

HALIFAX

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Active Transportation Project
Streets For Cycling
Report on the HRM Streets For Cycling Project Open House
held June 29,2000



Introduction

An open house was held on June 29, 2000 from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Halifax North Memorial Library Auditorium in order to present the results of Phase I of the Streets for Cycling project. The event was well attended by the cycling community, HRM council members and the community at large. Approximately 100 community members attended over the course of the evening.

Design recommendations for key areas on the route were presented along with study findings and the results of a cycling survey. A power point presentation displaying a summarized version of the Macdonald Bridge Bikeway Access options report was set up and ran continuously throughout the event.

The purpose of the event was to permit the community an opportunity to contribute their opinions and suggestions to the project. It also allowed project members an opportunity to assess the work completed to date in terms of how well it was received by the community. Consequently the event provided a 'snapshot' of how the larger community may 'buy in' to the concepts of cycling as a form of active transportation.

Community Feedback

Comments from the cycling community and the community at large were solicited. A comment form (Appendix I) was provided requesting opinions regarding different areas of the study. The following summarizes the returned comments as well as additional comments received during and after the event.

1. Regarding the 'Streets For Cycling Electronic Survey' results:

Comments on the survey results were positive. Some respondents felt that it was about time that HRM was determining the facility requirements of commuting cyclists along the route and at destinations within the downtown. Also some were encouraged that the responses indicated that more people would cycle to work if infrastructure and facilities were in place.

2. Regarding the Brunswick Street Re-Alignment between Duke and Sackville Streets:

Comments favoured the street realignment and some suggested that more car routes should 'give way' to bike routes. Some suggested that adequate signage of the route was required so that motorists would yield to pedestrians as well as cyclists at intersections. Several of those in attendance questioned placing the bike

lane outside of the parking lane suggesting that if a cyclist was 'doored' by a parked car door opening, the cyclist, there would be a greater possibility of cyclist injury through falling in oncoming traffic. Alternative suggestions included placing the bike lane between the sidewalk and the parking lane. The reasoning being that if a cyclist was 'doored' on the passenger side, the cyclist would fall to the sidewalk and not be in danger of oncoming traffic. However, others countered that this would not be feasible for those wishing to make left turns, as the alignment would commit cyclists to the right side of the roadway and they would be unable to merge for left hand turns if the parking lanes were occupied by automobiles obstructing the cyclists turning movement.

3. Regarding safety issues:

Another issue emerging from discussion of the realignment was where HRM should provide dedicated lanes. The lanes were marked for cyclists between Duke and Sackville on Brunswick to provide a measure of safety to cyclists as the information suggested that dedicated cycle lanes should only be provided on high traffic volume streets and only where absolutely necessary.

Some event participants felt that dedicated lanes should also be used on street sections prior to high volume sections as a means of transition to the higher volume area, regardless of safety considerations. In addition to transition areas, some community members felt that painted cycle lanes gave cycling a higher profile and that was an adequate reason to provide them.

Some reasoned that safety factors would be better addressed in education programs and cycling safety should be represented in publications such as the Nova Scotia Drivers Handbook, pointing out that there is no direction for motorists within the handbook on sharing the road with cyclists. In addition, some felt that cyclists should be represented on the Nova Scotia Road Safety Advisory Committee. It was also felt that the skill level of cyclists was not adequately addressed and that cycle lanes may provide a false sense of security to less skilled cyclists.

4. Regarding the Angus L. Macdonald bikeway access options

Comments were mixed regarding the options presented in the Power Point presentation. Some comments favoured the multiuse path approach mixing pedestrians with cyclists on the Bridge Bikeway and the Bikeway access ramp. Some favoured switching the Bikeway to the south side of the bridge. Others were more in favour of simple, cost effective solutions such as a wooden staircase for better access to the bikeway on the North side. Generally most comments favoured further studies to deal with the safety issues and access concerns which exist in the current design.

5. Regarding the question 'Are you in favour of making Brunswick Street a bicycling route?'

All comments favoured the route from the Macdonald Bridge to Spring Garden Road as an ideal route for cyclists commuting to the downtown. Reasons stated were that it was flat, straight and had low volume traffic along most of the route.

6. Regarding the question 'Are you in favour of HRM creating a system of cycling routes in Peninsular Halifax?'

All survey comments favoured creating cycling routes on the Peninsula and in discussions with event attendees all commented favourably on having bike routes. Some felt that bike routes would provide school children a safer way to get to school. Other comments suggested that a connected system that included both on and off road bike routes would be desirable throughout the urban core of HRM.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It appears support for cycling routes and facilities has gone well beyond the initial stages and that many in the community are well into 'buying in' to the concept of active transportation as an alternative to the automobile.

The positive response from the community to our open house supports the findings of our electronic survey performed in the summer of 1999. There appears to be a great deal of enthusiasm for the introduction of bicycle routes, beginning with the Peninsular Halifax area.

The issue now seems to be one of what form and processes should be followed, rather than whether the bike routes should exist. While many design changes were recommended three general themes emerged from the process that will be useful in policy and plan formation:

1. Part of a general cycling infrastructure policy and plan should include clearly defined criteria for determining where dedicated, marked cycling lanes should be located and whether considerations other than safety should be used as determining factors.
2. The Angus L. Macdonald Bridge Bikeway access issues should be resolved as soon as possible.
3. Safety issues and skill levels of cyclists should be given due diligence in the planning process.