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**Item No. 5**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**May 15, 2012**

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

Original Signed by Director

**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Reashor, Director Transportation and Public Works

**DATE:** April 11, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Maintaining Urban Park Walkways Year Round (Northbrook Park)

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

Request from Regional Council for additional information relating to a Council Report submitted on March 23, 2010; titled Maintaining/Clearing Key Urban Park Walkways on a Year Round Basis.

Councillor Smith requested specific information on the year round servicing of 300 meters of walkway in Northbrook Park.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Municipal Operations department provides snow clearing services to streets, sidewalks and those walkways that are deemed to be part of the Active Transportation Network. Planning and Infrastructure are responsible for determining the key walkways that support the Active Transportation Network and should receive winter maintenance.

*It should be noted that parks are not included in the winter maintenance program. Municipal Operations does provide year round maintenance services to specific major park walkways such as Point Pleasant Park and sections of Shubie Park, however, these services are approved by Council and are not integral of the streets program.*

When determining the walkways that make up the Active Transportation Network, consideration is given to such elements as: safety and access, as well as, design and condition of the walkway. The current walkway systems receiving winter maintenance services have been established for some time; newly built walkways are considered for this service when they are deemed to be integral to the Active Transportation plan and are designed and built to support year round maintenance. Many walkways are not built to a design standard - this would be a limiting factor for not receiving service. Walkways not meeting the needs of the Active Transportation Network are not serviced year round and are signed accordingly. Any requests and considerations to add services to walkways of substandard design and condition may require a capital upgrade of the walkway.

When deciding whether to service an existing walkway there is consideration given to other reasonable alternatives for the pedestrian to reach their destination. The walkway selected for service may not always be the most direct route, however, is selected to service several areas of the community need instead of specific or individual need. We must be mindful of this when considering requests for service. To this end some walkways in a specific area may receive service, and others will not.

In addition to elements of design, consideration is given to managing costs and reducing redundant services i.e. choosing not to service a walkway if there is a sidewalk receiving winter maintenance nearby. The cost to provide year round service is determined by design and length of a walkway; the standard cost to provide winter services is \$5,065. per km for the season.

Requests from Council for year round service would first fall with Planning and Infrastructure to determine suitability of the walkway. If a decision is made to add a particular walkway or group of walkways for year round service, Municipal Operations would cost the service and request Council approval for the additional expenditures; the current snow budget funding does not have capacity to absorb addition services.

## **DISCUSSION**

Councillor Smith requested specific information on the year round servicing of 300 meters of walkway in Northbrook Park that runs from the Community Centre to Graham Street. The walkway was cleared by HRM in the past when the Community Centre was a school, however, the school was decommissioned three years ago. The walkway was once considered part of the Active Transportation Network because of its proximity to the school, however, since the school has been decommissioned winter servicing was not deemed necessary because of availability of safe sidewalk transport alternatives.

The walkway is concrete in composition and is five (5) feet wide that shrinks to four (4) feet in an area that crosses over a bridge and culvert. There are two locked gates and a locked pedestrian gate that are opened and closed by Park Patrol. The gates remain closed between dusk and dawn.

This walkway would not generally be recommended for service as it is through a park which is not considered within the scope of the street snow clearing program. A breakdown in the middle of a park would create severe logistical issues getting equipment to the sidewalk machine. In the event of fuel or hydraulic spill costs would be considerable.

Service is maintained on all sidewalks on the perimeter of the Park, thus residents do have a safe alternative. A snow clearing operation runs from the Northbrook Community Centre to Symonds St, up Victoria Rd to Francis St then down to Cain St and Graham St where the pathway comes out - total length 800 m (attachment 1).

There are a number of barriers to access that would impede snow clearing operations, as well as, infrastructure that could be damaged by equipment (attachment 2, 3 and 4). One area in particular, because of narrow dimension, is particularly at risk to winter maintenance damage (attachment 5).

Should Council choose to provide special consideration for this location there are three alternatives:

- 1) Do nothing - adequate passage provided by sidewalk clearing operation, no additional cost incurred.
- 2) Provide winter maintenance as a priority 3 activity that would have the pathway cleared within 36 hours of a snowfall. Cost to deliver this service is approximately \$1,600 per season. Snow damages would elevate the cost of delivering this service.
- 3) Provide winter maintenance as a priority 3 activity that would have a sloped pedestrian walkway cleared by a hand crew within 36 hours of a snowfall. The walkway leads from the Community Centre down to Westbrook St. From there residents could connect to Graham St to the same point the pathway comes out. Cost to deliver this service is

approximately \$1,700 per season. Snow damages would elevate the cost of delivering this service. (Not recommended because of the slip and fall risk, attachment 6) .

The request during Council discussion was to have the walkway maintained under the guise of the Active Transportation Network. A report to Regional Council on the matter that day, spoke to the approach to designating walkways under the Regional Active Transportation Network. It outlined how the present approach within the program was to concentrate capital and maintenance on building the Active Transportation (AT) Network on primary trail routes/main spines and trails/walkways which are contiguous to those spines. This means that under the AT Trails program primary routes are built and maintained, as well as, secondary routes which are connected to primary routes and finally tertiary paths that are connected to secondary routes connected to primary spines.

