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Item No. 9.1
Halifax Regional Council
August 5, 2025

TO: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Regional Council

FROM: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 25, 2025

SUBJECT: **Morris Street Bike Lane Update**

ORIGIN

July 8th, 2025 Regional Council (Item 15.1.6)

MOVED by Councillor White, seconded by Councillor Cleary:

THAT Halifax Regional Council Direct the CAO to proceed with implementing the approved Morris Street bikeway option using temporary, tactical materials and return to Council with an evaluation information report two years after the peninsula complete streets project has been installed, and initiate additional planning to consider converting Lower Water Street between Terminal Road and Morris Street to two-way traffic to mitigate impacts to traffic capacity on Lower Water Street.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

Nova Scotia Bill 24 (Temporary Access to Land Act and Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act (JTA)) was proclaimed by the Nova Scotia Legislature on July 15th, 2025. Section 9 of Bill 24 replaces section 7 of the JTA which, under subsection 7(1), now empowers the Minister of Public Works to order a municipality to:

*“(b) build, change, reconfigure or remove transportation infrastructure within the municipality; and
(c) do anything necessary or desirable in the interest of the safe, efficient and coordinated movement of people and goods.”*

In a letter (dated July 16, 2025) to Mayor Fillmore, Halifax Regional Council, and the Chief Administrative Officer, attached as Attachment A, the Honourable Premier Tim Houston advised that *“if HRM Council proceeds to make Morris a one-way street, the provincial government will be forced to act”*, and requested that the municipality advise if it is prepared to reverse the decision to convert the street to one-way traffic by August 6, 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 1, 2024, Regional Council approved new bicycle facilities and related changes for several streets in the south end of the Halifax peninsula as part of the Peninsula South Complete Streets project. This includes a two-way bikeway on Morris Street, which would connect the proposed two-way bikeway on University Avenue to Lower Water Street, the “East Connection.” Combined with the approved West Connection (Halifax Urban Greenway to University Avenue), this east-west route would complete the All Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycling network in the south end of the Halifax Peninsula

On [July 8th, 2025](#), staff presented potential alternative options for bikeway facilities on adjacent streets that would retain two-way traffic on Morris Street, and recommended that Regional Council direct staff to further investigate these options. Regional Council did not approve the staff recommendation and instead directed staff to proceed with implementing the approved Morris Street bikeway option using temporary, tactical materials and return to Council with an evaluation information report two years after the Peninsula South Complete Streets project has been installed. Staff were also directed to initiate additional planning to consider converting Lower Water Street between Terminal Road and Morris Street to two-way traffic to mitigate impacts to traffic capacity on Lower Water Street.

On July 16, 2025, Premier Tim Houston sent a letter to the Mayor, Halifax Regional Council, and the Chief Administrative Officer advising that the province intends to use its powers under Bill 24, which gives order-making authority related to transportation projects in municipalities, unless HRM reverses its decision to proceed with the Morris Street project.

In light of the province’s stated intention not to allow the Morris Street project to proceed based on it being converted to one-way traffic, this report recommends that Regional Council rescind its July 8th decision to proceed with the Morris Street project and direct staff to proceed with additional functional planning and public engagement for alternative design options for the East Connection that do not require conversion of Morris Street to one-way traffic. Failure to rescind the July 8th decision would create additional financial and reputational risk for the municipality and be damaging to inter-governmental relations with the Province of Nova Scotia. This report also recommends that Council direct staff to carry out additional planning, design, and targeted stakeholder engagement for the proposed University Avenue portion of the Peninsula South Complete Streets project and provide a recommendation to Council as part of the report reviewing alternative network solutions and cost savings opportunities for the AAA bike network that was requested by Regional Council on June 24th, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Regional Council:

1. rescind the July 8, 2025 motion with respect to Item 15.1.6 (as set forth in the Origin section of this report);
2. direct the CAO to initiate additional functional planning and engagement for alternative cycling connections for the East Connection on Morris Street between University Avenue and Lower Water Street, as described in the July 8th Council report, and return to Regional Council with a recommendation on the preferred alternative cycling connection;
3. request the Mayor respond to the Premier’s July 16, 2025 letter advising of Regional Council’s direction to rescind the July 8th decision and that the Municipality will explore alternative cycling connections that do not require conversion of Morris Street to one-way traffic; and,
4. direct the CAO to carry out additional planning, design reassessment, and targeted stakeholder engagement for the proposed University Avenue portion of the Peninsula South Complete Streets

project, prior to the commencement of preliminary and detailed design work, and provide a recommendation to Council as part of the report reviewing alternative network solutions and cost savings opportunities for the AAA bike network that was requested by Regional Council on June 24th, 2025.

