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**Item No. 11.1**  
**Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee**  
**May 18, 2017**  
**July 20, 2017**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner and Director, Planning & Development

**DATE:** March 1, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Current Approach to Wayfinding in the Halifax Regional Municipality

**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Motion of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee from April 21, 2016

THAT the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee request a staff report on the current HRM initiatives, programs, and policies that are establishing an HRM-wide wayfinding strategy. The report to identify gaps in the current approach, assess against other relevant jurisdictions, and identify opportunities to improve the current wayfinding practices in HRM.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

See Attachment A.

**BACKGROUND**

Wayfinding systems support and improve the ability of people to orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place. Wayfinding is particularly important in complex built environments such as neighbourhoods, commercial centres, institutional campuses, and transportation facilities. As the built environments become more complicated, wayfinding tools such as maps, directional signs, and symbols can help guide residents and visitors to their destinations. The Society for Experiential Graphic Design, in their definition of wayfinding, states that "wayfinding systems contribute to a sense of well-being, safety, and security", in the Halifax context this is especially important for residents and visitors who may be travelling through our large municipality.

## **Wayfinding in Halifax Regional Municipality**

HRM's wayfinding system is highly dependent on a system of signage in road rights of way (ROW) which people use to orient themselves while using the road network, as well as some wayfinding signage on transit and active transportation (AT) routes, and in municipal parks. The system of signage in the road rights of way is often designed to ensure legibility to vehicle operators, but the products are used by pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users as well.

The wayfinding system also includes some elements that cater to visually impaired people and others who orient themselves using means other than visual aids (e.g. audible signals, tactile warnings).

To support wayfinding, HRM also publishes maps for transit users, as well as maps of the bicycle & trail network.

## **DISCUSSION**

This report focuses on HRM signage programs and policies and how they relate to publically owned lands. Programs and policies approved by Regional Council and existing business unit practices include:

- Halifax Transit Signage
- Destination Signage Program
- Community Sign Program
- Park Identification Signage Program
- Parks & Recreation Branding Strategy
- Corporate Communications
- Active Transportation Plan (recommendations related to wayfinding)
- Neighbourhood and Special District Sign Policy

### **Municipal Signage Programs**

#### Halifax Transit Signage – Halifax Transit

Halifax Transit is responsible for all on-street bus stop signs and all signage at transit facilities. This includes more than 2500 on-street bus stop signs, transit terminal and Park & Ride identification signage, bus bay signs, and wayfinding and directional signs surrounding and on transit properties. All new signage follows a consistent branding strategy.

In recent years, Halifax Transit has improved signage by double siding and flag mounting on-street bus stop signs, putting route decals in boxes to avoid confusion between adjacent decals, increasing the size of bus stop signs at terminals, and adding bus bay designations at all terminals and major hubs. With the construction of the Lacewood Terminal, wayfinding signage was enhanced by including icons, and signage was made multi-purpose by including directional information about surrounding facilities.

#### Destination Signage Program – Traffic Management

Traffic Management is responsible for all signage within municipal ROW's, with the exception of community identification signs. The purpose of the signage under this program is purely navigational and safety related. Examples of these signs are the black and white directional signs and the large green and white signs located in the ROW. HRM's corporate branding strategy does not apply to this program.

#### Community Sign Program - Civic Addressing

In 2002 HRM began a program to ratify community boundaries. This was necessary to enable the efficient delivery of E911 and Canada Post services. It was also regarded as an opportunity for local communities to demonstrate community pride while reflecting local history. Under this program, the

municipality installs standard signs at each entrance point to a community. All new signage follows HRM's corporate branding strategy.

#### Park Identification Signage Program – Parks

The Parks department is responsible for all signage in HRM parks. The current program is generally limited to park identification signage, but Parks may work with local councillors and community groups to develop unique signage for important places under the Neighbourhood Sign Policy (see below under "Policies"). From time to time, this department has also implemented wayfinding signage within parks (e.g. Point Pleasant Park, Frog Pond). All new signage follows HRM's corporate branding strategy.

#### HRM Branding Strategy - Corporate Communications

HRM Regional Council has an approved strategy for branding in HRM (April 15, 2014 [www.halifax.ca/municipalclerk/documents/140415ca1153.pdf](http://www.halifax.ca/municipalclerk/documents/140415ca1153.pdf)). The purpose of the branding strategy is to apply a distinct and consistent visual identity to HRM through the branding of municipal signage, infrastructure, assets, and communication materials. Generally all new signs must follow this branding strategy, with the exception of traffic signs.

