

Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
February 8, 2011

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by Director

Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Director, Transportation and Public Works

DATE: January 10, 2011

SUBJECT: Highway 2 Speed Limit

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report originates with a 64 signature petition submitted by Councillor Dalrymple during Regional Council's November 16, 2010 session.

BACKGROUND

The petition requests a speed limit reduction from 70 km/h to 50 km/h on Highway 2 from Fall River to Wellington.

DISCUSSION

Highway 2 is an arterial roadway, connecting to Highway 102 in Fall River and Enfield. The speed limit on Highway 2 is 60 km/h through most of Fall River, changing to 70 km/h just north of Fall River Road. This 70 km/h limit continues to a point approximately 700 metres north of Sunnylea Road in Wellington, where it changes to 80 km/h. The Province maintains Highway 2 north of Sunnylea Road.

The area in question is approximately five kilometres in length from the beginning of the 70 km/h zone (just south of Fletcher Drive in Fall River) to Sunnylea Road in Wellington, and encompasses the entire stretch of Highway 2 through Fletchers Lake. The area was studied as a whole, as well as two homogeneous segments – Fletcher Drive to Holland Road and Holland Road to Sunnylea Road. Traffic counts obtained in 2009 and 2010 indicate an average volume of approximately 7000 vehicles per day travelling the section between Fletcher Drive and Holland Road. North of Holland Road, there are approximately 4700 vehicles per day. Speed studies conducted in November, 2009, between Coach Avenue and Howe Avenue indicate an average speed of 69 km/h. A common practice used by traffic engineers to determine the correct speed limit for a road is called the 85th percentile. Studies have indicated that 85% of all drivers will drive at a reasonable and prudent rate of speed. The 85th percentile at this location is 78 km/h, meaning that 85% of drivers were travelling at or below 78 km/h. North of Holland Road, the average speed was 70 km/h while the 85th percentile was 79 km/h. Typically, the engineering practice states that the next lowest 10 km/h speed below the 85th percentile is the proper posted speed.

The Transportation Association of Canada has also developed guidelines to aid in determining proper speed limits. This is a useful tool in previously established speed zones such as this, and takes into consideration such things as road class, geometry, pedestrian and cyclist exposure, intersections and driveways, etc. Whether addressed as a whole or as two separate sections, in each case the guideline lays right on the cusp of recommending either 70 km/h or 60 km/h. Given the results of both TAC guidelines and the speed data, the posted speed is appropriate.

The Registry of Motor Vehicles maintains all vehicular collision data and HRM is provided with data through the NS Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. For the period from 1986 to 2006, fourteen collisions were reported at or near the intersection of Highway 2 and Holland Road. Two of those collisions were attributed to speed. There is no practical way to assess unreported collisions, therefore only those that were reported and include proper descriptions can be used to evaluate the safety of a highway location or segment.

Nearly every street has a small sampling of traffic that will drive excessively above the speed limit. There is a common misconception that lowering the posted speed limit will cause motorists to react accordingly. However, experience has proven that unrealistically low speed limits will invite violation by otherwise responsible drivers. As indicated, 85% of drivers tend to drive at an appropriate speed. Considering the prevailing operating speeds and the low collision rate, the current posted speed limit is appropriate.

In addition to studying the speed limit, the curve on Highway 2 at Holland Road was also assessed. In order to determine whether additional warning signage is required for a curve, it is tested at various speeds with a device called a ball bank indicator. This device measures the inclination of a vehicle rounding a curve and the resulting data confirms whether a curve warning sign is recommended. According to the data gathered for this curve, it can be safely driven at 70 km/h in the northbound direction, therefore no additional signage is required. The curve can be safely driven at 60 km/h in the southbound direction, thus a curve warning is recommended. A work order has been issued for its installation.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

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 was not deemed to be necessary in this process because decisions were based on operational procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4268.

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