BACKGROUND

On [October 1, 2024](#), Regional Council approved new bicycle facilities and related changes for several streets in the south end of the Halifax peninsula as part of the Peninsula South Complete Streets project. This includes a two-way bikeway on Morris Street, which would connect the proposed two-way bikeway on University Avenue to Lower Water Street, the “East Connection”.

On June 10th, 2025, Regional Council directed staff to provide updated alternatives to the approved Morris Street bikeway that “maintains two-way traffic on Morris Street and that does not remove vehicular lanes or otherwise worsen congestion on either Morris Street or Lower Water Street.” This direction followed concerns from the community and stakeholders related to the implications for general purpose traffic, transit, and truck traffic of converting Morris Street from two-way to one-way flow.

On June 24th, 2025, Regional Council directed staff to prepare a report that identifies the estimated budget requirement for all AAA bike network capital projects identified in years 2026-29, assesses the feasibility of alternative network solutions that could reduce future costs, and outlines opportunities for additional external funding sources for these projects. Since this direction was not received until after the June 10th, 2025 Council direction related to Morris Street, the July 8th report did not include an assessment of costs for alternative options that were reviewed.

On [July 8th, 2025](#), staff presented potential alternative options for bikeway facilities on adjacent streets that would retain two-way traffic on Morris Street, and recommended that Regional Council direct staff to further investigate these options. Regional Council did not approve the staff recommendation and instead directed staff to proceed with implementing the approved Morris Street bikeway option using temporary, tactical materials and return to Council with an evaluation information report two years after the Peninsula South Complete Streets project has been installed. Staff were also directed to initiate additional planning to consider converting Lower Water Street between Terminal Road and Morris Street to two-way traffic to mitigate impacts to traffic capacity on Lower Water Street.

On July 16, 2025, Premier Tim Houston sent a letter to the Mayor, Halifax Regional Council, and the Chief Administrative Officer advising that the province intends to use the powers granted to it under Bill 24, which gives order-making authority related to transportation projects in municipalities, unless HRM reverses its decision to proceed with the Morris Street project.

DISCUSSION

Nova Scotia Bill 24 (Temporary Access to Land Act and Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act) was proclaimed by the Nova Scotia Legislature on July 15th, 2025. Section 7 of Bill 24 replaces section 7 of the JTA which, under subsection 7(1), now empowers the Minister of Public Works to order a municipality to:

“(b) build, change, reconfigure or remove transportation infrastructure within the municipality; and

(c) do anything necessary or desirable in the interest of the safe, efficient and coordinated movement of people and goods.”

It is anticipated that the authority granted to the Minister of Public Works under Bill 24 may have significant implications for municipal transportation projects, including the proposed bikeway on Morris Street. Under

the Bill “resolutions, regulations, by-laws and policies, and other acts or matters of a municipality, related to transportation must be reasonably consistent with the approved regional transportation plan.”

The letter received from Premier Tim Houston on July 16, 2025 advised HRM of the province’s intention to invoke the authority under Bill 24, unless HRM reverses its July 8th, 2025 decision to proceed with the Morris Street project. The Premier provided a deadline of August 6th for HRM to respond and advise as to whether the municipality will reverse its decision.

Since Bill 24 gives the Province the authority to issue an order and require the municipality to comply with that order, effectively overruling the decision of Halifax Regional Council in this situation, and the Premier’s letter indicates they intend to use this authority, staff are recommending that Council rescind its July 8th decision and direct staff to explore alternative bikeway options for the East Connection that retain two-way traffic flow on Morris Street (as outlined in the July 8th Council report). This approach will avoid assigning staff resources and capital funds to further exploring an option that will ultimately not be permitted by the Province to proceed.

Implications for the Peninsula South Complete Streets Project

Per Regional Council direction from [October 1, 2024](#), in addition to the approved Morris Street bikeway, a bikeway facility is also being pursued on University Avenue (between LeMarchant Street and South Park Street) as well as a West connection, including Seymour Street (south of University Avenue); South Street (between Seymour and Cartaret Streets), Cartaret Street, and Oakland Road (between Beaufort Avenue and Robie Street). A Request for Proposals (RFP) for the preliminary and detailed design, including all the facilities for the Peninsula South Project, was posted on February 6th, 2025, and closed on March 18th, 2025. The design work has not yet been awarded.

