

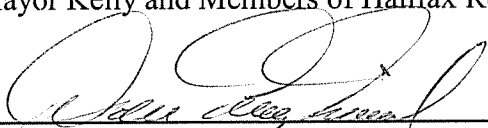


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**Halifax Regional Council
Committee of the Whole
November 29, 2005**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 25, 2005

SUBJECT: MRIF - Supplementary Report

ORIGIN

During the November 22, 2005 Committee of the Whole discussion on projects to consider for Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (MRIF) application, staff was asked to prepare a report outlining a better balance of the \$4.5m currently allocated for bikeways/trails, to be distributed between bikeways/trails and transit.

New information, available with the signing of the agreement indicated HRM's allocation for application to MRIF is \$11.5m. This lowers the Council requested 20% urban allocation to \$3.45m (total contributions).

Staff will come back to Council with recommendations on the allocation within the projects approved as the rural component (approved November 22) to meet the \$11.5m application maximum.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that :

1. The 20% urban component of HRM's MRIF allocation be applied towards the following projects (totalling \$3.45m):
 - Purchase of three transit buses at a total cost of \$1.35m to help address a portion of the existing transit service deficiencies within the urban core.

Recommendation Continued:

- Top priority active transportation projects, totalling \$2.1m, providing a basic network of routes that can be integrated into the daily lives of the public and which contribute significantly to lessening traffic, increasing transit ridership and promoting a healthier lifestyle.
Halifax Urban Greenway Phase I - \$880,000
Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail (Maplehurst connection) - \$528,000
Shubenacadie Trail - \$400,000
Bedford Highway Bikeway Phase 1 - \$352,000

BACKGROUND

Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund

The Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund is a Federal/Provincial cost share program in which each partner is expected to contribute 1/3 of the cost. MRIF was signed in Nova Scotia on Thursday November 24, 2005. HRM expects to be eligible to receive up to a maximum of \$14.4m (previously estimated at \$14.8m - reduction due to administrative costs). The final decision on which projects are funded rests with the Federal and Provincial governments, however municipal priorities are a strong consideration. MRIF is application based, HRM will apply to the federal/provincial program to fund the specific projects as approved by Council. As is consistent with other infrastructure agreements, 20% of the allocation will be invested in strategic priorities by the Federal and Provincial governments without an HRM application, leaving approximately \$11.5m available for Council prioritization and application.

In total across Canada, a minimum of 60 percent of funding under the MRIF, with a minimum of 40 percent per jurisdiction, will target "green infrastructure" that provide a better quality of life and benefit through sustainable development. These include water, wastewater, solid waste, municipal energy improvements, and public transit. The new fund will also invest in cultural, tourism and recreational infrastructure, local roads and broadband connectivity.

Other Potential Funding Sources

During the November 22 Committee of the Whole discussion staff were also asked to highlight other external funding sources that may be available to HRM for projects such as those suggested for MRIF application. Below is a brief description of the following:

- Gas tax
- Transit funds
- Atlantic Investment Partnership
- PCAP

Gas Tax

A bi-lateral agreement was signed between the federal and provincial governments on Friday September 23, 2005. To enable the flow of funds to a municipality a Municipal Funding Agreement must be signed between HRM and the Province of Nova Scotia. On October 25, 2005 Council recommended that the Mayor on behalf of HRM enter into the agreement. Formal signing of the agreement is expected within the coming weeks. HRM expects (based on current estimates) to receive in the area of \$60m in 5 years.

Municipal Requirements:

- Funds must result in net incremental capital spending on environmentally sustainable infrastructure from April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2010
- The funds will not clawback any current capital funding
- Average annual capital spending on municipal infrastructure will not fall below \$58m
- HRM will supply a capital investment plan by year 5
- HRM will develop over the term of the agreement a community sustainability plan
- HRM will provide access to records related to funded projects if requested
- HRM will comply with the communications protocol outlined
- HRM will retain title to the resulting infrastructure for at least 10 years

Eligible Projects Include:

- Public transit (rapid transit, transit busses, ITS, HOV lanes etc)
- Water (drinking water supply, distribution, metering)
- Wastewater (wastewater and stormwater)
- Solid waste (diversion, recovery facilities, organics management, landfills, landfill gas recuperation)
- Community energy systems (cogeneration, district heating)
- Active transportation infrastructure (bike lanes, local roads, bridges, tunnels)

Public Transit Funds

On June 1, 2005 a news release was issued outlining the federal government's investment of up to \$800 million in public transit over two years as part of the New Deal for Cities and Communities.

It has been suggested that funds will be used to refurbish and replace fleets, upgrade and refurbish terminals and garages, invest in new light rail, subway and bus rapid transit systems, replace and rehabilitate tunnels, stations and other structures, and utilize new intelligent transportation systems designed to improve services for both passengers and operators.