This simply reflects a need to rationalize limited resources and concentrate efforts on building a connected system that serves the largest segment of the citizenry, rather than an ad hoc approach with routes that start and stop and are not connected to other AT routes. Building and maintaining a slew of tertiary routes that are not connected under this program would result in delays in bringing a truly regional Active Transportation Network to the citizens of HRM. At this point this (Northbrook Park) walkway is stand alone and does not connect any major destinations, nor is it contiguous with any designated major AT spines.

The Active Transportation (AT) Plan, approved in 2006, will undergo a five (5) year review later this year. The review will look closely at developing a consistent and affordable approach to winter maintenance within the AT Network.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Budget implications would be based on the extent of the requests for service. There is no capacity in the current budget funding model to absorb additional services.

### **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**

N/A

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1: Sidewalk Snow Clearing Operation Adjacent Northbrook Community Centre
- Attachment 2 to 6: Pictures of pathway connecting Northbrook Community Centre to Graham Street
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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:

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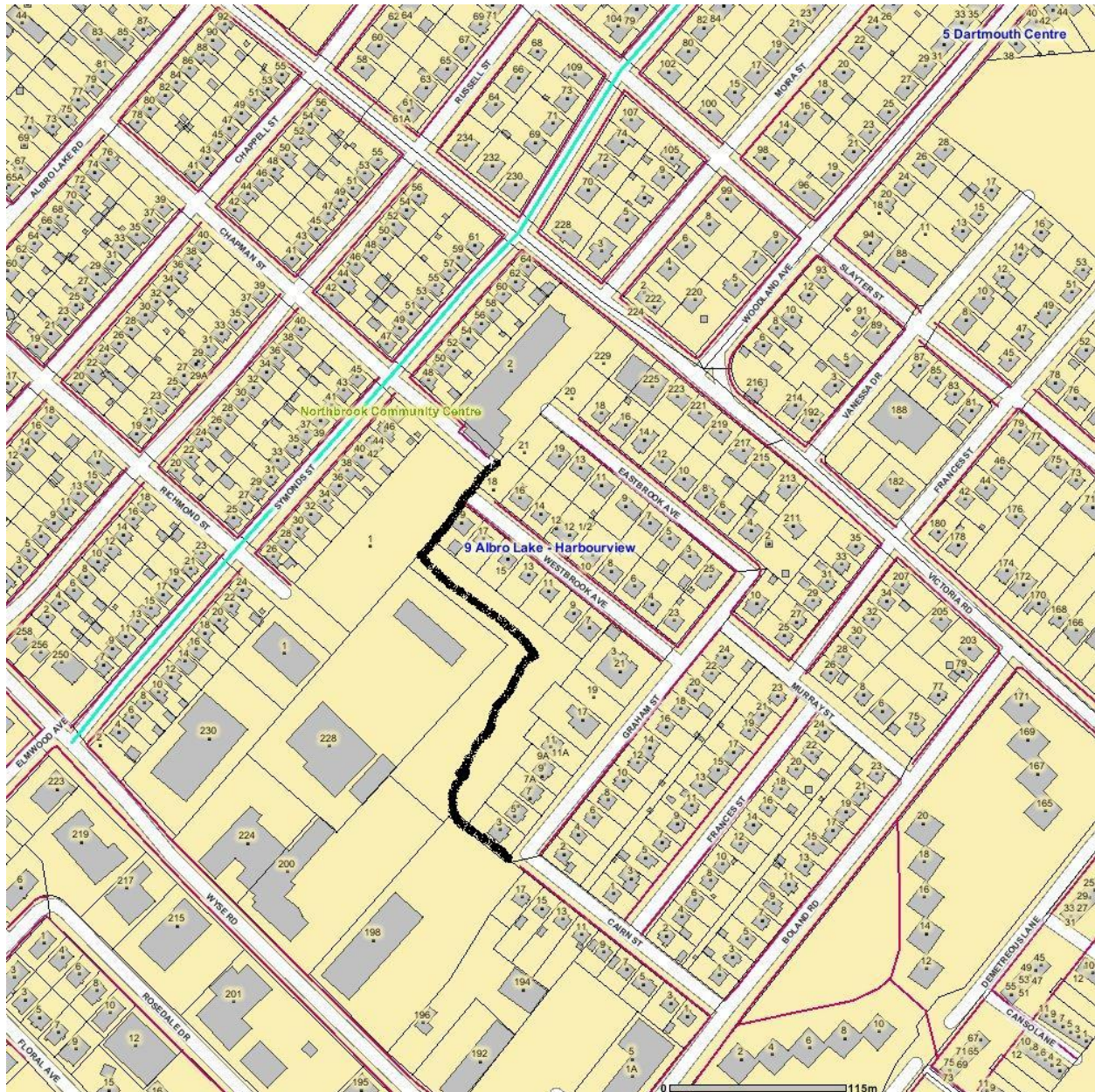
Report Approved by:

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David McCusker, Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, 490-6696

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Attachment 1





**Attachment 2**



**Attachment 3**





**Attachment 4**



**Attachment 5**



**Attachment 6**