Implications of the staff recommendation and other recent Council direction for the overall Peninsula South Complete Streets Project include:

- In accordance with July 8th, 2025 Council direction to investigate alternative bikeway options on adjacent streets that would retain two-way traffic on Morris Street, the Peninsula South RFP for Preliminary and Detailed Design for University Avenue and the West Connection would need to be re-solicited, excluding the portion of the scope that focuses on preliminary and detailed design of the Morris Street segment.
- In accordance with June 24th Council direction to investigate alternative network solutions and cost savings opportunities for the AAA bike network, reassessment of the approved design options for University Avenue should be completed prior to preliminary and detailed design work proceeding.
- Staff are also recommending that key area stakeholders including hospitals, emergency responders, Dalhousie University, and others be re-engaged to provide more up to date understanding of how the project affects them. Area stakeholders were last engaged as part of the Peninsula South project between 2019 and 2024, and staff have recently received feedback from multiple entities related to the project. It is expected that significant growth and resulting increases in traffic have likely prompted these stakeholders to get re-engaged in the project.

Next Steps

If Regional Council rescinds its July 8th decision to proceed with implementing the approved Morris Street bikeway and directs staff to further investigate alternatives to the approved Morris Street bikeway, the following approach would be taken:

- Mayor Fillmore would be requested to draft and send a letter to the province informing them of the rescission and proposed approach that will investigate options that retain two-way traffic on Morris Street;

- Staff would initiate a new functional planning process for alternative bikeway options for Morris Street, including additional public engagement. HRM's standard functional planning-design-construction cycle for capital projects in the right of way typically allows one year for functional planning, though complex projects can take longer. Preliminary design and detail design also typically require a year each depending on the scope and complexity of the project.
- Staff would initiate a planning, design reassessment, and engagement process for the proposed University Avenue segment that includes:
 - Re-engagement with targeted stakeholders including hospitals, emergency responders, Dalhousie University, and others to provide more up to date understanding of how the approved design concept (two-way bikeway within University Avenue median) affects them.
 - Reassessment of the approved design option for University Avenue in consideration of the report requested by Regional Council on June 24th, 2025 that will investigate alternative network solutions and cost savings opportunities for the AAA bike network.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the approved West Connection, University Avenue, and Morris Street AAA bikeways is part of the budget plan for Capital Project CR200007 Regional Centre AAA Bikeways.

Financial implications associated with the staff recommendation in this report include:

- Preliminary design costs, estimated at approximately \$80,000 (excluding HST), for the Morris Street component of the project would not be incurred in 2025/26 as previously planned
- Preliminary and detailed design costs, estimated at approximately \$120,000 (excluding HST) for the University Avenue Phase 1 component of the project, would not be incurred in 2025/26 as previously planned.
- Functional planning and design costs for the East Connection would be incurred in 2025/26, with an estimated cost between \$100,000 - \$300,000. This would be in addition to the cost (\$201,500) of functional planning completed to date for the Peninsula South Complete Streets project. This new cost can be funded from the current budget for Capital Project CR200007 Regional Center AAA Bikeways.
- The proposed approach aims to maintain Public Transportation Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) Agreement objectives for a complete AAA bikeway network in the Regional Centre. In a scenario where no AAA connection is achieved for the East Connection, an amendment to the agreement would likely be required
- Design changes would impact the current proposed project capital budgets; additional costs would be incorporated into future capital budget requests

RISK CONSIDERATION

HRM Procurement has advised that a new RFP for the design of University Avenue and the West Connection, excluding Morris Street from the scope, would need to be issued. A new RFP for University Avenue Phases 1 and 2 and the West Connection would push the schedule for University Avenue Phase 1 and the West Connection into a multi-year construction window between 2026 and 2027, or a single construction season in 2027, instead of the originally planned delivery in 2026. Phase 2 of University Avenue would be at high risk of being converted to multi-year construction in 2027–2028 or delivered in a single 2028 season rather than the originally planned delivery in 2027. There is a risk that delaying construction could lead to increased costs due to inflation and multi-year construction, which could result in higher costs compared to single-season construction.

Funding for the All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Regional Centre Bike Network through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) is projected to be exhausted in 2026, based on the latest cash flow estimations. The funding is not specific to a single project, but rather the AAA as a whole, and the remaining \$12 million in funding will be used for other projects. The agreement is based on the completion of a complete network comprising facilities that are considered suitable for all ages and abilities by March 31, 2028. A new end date extension is already under consideration to align with the current AAA program plan with most segments planned to be completed by the end of 2028, with some challenging ones, like Africville, extending beyond that date (refer to Regional Centre “AAA” Bikeway Network Delivery Information Report dated May 29, 2025). There is a risk that the proposed approach could (i) delay completion of the network beyond the target date and, (ii) result in the recommendation of a design option that does not meet the typical requirements of a AAA facility. These risks are not considered to be significant, as it is expected that there will be opportunity to renegotiate these aspects of the ICIP agreement

And an overall risk is that (iii) the delayed segments might not be covered by the remaining ICIP agreement funds, as those funds are expected to be exhausted by 2026. However, this risk already applies to other segments, given that the current Program Cost exceeds the funds available under the existing ICIP agreement, and new funding opportunities will need to be explored.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Other than receiving the community and stakeholder feedback described in the July 8th Council report, no additional community engagement was conducted to inform this report.