Public transit funds will flow to municipalities in a way similar to gas tax funds. Within each province and territory, the Government will negotiate an intra-jurisdictional formula based on ridership.

Allocation to the provinces and territories of the transit funding totalling up to \$800 million over two years results in approximately \$23,464,303 for Nova Scotia. There is no formal implementation plan to date.

Atlantic Investment Partnership

The 2nd Wave of the Atlantic Investment Partnership was recently announced.

Within it is an Innovative Communities Fund. The Innovative Communities Fund (ICF) invests in strategic projects that build the economies of Atlantic Canada's communities. ICF builds on the strengths of communities and provides the tools needed to identify opportunities available for their sustainable economic growth.

ICF focuses on investments that lead to long-term employment and economic capacity building in rural communities. Urban initiatives that stimulate the competitiveness and vitality of rural communities may be considered on a selective basis.

The program is funded with \$175 million over five years. Assistance is non-repayable. The amount provided to each individual project will be determined by an assessment of the level of funding necessary to allow the project to proceed. HRM or community groups could apply for funding but there is no notional allocation to areas or municipalities. If HRM were to apply there would be an expectation it would provide a share of funding.

More information and criteria on the Atlantic Investment Partnership can be found at:
www.acoa.gc.ca

Provincial Capital Assistance Program

The Provincial Capital Assistance Program (PCAP) is designed to enable the Government of Nova Scotia to contribute financially towards the cost of high priority municipal infrastructure projects in order that this cost burden might be reduced to an affordable level. Eligible projects include: sanitary sewage facilities and collection systems, in-ground sewage disposal facilities, water intake, treatment, pumping and storage facilities, water transmission and distribution systems, solid waste management facilities and equipment, municipal infrastructure engineering and research studies.

More information on the PCAP is available online at:
http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/muns/infr/capital_assist.asp

This is not an exhaustive list of external funding opportunities, but does highlight some opportunities for HRM.

DISCUSSION

Bikeyways/Trails

The Regional Bikeways and Trails program is a joint effort between Transportation and Public Works and Real Property and Asset Management. The program is aimed at putting Active Transportation (AT) infrastructure on the ground as an alternative to vehicle trips. The system is designed to connect pedestrians, cyclists, and other modes of human powered mobility to major transit facilities (ferry terminals, bus terminals and bus rapid transit) as well as provide direct destination tripping for both local community destinations as well as regional employment, business and education centres. The AT system involves both on-street facilities and multi-use trails. The benefits of an alternative transportation system are multi-fold and help our community achieve objectives in sustainable development, environmental protection, traffic reduction, healthy lifestyles and a quality of community life.

Currently an Active Transportation Plan for all of HRM is being developed by Transportation and Public Works, Real Property and Asset Management, Planning and Development, Recreation Tourism and Culture and Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation. That plan will identify a strategy for building and promoting an active transportation system for the municipality by building on work that has been done to date around bikeways, trails and parks, transit and ferry initiatives, regional planning, transportation planning and healthy living. The plan is scheduled to be delivered to Council in February.

In the meantime staff are comfortable identifying a number of priorities which, while not complete, constitutes the framework for Active Transportation in and around the urban areas as stipulated by council's direction for 20% urban funding in the MRIF program (as noted in the recommendation section of this report). These constitute primary regional connection corridors within the overall system. The list and a brief description of these components can be found in Appendix A.

The entire Active Transportation system will take a number of years to complete. The program has to be ambitious in that a good deal of existing HRM transportation infrastructure has not been built to easily accommodate other modes of transportation. In some areas of the municipality it is relatively straightforward to build the system. In other areas patience and strategic land acquisitions are required. To date there has been good success especially in the rural areas where abandoned railways constitute a main stay for connecting communities. Urban areas can have different challenges and be substantially more expensive. The list in Appendix A constitutes approximately 15 million dollars in infrastructure improvements. These elements will form the "arterial routes" for the municipality's Active Transportation System.

In prioritizing the proposed projects for the MRIF program staff have aimed to advance major projects which have either already begun in a phased approach or have undergone detailed design and are currently ready for construction. These projects can provide a basic network of routes that can be promoted and integrated into the daily lives of the public. This is seen as being key to

building a successful more comprehensive system which contributes significantly to lessening traffic, increasing transit ridership and promoting a healthier lifestyle.

The Active Transportation program will require significant funding over the next ten to fifteen years. HRM has been the beneficiary. The Gas Tax fund recognizes Active Transportation infrastructure as a component of a fully rounded transportation system and is eligible for funding. HRM will have to consider funding AT infrastructure from the Gas Tax as well as seeking other funding sources in order to achieve a comprehensive network able to give our citizens good and viable alternatives to the automobile.

Transit

With the continued growth in transit ridership, capacity pressures exist on certain transit routes within the urban core transit network. These transit routes carry a high volume of passengers and buses often transport passengers at or over capacity during peak hours. This results in the potential for passengers to be left behind at a bus stop during peak hours.

