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Item No. 12.1.1
Transportation Standing Committee
December 7, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: ORIGINAL SIGNED

Bruce Zvaniga, P.Eng., Director, Transportation and Public Works

DATE: October 11, 2017

SUBJECT: Protected Bicycle Lane – Hollis Street

ORIGIN

July 21, 2016 Transportation Standing Committee, MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Rankin THAT the Transportation Standing Committee requests a staff report to evaluate the Hollis Street Bicycle Lane protected pilot project in spring of 2017 and include a staff comment in regard to a long-term strategy for an “all ages and abilities” biking facility out of the downtown.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Motor Vehicle Act (section 90) allows the Traffic Authority to mark lanes on a street and control their use.

Clause 79 (1) (aa) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter provides that Council may expend money required by the Municipality for streets, culverts, retaining walls, sidewalks, curbs and gutters.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to continue to plan the development of a permanent “all ages and abilities” on-road bicycle lane running north-south through downtown Halifax and return to Transportation Standing Committee and Regional Council in 2018 with a recommended option for implementation in 2019.

BACKGROUND

Installation of the Hollis Street Bike Lane was approved by Regional Council on June 23, 2015 (Item No. 11.1.7) and was installed in fall 2015. This report stated that “Hollis Street will be due for pavement resurfacing in the next two to four years. In the interim, there will be an opportunity to monitor how the street operates with the bicycle lane and to make adjustments, if needed, in the future.”

Hollis Street has been identified as a candidate route for a bike lane in municipal plans going back to 2001 and is a candidate route in the 2014 Active Transportation Priorities Plan. As one of the key employment destinations in the Municipality, providing bicycle infrastructure in downtown Halifax is key to attaining municipal objectives to increase the modal share of bicycling. The Hollis Street-Lower Water Street corridor is identified in the current drafts of the Integrated Mobility Plan as a location of a north-south “all ages and abilities” bicycling facility.

Implementation of the current Hollis Street bike lane was part of the *Downtown Street Network Plan* from the Downtown Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy (DHSMPS). This also included installation of a painted bicycle lane on Lower Water Street between Terminal Road and Sackville Street. The Lower Water Street bike lane is intended to be the complementary northbound bike lane to move bikes through downtown Halifax. The fact that it ends at Sackville Street means that it is not providing a complete bike lane to the north end of downtown Halifax (Cogswell Interchange area).

The Hollis Street bike lane is a painted buffered bike lane that extends for just over one kilometre, one way, from the Cogswell Interchange, south to Terminal Road. The bike lane is on the left-hand (east) side of the street. The “buffer” is a 60cm wide hatched area between the bike lane and the vehicle travel lane. There are “no stopping” restrictions for vehicles in the bike lane from 7:00-9:00am and from 4:00 – 6:00pm from the beginning of the bike lane at the Cogswell Interchange through to Morris Street. At all other times, the bike lane operates as a typical painted bike lane as regulated by the Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act. As such, it is legal for vehicles to enter the bike lane to stop for the purposes of loading and unloading.

In summer 2017, a small section of the Hollis Street bike lane was protected from vehicle traffic by a concrete barrier between Sackville and Salter Streets. This is due to a temporary encroachment with an adjacent land owner that requires the sidewalk to be moved into the street travel way.

A “protected bike lane” is an exclusive bicycle facility that is physically separated from motor vehicle traffic, and distinct from the sidewalk. Methods of separation may include curbs, bollards, planters, rows of parked vehicles, or any other type of physical barrier.

Regional Council has directed staff to develop a plan for a redesigned road network to replace the Cogswell Interchange. While planning for this is still underway, initial plans include a network of “all ages and abilities” protected bike lanes that would provide bikeway connections to downtown from the north via the Barrington Greenway and west via Cogswell Street. These would be connected to improve downtown bike lanes.

In summer 2017, Halifax initiated a planning process to determine the optimal location and facility type for protected bike lanes that would connect the Seaport Market and Train and Bus Stations in the south to the new protected bike lane facilities being proposed for the redesigned Cogswell Interchange area in the north. This planning work is expected to extend to spring 2018. The Provincial Government’s Connect2 program has approved \$30,000 in funding to support this planning work. The balance of costs is covered in the approved HRM Capital Budget.