As part of the functional planning process, stakeholders and the public were invited to learn more about the project and provide their feedback on the complete street concepts. Information about the project is available on the Halifax.ca website at:

www.halifax.ca/transportation/cycling-walking/expanding-network/regional-centre-bikeway-update#PeninsulaSouthCompleteStreets

Additional information, including the Phase 1 and 2 What We Heard summary reports and links to four short videos explaining the project, are available on the Shape Your City project page: www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/peninsula-south-complete-streets

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This project is supportive of the sustainability objectives of the municipality as it aims to make it safer and more comfortable for residents to choose sustainable transportation options for everyday transportation purposes.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose to:

1. Direct the CAO to proceed with implementing the Morris Street bikeway as approved by Regional Council on July 8th, 2025 and initiate additional planning to consider converting Lower Water Street between Terminal Road and Morris Street to two-way traffic to mitigate impacts to traffic capacity on Lower Water Street. Also, direct the CAO to proceed with preliminary and detailed design for the University Avenue segment based on the council approved configuration from October 2024. This is not recommended as it is expected that the project would not be permitted to proceed by the province as communicated in Premier Houston’s July 16th letter.
2. Direct the CAO to proceed with preliminary and detailed design for the approved University Avenue

segment without additional targeted stakeholder consultation or review of alternative design options (in addition to recommended CAO direction to complete additional functional planning and engagement for alternative cycling connections for Morris Street). This is not recommended as it is inconsistent with Council direction from June 24th, 2025 to investigate alternative network solutions and cost savings opportunities for the AAA bike network

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39 as amended

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

- (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality.
- (b) the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or
- (c) the expenditure is legally required to be paid.

(2) The Municipality may expend money provided for in an operating budget or capital budget for a purpose other than that set out in the operating budget or capital budget for that fiscal year if the expenditure does not affect the total of the amounts estimated for the operating budget and the capital budget.

322(1) Council may design, lay out, open, expand, construct, maintain, improve, alter, repair, light, water, clean and clear streets in the Municipality.

Motor Vehicle Act, R.S., c. 293, as amended:

90 (3) The traffic authority may also mark lanes for traffic on street pavements at such places as they may deem advisable, consistent with this Act and may erect traffic signals consistent with this Act to control the use of lanes for traffic.

Administrative Order Number One, the *Procedures of the Council Administrative Order*

62 (2) A motion of rescission cancels or countermands a previous action or order has the effect of striking out an entire main motion, resolution, rule, section, or paragraph that has been adopted at some previous time.

63 (2) A motion of rescission may be put by any Member regardless of how the Member voted on the original matter.

(7) A motion of rescission shall be passed by a vote of two-thirds (2/3 rds) of the Members present and voting.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Letter from the Honourable Premier Tim Houston to Mayor, Council and the Chief Administrative Officer (July 16, 2025)



NOVA SCOTIA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

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HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
B3J 2T3

July 16, 2025

Halifax Regional Municipality
PO Box 1749
Halifax, NS
B3J 3A5

Dear Mayor Fillmore, CAO O'Toole, HRM Councillors,

It is with great concern that I write to you regarding HRM Council's plans to turn Morris Street into a one-way street.

Eliminating one lane to add bike lanes will contribute to traffic congestion, create unnecessary public safety risks and potentially jeopardize port activity.

We should all be moved by the letter from Emergency Medical Care Inc. (EMCI) and their concerns about the impact on providing emergency services in the area. Their letter should be taken seriously.

In addition, the Halifax Port Authority and PSA Halifax have raised concerns that should be respected. Simply put, it is irresponsible to prioritize bike lanes over a key economic driver for the province, which is exactly what the port is.

To say that I find it disappointing that public safety and economic impact concerns have been dismissed with a simple shrug of the shoulders would be a serious understatement.

As you're aware, this spring our government passed *Bill 24*, which provides order-making authority with respect to transportation projects in municipalities. If HRM Council proceeds to make Morris a one-way street, the provincial government will be forced to act.

I remain hopeful that common sense will prevail and Council will reverse this decision. Please advise by Wednesday, August 6th if Council is prepared to do so.

Yours truly,



Honourable Tim Houston
Premier of Nova Scotia