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**Item No. 10.1.1 (i)**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**June 14, 2011**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  
Councillor Robert Harvey, Chair, North West Community Council

**DATE:** May 31, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Crosswalk Flag Program

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**ORIGIN**

North West Community Council meeting held on May 26, 2011.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That HRM not object to local community groups/organizations installing, maintaining, and using crosswalk flags at marked crosswalks or traditional sites of significant pedestrian crossing within their community, provided there will be no cost implications to HRM with the exception of Councillor's funds.**

**BACKGROUND/ DISCUSSION**

North West Community Council received a presentation from Mr. Norm Collins regarding the use of crosswalk flags at their May 26, 2011 meeting.

In his presentation, included as Attachment A, Mr. Collins requested that HRM not object to the use of crosswalk flags where community groups would like to use them. He noted that the HRM Traffic Authority currently does not endorse the use of crosswalk flags as staff believe they create a false sense of security.

The Crosswalk Flag Program was considered by Regional Council at a meeting held October 6, 2009.

As a result of Mr. Collins' presentation, Community Council agreed to support this community based approach to the crosswalk flag program as it was a cost effective way to improve safety and would not, in fact, create a false sense of security. Community Council agreed that it was not a program that would work in all areas of HRM; however, would be particularly beneficial in communities that were having difficulty obtaining crosswalks and crosswalk lights.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

None associated with this report.

**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**

North West Community Council meetings are open to the public. Agendas and reports for the Community Council are available online at [www.halifax.ca](http://www.halifax.ca).

**ALTERNATIVES**

No alternatives were provided.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Crosswalk Flag Presentation – Mr. Norm Collin – May 26, 2011 North West & Marine Drive Valley and Canal Community Council

Report Prepared by: Shawnee Gregory, Legislative Assistant, 490-6521

# Crosswalk Flag Presentation

## Marine Drive, Valley & Canal Community Council

May 25, 2011

### Councillors Streach, Dalrymple and Hendsbee

Thank you for your time to once again consider the issue of crosswalk flags. We appreciate this may appear to be the initiative that simply won't go away, but when it comes to public safety, initiatives should not "just go away".

As you know HRM's traffic authority does not support crosswalk flags for reasons that are both inconsistent, i.e. if crosswalk flags create a false sense of security surely overhead lights do as well, and unsupported by any data or evidence. Neither the traffic authority nor TAC has provided any justification for their position on this issue.

On the other hand the only study we have uncovered, published by the Transit Cooperative Research Program presents results showing crossing flags were 38% more effective than overhead flashing amber beacons in terms of motorist yielding rates, on average 65% effective versus 47%.

The report states

*"... anecdotal information indicated these crossing flags are effective in improving driver yielding behavior", and "pedestrian crossing flags ... were effective in prompting motorist yielding"*

The Province takes a much different position than HRM re crosswalk flags. David Darrow, the Deputy Minister of Transportation writes

*"...I did request and receive a legal opinion on this issue ... the Department has no objections to crosswalk flags being used by pedestrians ... on provincially-owned roads"*

With this support the Village of Port Williams implemented a crosswalk flag program throughout the village in March of this year. Shortly after implementation David Darrow wrote:

*"I drove through Port Williams early morning. While it was too early for anyone to be out and about and using the flags, it occurred to me the very presence of the flags in their holders was a good reminder to motorists to slow down. Kudos to the Village."*

Lewis Benedict, chairman of the village observed he has noticed drivers are slowing down and using more caution because of the new flags. He says

*"I see young, old, middle aged, everybody's using (the flags)" "Everybody I've talked to, they figure it it's going to help save a life, it's worth doing"*

The Kings County News covered the initiative with an article titled **'Port Williams' eye catching flags'**, reporting the idea is simple – but effective, with the buckets of bright orange flags themselves making the crosswalks more noticeable, giving drivers a 'heads up'

Then last week both the Village of Canning and the Village of Bible Hill approached us, both requesting information for the purpose of proposing similar crosswalk flag programs in their communities.

While perhaps not a controlled scientific study I want to mention a science project completed by Nicholas Doiron, a grade 9 student at Ecole du Carrefour. Nick won the grade 9-10 science fair project at his school, and placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the provincial French science fair at his level with his study of the effects of crosswalk flags. Nick hypothesized that *"...pedestrian safety will be greatly improved through the use of fluorescent flags"*. Based on the data Nick collected he observed vehicles were 4.6 times as likely to yield when he carried a crosswalk flag versus when he did not.

This initiative is all about safety. The Chronicle Herald, in its Aug 3, 2009 editorial wrote

*"What flags add is an aid to safety – like defensive driving courses or advising walkers to wear bright clothing after dusk – and one that can be effectively delivered by community partnerships"*

*"In Salt Lake City...media attention and neighbourhood participation have boosted safety education and awareness. Sounds like a model of common-sense co-operation."*

Crosswalk flag programs continue to be expanded or created including a number of examples over the past two months - expansions in Clearwater / St. Pete Beach, Florida and Charleston, South Carolina new programs in Everett, Washington and just last week in Park Ridge, Illinois.

We have all been told that to improve our safety we should wear bright clothing during the daytime and reflective clothing in low light or nighttime conditions. A crosswalk flag provides both – bright colour with reflective tape.

One can debate whether or not mid-block crosswalks should exist in the first place, but given they do it makes sense to make both the crosswalk and the pedestrian as visible as possible. Crosswalk flags achieve this objective. Over 3,000 individuals signed a petition in support of crosswalk flags. We ask you to recommend that HRM not object to the use crosswalk flags where local community groups wish to use them.

Thank you for your time and attention.