### **Municipal Policies and Plans Related to Wayfinding**

#### Neighbourhood and Special District Sign Policy

##### *Neighbourhood Signs*

Neighbourhoods are smaller areas within communities and tend not to have well defined or official boundaries. The purpose of these signs is to acknowledge the neighbourhood, and reinforce its sense of identity - not to define boundaries like the community identity signage. Neighbourhoods include those as identified by the Nova Scotia Gazetteer. Under this policy, signs may be located in parks, and the policy is administered by the Parks Department.

##### *Special District Signs/ Cultural Districts*

Special Districts have definable boundaries and include Business Improvement Districts, and Cultural/ Heritage Districts. The purpose of the signs is to identify the district, provide heritage and cultural information and demarcate the boundary.

Examples of these signs are found in the Hydrostone, Schmidville, Irishtown, and in the Westmount subdivision. This policy has been implemented through various programs such as the Heritage Conservation Districts program. Full details can be found at the following link, <http://halifax.ca/policies/documents/NeighbourhoodandSpecialDistrictSignagePolicy.pdf>.

#### 2014 Active Transportation Priorities Plan

This plan ([www.halifax.ca/ActiveTransportation/documents/AT\\_Plan\\_Final\\_July222014.pdf](http://www.halifax.ca/ActiveTransportation/documents/AT_Plan_Final_July222014.pdf)) recommends an integrated system of wayfinding signage that links two main types of proposed facilities: Local Street Bikeways and Greenway Trails. As their name suggests, Local Street Bikeways follow quiet side streets making their routing less intuitive than following main streets, necessitating the use of wayfinding signs to guide users along the route. Recommendation #18 of the plan highlights the need to develop a system of local streets bikeways and support it through the use of wayfinding signage.

Greenway trails are an established part of the municipal active transportation network but many of them have been built or overseen by community groups, with distinct signage installed along each. While this approach celebrates the uniqueness of individual trails and communities, the plan recommends establishing consistent wayfinding signage to help connect sections of trail with each other and with the local street bikeways: "the municipality should consider the development of a consistent and uniform AT wayfinding and route identification system for greenways which is integrated with the signage proposed for Local Street Bikeways" (recommendation #37).

## Jurisdictional Scan

### Charlottetown

The Charlottetown Regional AT Plan recommends:

Developing a way-finding signage strategy that will connect on and off-road segments of the Active Transportation Network and promote the short distance (or time) to regional activity hubs.

The AT plan has so far been implemented through the "Walk Your City" project. This project follows the recommendations in the Regional Active Transportation Plan by encouraging walking as a form of transportation and linking sidewalks and walking paths to critical activity hubs through signage. Walk Your City consists of 36 wayfinding signs posted at major points of interest located mainly in the downtown core. Each sign describes the distance to the next destination in terms of minutes by foot rather than kilometers by car.

#### *Reference:*

<http://city.charlottetown.pe.ca/news.php?id=731>

[http://www.city.charlottetown.pe.ca/pdfs/TTR\\_RATMP-main-report-FINAL-2012-02-28.pdf](http://www.city.charlottetown.pe.ca/pdfs/TTR_RATMP-main-report-FINAL-2012-02-28.pdf)

### Vancouver

Vancouver's 2040 Transportation Plan includes recommendations and 5 "Actions" related to wayfinding. The implementation of these recommendations and actions has resulted in the following updates to the pedestrian wayfinding system:

1. A richer level of detail, including demarcation of accessibility aids (e.g. ramps, elevators) and obstacles (e.g. stairs) for people with mobility challenges
2. User-friendly maps oriented to the user's perspective.
3. More maps, particularly outside of the downtown core.
4. Better connections to other sustainable modes of transportation, including public transit

#### *Reference:*

<http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/transportation-2040-plan.pdf>

### Toronto

The City of Toronto has the PATH pedestrian wayfinding system, which is used for the largest underground shopping complex in the world. It is a colour-coded system with directional cues. Within the various buildings, pedestrians can find a PATH system map, plus cardinal directions on ceiling signs at selected junctions. This system is in the process of being modernised.

In October 2012, the City adopted Wayfinding Strategy principles and is working with consultants and project partners to complete Phase II of the project. In June 2016, the City Council adopted two vehicle destination sign policies for Toronto:

### Vehicular Destination Sign Policy

#### *Policy Statement*

Vehicular destination signs provide valuable information to allow drivers to navigate across the road network and arrive at their destination safely. The City of Toronto recognizes that the display of designation signs should not compromise safety, contribute to roadside clutter or lead to confusion for drivers. This Policy establishes the principles, criteria, requirements and application process for requesting a vehicular destination signs on the City of Toronto's roads.

*Scope*

The Policy applies to all vehicular destination signs on City-owned roads.

