of this larger process was to develop a collaborative vision for the ARCs within HRM. The process included the need to better understand roles and responsibilities and identify areas of agreement and outstanding issues. Staff of HRM, Natural Resources and Health Promotion and Protection have been meeting for the past year to establish a common language and understanding around ARC issues and opportunities.

As a starting point for discussion, *DNR, HPP and HRM have come to agreement on, or are willing to move forward with the understanding that ARCs are suitable for shared use for a variety of environmental, social and fiscal reasons except under certain conditions.* Recently, the process has focused on developing criteria using a mapping approach to define and identify areas within HRM where those conditions exist.

### Deliverables

- Prepare a project management plan and communications plan with recommended key messages
- Develop tools and/or mechanisms to inventory and analyze issues, identify gaps (and approaches to fill those gaps) related to usage of the ARC in HRM, using the BLT Trail as a case study
- Develop a process that would provide clear direction to community-based organizations on how to work with governments and their communities to make decisions on the use of ARCs as trails and AT corridors
- Recommend thresholds (tipping points) for quantifying community agreement or lack of agreement on the use of an ARC
- Propose a progression of management approaches including but not limited to education, enforcement, restrictions and prohibition of use that would be implemented in response to specific thresholds (tipping points) of community agreement or lack of agreement on the use of an ARC

### Members (to be confirmed)

Halifax Regional Municipality – Annette Verge  
Natural Resources – Sandy Anderson  
Health Promotion and Protection – Dawn Stegen

### Accountability

Committee of Directors (Peter Bigelow, Allan Eddy, Rick Gilbert)

### Significant Milestones

Mid January – Key messages and talking points  
End of January – Recommended project plan and communications plan  
TBD based on Project Plan – Final report and recommendations