

Item No. 3
Halifax Regional Council
June 28, 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: June 2, 2011

SUBJECT: Safe Pedestrian Access to Flinn Park

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report originates from a 75 signature petition submitted by Councillor Watts (item 10.2.1) at the May 10, 2011 Regional Council session.

BACKGROUND

The petition states that the residents that surround Flinn Park are calling on Halifax Regional Municipality to take measures to ensure safe pedestrian passage to the park for all residents. The solution must take into account the visibility concerns posed by the blind crest and the fact that there is not presently a designated place for pedestrians to cross.

According to the petition, the factors that contribute to the need for improvements include:

- The increase in commuter traffic on MacDonald and interconnecting streets, particularly during peak hours;
- The atypical size, shape and complexity of the intersection due to the convergence of three streets;
- The blind crest that peaks in the centre of the intersection;
- The proximity of the intersection to Flinn Park;
- The absence of any alternate crosswalk on all of MacDonald Street; and
- The desire to encourage healthy living through safe outdoor activity in the neighbourhood.

DISCUSSION

This area was studied extensively during the spring and summer of 2010 at the request of Councillor Watts, based on concerns from citizens in the neighbourhood. The data collected from the 2010 study is considered current and can be effectively used to address the concerns submitted via this petition.

Contrary to the concern noted in the petition, there in fact has been no increase in commuter traffic on MacDonald Street. The average annual weekday traffic volume (AAWT) for MacDonald Street has remained relatively stable over the past three decades and it lies within the residential street volume characteristic of fewer than 3000 trips per day. The following AAWT's are offered for sample years:

1983 = 2700

1991 = 2600

1998 = 2300

2003 = 2600

2009 = 2400

The 2010 study determined an AAWT of 2222 with a directional split of 1700 north bound and 522 south bound. The removal of the 4 pm - 6 pm restriction on the entrance to Chebucto Road from the Armdale Roundabout has no doubt helped to reduce or minimize the impact on the p.m. peak hour traffic volume on MacDonald Street.

The Motor Vehicle Act provides pedestrians with legal right of way at intersections whether or not crosswalks are marked, and marking is not a requirement for enforcement purposes. Studies have shown unmarked crosswalks can be safer due to the fact that pedestrians may use less caution when entering a marked crosswalk, feeling that the crosswalk will protect them and make vehicles stop. Pedestrians crossing at unmarked locations are typically more aware and are less likely to enter the crosswalk without checking for vehicles or waiting for an adequate gap.

Due to the numerous requests for the marking of crosswalks, it has been necessary to establish criteria which provide an objective basis for evaluation as to where marked crosswalks are installed on HRM roadways. Given that it is not practical to mark crosswalks at every intersection, most jurisdictions use some form of evaluation criteria to determine which crosswalks will be marked and which will not.

The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) guidelines for approval of a marked crosswalk installation are the nationally accepted guidelines and have been adopted for use in HRM. The TAC guidelines require that the volume of traffic results in fewer than 120 crossing opportunities per hour and there be a minimum of 20 pedestrians per hour crossing.

The unmarked crosswalk at MacDonald and Flinn is near the top of the crest resulting in adequate sight distances in each direction. Alternately, unmarked crosswalks exist at Churchill and Patricia. The fact that there is a park adjacent to the intersection has no bearing on the

outcome of a marked crosswalk warrant unless it is generating enough pedestrians to affect the outcome.

During the 2010 study, both intersections of MacDonald at Flynn and at Churchill were evaluated for a marked crosswalk. Notwithstanding that Traffic Services staff knew the traffic volume was too low to consider a crosswalk (adequate crossing opportunities based on traffic volumes), we did want to ascertain the actual pedestrian activity. Neither intersection had enough pedestrian crossings to warrant a marked crosswalk.

The 5-legged intersection is currently appropriately controlled, with no stop control on MacDonald Street. Besides the fact that traffic volumes do not warrant it, basic traffic engineering principles state that this type of intersection should not be controlled by an all-way stop.

In addition, the 2010 study determined that the 85th percentile speed was 52 km/h (speed at or below which 85% of drivers are travelling) and the average speed was 42 km/h. This speed profile does not indicate a need for traffic engineering intervention. These counts were collected about 75 metres south of the crosswalk at Flinn Park. Also, Halifax Regional Police recently collected speed data right at the crest for northbound traffic and the speeds were much lower, closer to an 85th percentile of 35 km/h.

Other information from the 2010 study:

There is no collision history at this intersection that would require traffic re-engineering, as there was only one rear end collision between 2002 and 2006. MacDonald Street is a designated fire route and therefore is not a candidate for speed humps or other physical traffic diverters under the neighbourhood short-cutting policy.

In conclusion, based on this data, no changes to traffic control are recommended in the Flinn Park area as the current situation meets all engineering and safety standards.

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/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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