

HALIFAX

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Item No. 14.1.2
Halifax Regional Council
October 3, 2017

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 21, 2017

SUBJECT: Request to Province of Nova Scotia to Enable Bicycle Traffic Signals and Cross-rides under the Motor Vehicle Act

ORIGIN

Recommendation number 29 from Making Connections: 2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan which states, "The municipality should work with the province to enable bicycle traffic control signage, signals and pavement markings approved for use by the Transportation Association of Canada to be used under the Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act and Regulation, and should consider testing innovations in active transportation facilities under the Innovative Transportation Act."

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, clause 79 (1) (aa): "The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for (aa) streets, culverts, retaining walls, sidewalks, curbs and gutters;"

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council authorize the Mayor to send a letter to the Nova Scotia Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal requesting that the use of bicycle traffic signals and cross-rides be enabled in the next revision of the Motor Vehicle Act; and; that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal introduce a Regulation under Section 307 of the Motor Vehicle Act to permit Halifax Regional Municipality to conduct a project of not greater than five years to test and evaluate bicycle traffic signals and cross-rides at various locations in the municipality.

BACKGROUND

Making Connections: 2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan was approved by Council in September 2014. The aim in this plan and in the forthcoming Integrated Mobility Plan is to build bicycle facilities that are comfortable and have enhanced safety by physically separating bikes and motor vehicles on busier streets. Managing the interaction of bicycles and other street users at intersections is a critical consideration for such facilities.

Professional engineering guidelines for on-road bicycle facilities have evolved significantly in Canada and North America in the past several years. The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) 2017 Design Guidelines identify where and how to implement bicycle traffic signals and cross-rides. Such facilities are currently used in jurisdictions across Canada.

Bicycle traffic signals are used at signalized intersections where there is a need to direct bicycle traffic movements. They are particularly useful to manage movements and interactions when bi-directional bike lanes intersect with other streets where there are traffic signals.

Cross-rides are like crosswalks for bikes. They are typically installed beside crosswalks to provide a distinct pathway for people on bikes when connecting a bike lane across a street or intersection.

Currently, the use of cross-rides and bicycle traffic signals are not enabled in the Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act.

DISCUSSION

Halifax currently has bike facility projects in the planning stages that would require bicycle traffic signals and cross-rides. These include intersections on either side of the Macdonald Bridge, the proposed new bikeways in the Cogswell Redevelopment project, and the project to extend the Rainnie Drive bi-directional bikeway to Brunswick Street and potentially over to Spring Garden Road. Ideally, implementation of these facilities would start in 2019, pending Regional Council approval.

The Traffic Authority is a position created by the *Motor Vehicle Act* with responsibility for the regulation of the highways (i.e. streets and roads) within the Municipality. In 2017 Halifax's Traffic Authority submitted a letter to the Provincial Traffic Authority which requested their opinion on the legality of various bicycle facility design treatments in Nova Scotia. These are treatments that HRM would envision using in forthcoming projects. One result of this communication was the determination that bicycle traffic signals and cross-rides are not currently legal in Nova Scotia. Officials from the provincial government have indicated that they are considering updates to the Motor Vehicle Act; however, the timeline for this is unknown. Provincial staff indicated that, in the interim, Halifax could request consideration of a pilot project under Section 307 of the Motor Vehicle Act.

A letter from the Mayor on behalf of Regional Council requesting that bicycle traffic signals and cross-rides be enabled under the Motor Vehicle Act would communicate that this is a priority for Halifax and is necessary for our approved and forthcoming plans. Such changes would also help further Provincial objectives for sustainable transportation and greenhouse gas mitigation and would benefit other Nova Scotian municipalities who are also implementing active transportation plans. In addition, since the timing of changes to the Motor Vehicle Act is unknown, Halifax Regional Council could request that the Province authorize a pilot project of up to five years duration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to this report.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendation in this Report. The risks considered rate low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There has been no direct community engagement on this matter by HRM. There has been community engagement on specific projects that would need such treatments and there has been broad support for such treatments. Groups such as the Halifax Cycling Coalition have been advocating for changes to provincial legislation to improve safety for people who bicycle.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This request is supportive of the sustainability objectives of the municipality as these bicycle facilities aim to make it safer and more comfortable for residents to choose sustainable transportation options for everyday mobility needs.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may not recommend that the Mayor send a letter to the Provincial government. This is not recommended as the municipality needs the ability to use bicycle traffic signals and cross-rides in the near future in order to attain the goals of Council-approved plans.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments to this report.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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