The request for this report originated with a discussion at the Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) in June 2016. At that meeting the Halifax Cycling Coalition led a discussion that resulted in ATAC passing a motion requesting that the Transportation Standing Committee request this staff report.

DISCUSSION

The Hollis Street bike lane does not operate as an “all ages and abilities” facility that is comfortable for a wide range of bicyclists. The main reason is that it is regularly blocked by stopped motor vehicles. Furthermore, there is no corresponding “all ages and abilities” facility “feeding” the bike lane from the north (i.e. the existing Cogswell Interchange). These factors, combined with the fact that Hollis Street has high traffic volumes and high truck traffic means that it is mainly suitable for experienced bicyclists who can operate in mixed traffic. Newer professional guidelines to assist with the selection of the appropriate bicycle facility type for a particular corridor, indicate that a protected bike lane (i.e. with some type of curb or barrier) should be considered for an environment such as Hollis Street.

Monitoring of the bike lane in 2016 included bike counts at George, Sackville and Morris Streets and observations on loading. Bikes were counted from 7-9am, 11:30am-1:30pm, and 4-6pm and the full results are in “Attachment A”. The most bicyclists per hour that were recorded during these observations was 23 per hour and the least was one per hour. The number of bicyclists on Hollis Street is lower than other streets with bike lanes on the peninsula such as South Park Street and Windsor Street. Vehicles stopped in the Hollis Street bike lane were regularly observed.

Due to several factors (the above conditions, the Cogswell redevelopment planning process, the forthcoming IMP, and the commitment in the June 2015 report to Council to monitor and make adjustments), staff decided to initiate a planning process to identify a better north/south bicycle facility in downtown. This process is just starting and will result in a report to the Transportation Standing Committee and Regional Council in 2018 with a recommended solution. This planning process is considering both Lower Water and Hollis Streets and is considering both bidirectional protected bike lanes and unidirectional protected bike lanes.

This planning process recognizes there are a wide range of issues and demands on a downtown street such as Hollis Street. The planning process will include public and stakeholder consultations and is taking a “complete streets” perspective in trying to understand and accommodate a wide range of factors such as safety, loading, parking, transit, accessibility, pedestrian needs, goods movement, vehicle movements, aesthetics, and more. The goal of this planning process is to have a recommended facility type that could be implemented in 2019 subject to budget and other potential project co-ordination issues.

The motion that is the origin of this report requests consideration of a pilot protected bike lane on Hollis Street. However, it is not clear that a pilot project would provide information that is not already evident. As noted above, staff have concluded that if there is to be a bike lane on Hollis Street, it should be protected and there is a planning process underway to determine how best to achieve this. Therefore, rather than a “pilot” project, staff have considered whether an “interim protected bike lane” on Hollis Street is worth pursuing in 2018.

The main factors to consider in whether an “interim protected bike lane” could and should be installed in 2018 include the following:

Technical Feasibility – The fact that the bike lane has a buffer provides space for some type of device such as plastic bollards, as used on University Avenue and Rainnie Drive or precast concrete curb segments (or a combination of the two) to provide “protection”. Further design and formal approval by the Traffic Authority for signage and pavement markings would be required, but there is space for some type of barrier. This could probably not be used on the block of Hollis Street south of Morris Street as there is on-street parking between the curb and the bike lane on this block.

Impact to Street Operations – The main impact would be the bike lane could no longer be used for loading. Messengers, couriers and other vehicles currently using the bike lane to serve adjacent buildings would need to find another location. There may be an option to open up additional space for loading on some of the blocks on the west side of Hollis Street, which would decrease on-street parking. The needs of people with disabilities to access the front doors of buildings abutting an interim protected

bike lane would need to be considered. On University Avenue, this has been accommodated by providing gaps in the protected bike lane where cars can enter and stop next to the curb and sidewalk.

Staff Resources – Implementation of an interim protected bike lane on Hollis Street would require a reallocation of staff resources away from other current planning and capital implementation priorities. Permanent protected bikeways are currently being considered for implementation on a number of Regional Centre streets in 2018. It would also involve resources from other groups in HRM such as Traffic and Municipal Operations.