Staff have identified the need to address these deficiencies by increasing the service frequencies to meet our service standards. The purchase of three transit buses will provide capacity to increase service frequencies on transit routes within the urban core to address the high volume of passenger demand.

While this opportunity will provide capacity to address some of the service deficiencies within the urban core, additional funding will be required address the remaining areas.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate budget implications associated with determining the projects to which MRIF funding will be applied. Any budget implications will be discussed during each application or contract for a specific project.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

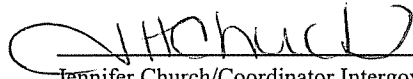
Council could choose other infrastructure projects to be included in MRIF applications. Staff does not recommend this.

ATTACHMENTS


Appendix A - Priority Regional Connectors for Active Transportation.

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.

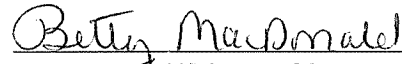
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Financial Review:


[Barb Palmet/Financial Consultant]

Report Approved by:


Betty MacDonald/Director of Governance and Strategic Initiatives/490-4769

Appendix A - Priority Regional Connectors for Active Transportation.

Dartmouth Harbourfront Trail - Connecting Woodside Ferry to Alderney Ferry to the MacDonald Bridge Bike Lane.

Shubenacadie Trail Corridor - Completion of multi-use trail from Alderney Ferry to north end of Lake Charles with connections to other collectors and destinations along that route.

Shearwater to Woodside Ferry Terminal - Connecting to the Cole Harbour Marsh Trail via Hines Road this trail connects Eastern Passage with Woodside.

Lake Charles to Waverley Trail - An extension of the Shubenacadie Trail running along Lake William to Waverley.

Portland Hills Woodside Ferry Connector - On-street and off-street connection between neighbourhood trail system at Portland Hills, Morris Lake and Russell Lake and the Woodside Ferry. This connection includes routes connecting Bus Rapid Transit terminal in Portland Hills.

Barrington Street Trail - Connecting the north end of the Halifax Peninsula to the MacDoanld Bridge and downtown Halifax - Phase I runs from the Macdonald Bridge to downtown and the waterfront - Phase II runs from the MacDonald Bridge to Seaview Park and Look Off and on to Memorial Drive.

Halifax Urban Greenway - Running from the Armdale Rotary to Point Pleasant Park along the aprons of the rail cut and city streets- Phase I South Street to Point Pleasant Park and Phase II is from South Street to the Armdale Rotary.

Waterfront to Point Pleasant Park - Running through the port lands the desire is to work with the Port of Halifax to connect the waterfront through to Point Pleasant and then to the Halifax Urban Greenway.

Central Peninsula Travelway - Providing a safe and enjoyable on-street environment for active transportation users to connect from Seaview Lookoff in the Northend to Point Pleasant Park in the Southend. This travelway uses streets including Agricola, North Park, Trollop and South Park and Young Ave to create a spine connecting neighbourhoods to universities, hospitals, schools, recreation centres, parks, and shopping districts.

BLT/ Bayers Lake Trail Extension - connecting the end of the Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Trail at Bayers Lake to the Armdale Rotary and Fairview Cove/Bedford Highway Bikeway using the existing Bayers Lake rail spur line.

Clayton Park Liner Park Trail - Connecting Bedford South with Fairview at Main Ave this existing trail requires upgrading to an Active Transportation standard primarily through paving. Phase II involves construction of a connection between Main Ave and Chain Lake where the trail would join the BLT on its way to the Armdale Rotary.

St. Margarets Bay Road Bike Way - Development of a safe bikeway along the St. Margarets Bay Road to Prospect Road.

Purcells Cove Road Bikeway - Paving of shoulders and other improvements to create a safe bike route along Purcells Cove Road.

Herring Cove Road Bikeway - Right of Way improvements in order to develop a bikeway connecting Herring Cove to Armdale Rotary.

MacIntosh Run to Chain Lake Connector - Using a combination of on and off street travelways this trail connects Spryfield with Chain Lake and the Armdale Rotary.

Bedford Sackville Connector - Phase I connecting the Sackville Transit Terminal to the Bedford Highway Bikeway and future Bedford Fast Ferry Site is currently underway. Phase II will require that this route be upgraded to an urban Active Transportation standard by paving.

Feeley Lake to Sackville Bus Terminal - Phase I connects the bus terminal to Downsview Mall - Phase II connects to Bus Rapid Transit at Beaverbank Crossroads and also to Feeley Lake.

Bedford Highway Bikeway - connecting Northend Halifax to Bedford via safe cycling routes along the Bedford Highway

Hammonds Plains Road Bikeway - Roadway improvements to create a bikeway along Hammonds Plains Road to connect with the Fast Ferry and Bedford Highway Bikeway.