*Reference:*

<https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Transportation%20Services/Walking/Files/pdf/Peds/Vehicular%20Destination%20Sign%20Policy.pdf>

Neighbourhood and Business Area Identification Sign Policy

*Policy Statement*

The City of Toronto recognizes that neighbourhood and business area identification signs provide resident and business associations an opportunity to distinguish their neighborhood or business area. This Policy establishes the principles, criteria and application process for neighbourhood and business area identification signs.

*Scope*

This policy applies to all neighbourhood and business area identification signs located on City-owned roads.

*Reference:*

<https://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Transportation%20Services/Walking/Files/pdf/Peds/Neighbourhood%20&%20Business%20Area%20Identification%20Sign%20Policy.pdf>

**Gaps and Opportunities to Improve Wayfinding in HRM**

The bulk of HRM's existing wayfinding effort is implemented by Traffic Management and Civic Addressing and is largely directed towards the motoring public. Consideration of similar signage along pedestrian and bicycle routes may support the Regional Plan's objective to implement a sustainable transportation strategy.

Recommendations of the Active Transportation Plan related to the establishment of a wayfinding system for bicycle routes and greenway trails have not yet been implemented. Prioritizing identified issues like these would be a logical place to begin to improve the current wayfinding practices in HRM.

When compared to larger jurisdictions like Toronto and Vancouver who have implemented more extensive pedestrian wayfinding programs in their downtown cores, it is not clear that there is a great need, or significant opportunities for similar approaches in the municipality's downtowns.

For example, some pedestrian oriented wayfinding was contemplated for sections of downtown Halifax and Dartmouth under the 2004 Capital District Identity and Wayfinding study. However, this report's recommendations were more strongly related to the establishment of a visual identity rather than towards navigation. This is primarily because the municipality's urban environments are relatively easy to navigate given their compact size, traditional street grid, and relationship to the harbour. Furthermore, there were challenges implementing the recommendations of the study that were related to signage, primarily due to spatial constraints in the ROW. There was however some success in establishing a distinct visual identity for these districts through other streetscape elements, an effort that remains ongoing (i.e. distinct light standards, street furniture, sidewalk paving).

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was carried out in the preparation of this report.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Legislative Authority

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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## Wayfinding Strategy

### Attachment A

#### Legislative Authority

##### *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*

61 (3) The property vested in the Municipality, absolutely or in trust, is under the exclusive management and control of the Council, unless an Act of the Legislature provides otherwise.

188 (1) The Council may make by-laws, for municipal purposes, respecting  
(c) persons, activities and things in, on or near a public place or place that is open to the public;

235 (5) Where a municipal planning strategy so provides, a land-use by-law may  
(b) regulate or prohibit the type, number, size and location of signs and sign structures;

##### *By-law S-801, By-law for Temporary Signs*

##### *Public Highways Act*

49A (2) Subject to subsections (3), (4) and (6), the council of a municipality may make a by-law prohibiting or regulating the erecting, maintaining, pasting, painting or exposing of advertisements upon any part of a highway located within the municipality and designated in the by-law.

##### *By-law A-600, Advertising on Provincial Highways Bylaw.*

##### *Motor Vehicle Act*

87 (2) The Department may determine the character or type of and place or erect upon provincial highways traffic control signals at places where the Department deems necessary for the safe and expeditious control of traffic and, so far as practicable, all such traffic control signals shall be uniform as to type and location.

(3) No traffic control signals shall be erected or maintained upon any provincial highway by any authority other than the Department.

88 (1) Signs and signals erected and maintained under this Act shall state or represent thereon such matters as the Minister shall determine.

(2) The fact that the sign or signal has been erected and maintained shall be *prima facie* evidence that the sign or signal is erected in compliance with this Act and that the matter stated or represented on the sign complies with that determined by the Minister.

(3) The Minister shall from time to time publish in one or more issues of the Royal Gazette a description or specification of the signs that may be erected by the Department or a traffic authority under this Act for the purpose of regulating or controlling traffic, and the production of a copy of the Royal Gazette containing such description or specification shall be *prima facie* evidence of the matters stated or represented in the description or specification.

89 (1) Subject to such authority as may be vested in the Minister, the Registrar or the Department, traffic authorities in regard to highways under their respective authority may cause appropriate signs to be erected and maintained designating business and residence districts and railway grade crossings and such other signs, markings and traffic control signals as may be deemed necessary to direct and regulate traffic and to carry out the provisions of this Act.

(2) The Department shall have general supervision with respect to the erection by traffic authorities of official traffic signs and signals, for the purpose of obtaining, so far as practicable, uniformity

as to type and location of official traffic signs and signals throughout the Province, and no traffic authority shall place or erect any traffic signs, signals or markings unless of a type or conforming to specifications approved by the Department.

(3) The Department may prescribe conditions under which a traffic control signal shall be used and when conditions have been so prescribed, it shall be an offence for the traffic authority to fail to comply with them.