Cost – The cost to purchase and install plastic bollards or precast concrete curbs could be accommodated within typical existing capital budgets.

Ability to Achieve Protection Along the Entire Corridor – There would likely be a break in the protected facility at a hotel with a loading bay. Also, there would likely be a break at a construction encroachment just south of Bishop Street. As noted above, there may also need to be some gaps where vehicles could still enter the facility to load and unload for accessibility reasons and south of Morris Street it would be a challenge to provide an interim protected bike lane due to the existing parking configuration.

Value in Testing the Potential of Protected Bike Lanes to Attract more Bicyclists – This is difficult to predict. One factor that diminishes the potential value is that there is no “all ages and abilities” access to Hollis Street from the north. This will likely change with the Cogswell Redevelopment project.

Safety for Bicyclists – The full safety benefit of an interim protected bike lane is difficult to predict. A physical barrier that inhibits vehicles from entering the bike lane along the corridor would reduce the number of times that bicyclists need to exit the bike lane to move around stopped vehicles. As noted above, there may still need to be some gaps in the barrier, where vehicles could enter and stop for a short period. Modern bikeway treatments at intersections (green paint to indicate conflict zones) would likely not be feasible as part of a temporary interim configuration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for the current planning process is covered by existing HRM Capital Budget (CTU00420) and by a \$30,000 contribution from the Provincial Connect2 program.

Should the Transportation Standing Committee request further consideration of an interim protected bike lane in 2018 as per the alternative below, the costs would be factored into the 2018-19 capital budget request to Council.

Budget Summary:

Project Account No. CTU00420 – Active Transportation Strategic Projects

Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$3,176,480
Pending budget increase	<u>\$ 30,000</u>
	\$3,206,480

A Directors Report will be submitted shortly to obtain the approval of increasing the project to reflect the \$30,000 contribution from the provincial Connect2 program.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendation in this Report. The risks considered rate low. To reach this conclusion, consideration was given to financial, legal and compliance, and service delivery risks.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was significant community engagement as part of the original process to install the existing bike lane on Hollis Street. There will be further engagement as part of the planning process for a permanent facility. There has been no specific engagement on the concept of an interim protected bike lane in 2018 although this could be raised in forthcoming engagement on the planning for a permanent facility (anticipated for early in 2018).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The development of a network of “all ages and abilities” bicycle facilities will provide a healthier and less polluting transportation option for residents to travel.

ALTERNATIVES

The Transportation Standing Committee could recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to return to the Transportation Standing Committee with a report on how to pursue the implementation of an interim protected bicycle lane on Hollis Street in spring or summer 2018. As noted above, this option has potential benefits, but there are impacts and design considerations that would need further study. This would place priority on developing an interim solution for Hollis Street compared to other potential 2018 corridors for protected bikeway implementation.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A – 2016 Hollis Street Bicycle Counts

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

Report Prepared by: David MacIsaac, Active Transportation Supervisor, 902.490.1665

Attachment A – 2016 Hollis Street Bicycle Counts

		George St	George St	Sackville St	Sackville St	Morris St	Morris St
Date		May 31, 2016	Sep 29, 2016	June 1, 2016	Sep 29, 2016	June 9, 2016	Sep 27, 2016
Weather		Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Overcast	Clear	Light Rain
Mean Temp °C		15.1	12	12.9	12	11.8	11.3
AM	7:00-8:00	7	8	11	4	3	1
	8:00-9:00	17	16	11	6	6	9
NOON	11:30-12:30	10	4	9	5	7	4
	12:30-1:30	5	5	9	5	2	4
PM	4:00-5:00	13	11	23	9	13	5
	5:00-6:00	9	11	14	7	19	6
Six hour total bicyclists		61	55	77	36	50	29

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NOON	11:30-12:30	10	4	9	5	7	4
	12:30-1:30	5	5	9	5	2	4
PM	4:00-5:00	13	11	23	9	13	5
	5:00-6:00	9	11	14	7	19	6
Six hour total bicyclists		61	55	77	36	50	29