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**Item No. 12.1.3**  
**Transportation Standing Committee**  
**November 23, 2017**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

**SUBMITTED BY:** Bruce Zvaniga, P.Eng., Director of Transportation and Public Works

**DATE:** September 27, 2017

**SUBJECT:** **One-time Redirection of Sidewalk Replacement, Renewal, and New Sidewalk Funding to Improve Key Curb Ramps**

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**ORIGIN**

At the June 7, 2017, Transportation Standing Committee meeting, the following motion was passed: The Transportation Standing Committee requests a staff report on the challenges and opportunities regarding a one-time redirection of sidewalk replacement, renewal, and new sidewalk funding to fund a program to improve key curb ramps at critical intersections leading to schools, institutions, hospitals, commercial areas, transit terminals and key bus stops to bring sidewalk infrastructure to the revised accessible Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

HRM Charter, section 93(1) - The Council shall make estimates of the sums that are required by the Municipality for the fiscal year;

HRM Charter, section 35(2)(d)(i) - The CAO can only authorize budgeted expenditures or within the amount determined by Council by policy;

Halifax Regional Municipality policy on Changes to Cost Sharing for Capital Projects - changes requiring Council approval.

The following report conforms to the above guidelines.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee:

- 1) Not redirect funds to support a program to improve key pedestrian ramps until HRM receives further direction from the Province of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Standards Association;
- 2) Staff continues upgrading pedestrian ramps to the existing HRM standard in all sidewalk projects.

## **BACKGROUND**

HRM has 947 kilometers of existing sidewalks (with roughly 110 kms currently qualifying for a capital upgrade) and over 390 requests for new sidewalks. The current annual capital budget allocated for each program is \$3,000,000. Approximately 5 kms of existing sidewalks are upgraded, and 8-10 new sidewalks (4-5 kms) constructed annually. Generally speaking, sidewalk renewal projects include the upgrading of the pedestrian ramps where required, and the enhancement utilizes the current pedestrian ramp standard outlined in HRM's Municipal Design Guideline (Redbook). This practice has been in place for a number of years whereby deficient ramps are upgraded, through projects such as sidewalk renewals, as outlined in the annual capital program.

The existing sidewalk network is rated every two years, and as part of that process, the sidewalk ramp condition (P1 Hazard, P2 Major, Poor, Fair or Good) is collected. Based on the last data collection conducted in 2016, HRM currently has a total of 9596 pedestrian ramps. As a note during this survey, it was observed that 63 locations were missing pedestrian ramps. The total number of ramps rated as "P1 Hazard", "P2 Major", or "Poor" is 785. In addition to the poor condition ramps, a total of 2434 ramps were rated as "Fair", and the remaining 6377 ramps were rated as "Good". What is not recorded is the type of ramp at each location, and whether it meets the current Redbook standard or a pre-amalgamation design.

## **DISCUSSION**

The CSA B-651 specification relates to accessible design for the built environment, and has been under consideration for revisions. It is HRM staff's understanding that a revised pedestrian ramp standard was to be finalized in 2017; however, it is unclear if the modifications have been formally completed. As well, the Province of Nova Scotia has recently legislated the Accessibility Act, and the development of regulations is to follow. It has been conveyed to HRM that the Province intends to establish working groups, with a mandate to develop accessibility standards including pedestrian ramps. However, the time table to institute the working groups and create new provincial regulations is unknown. Until such time, staff believes it would be premature to undertake an expansive upgrade of ramps using the current HRM standard in the event it does not comply with the new standard.

Other factors that will influence the decision to support the above noted motion include staffing resources, financial implications, contractor capacity, and impact on integration opportunities. As outlined above, the types of existing ramp standards across the network have not been characterized (including locations at critical intersections leading to schools, institutions, hospitals, commercial areas, transit terminals and key bus stops). Once a new standard has been finalized, staff will need to determine the number of ramps requiring an upgrade. Cost estimates can then be produced to better understand the financial implications. Given the significant number of locations, it is anticipated substantive survey and design work may be required to execute this program, and it is unknown if the current staffing levels could feasibly undertake such a program or if outsourcing would be the better option. As well, the construction industry would have to be consulted to determine capacity, a practical methodology and schedule to complete the upgrades.

Another influencing factor is the potential missed opportunity for integration. Many paving projects are integrated with new sidewalk and/or sidewalk renewal construction to take advantage of minimizing disruption to the neighbourhoods, realizing cost savings, improving safety, reducing maintenance costs, and enhancing pedestrian movement. Removing this opportunity to take advantage of the one-time redirection initiative will need to be evaluated.

It is noted though that a one-time upgrade of all critical locations with the appropriate pedestrian ramp design offers advantages such as large-scale improvement for accessibility, an anticipated competitive unit price given the proposed size of the program, and enhancement of safety and pedestrian movement. However, for reasons outlined above, until the new standards are realized and the number of locations to

be upgraded is known, it is difficult to justify undertaking this initiative at this time.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications at this time.

**RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report. The risks considered rate low.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was conducted in the preparation of this report.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Implications not identified.

**ALTERNATIVES**

Council could choose to approve a one-time redirection of the sidewalk renewal and new sidewalk accounts to address problematic pedestrian ramps at critical locations. However, staff does not recommend this alternative until the proposed new standard has been finalized and the other influencing factors have been properly evaluated.

**ATTACHMENTS**

N/A

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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