



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 11.1
Transportation Standing Committee
December 8, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner & Director, Planning & Development

DATE: November 17, 2016

SUBJECT: Regional Goods Movement Opportunity Scoping Study

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the February 23, 2016 meeting of Halifax Regional Council, a motion was passed to undertake the Integrated Mobility Plan. The project charter approved for that plan included, "While the focus will be on intra-regional mobility, regional infrastructure that facilitates inter-regional goods movement will also be in scope."

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter:

Section 79 Power to expend money

- (1) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for
- (m) promotion and attraction of institutions, industries and businesses, the stabilization and expansion of employment opportunities and the economic development of the Municipality;
 - (o) public transportation services;
 - (aa) streets, culverts, retaining walls, sidewalks, curbs and gutters.

BACKGROUND

In February, 2016 a Request for Proposals was issued for a Regional Goods Movement Opportunities Scoping Study. On June 27, 2016, the CAO awarded the contract for the study to Davies Transportation Consulting Inc. The study has now been completed and the final report approved by HRM staff on November 16, 2016.

DISCUSSION

The stated purpose of undertaking the work in the Regional Goods Movement Opportunities Scoping Study was to provide needed background and a strategic framework for how the movement of goods within the region should be integrated into the regional transportation network. The document will be one of several tools that HRM staff will use in developing the Integrated Mobility Plan, scheduled to be presented for approval of the Standing Committee and Regional Council in the Spring of 2017. As a background document, none of the recommendations in the Regional Goods Movement Opportunities Scoping Study will have any status unless brought forward through the Integrated Mobility Plan. For this reason, there is no need for the approval of the Standing Committee or Regional Council at this time. It is being presented to the Standing Committee for the information of its members and so that it can be released to the public and to stakeholders, in particular the Halifax Port Authority who are currently preparing a Ports Master Plan.

The Executive Summary from this report is attached and the link to the full report is provided below:

www.halifax.ca/traffic/documents/GoodsMovement.pdf

When the study was initiated, the following tasks were expected to be addressed:

- Review previous studies in the Halifax area and case studies from other cities
- From the large number of potential solutions to reducing the impact of truck traffic downtown, determine which hold the best opportunity
- Identify aspects of freight movement within the region that should be addressed in the Integrated Mobility Plan
- Identify what role the Municipality should be playing the management, monitoring and measurement of freight within the region

When the study was initiated, issues surrounding the operation of the port and the movement of goods had been somewhat static and it was felt to be an opportune time to engage stakeholders in discussing ideas related to improving the movement of goods. Soon after the study began, however, the Halifax Port Authority announced that it would be conducting its own master planning exercise to determine, among other things, how to build future capacity for larger container ships. Although this announcement created a “moving target” for recommendations coming out of the HRM study, the report succeeded in providing HRM staff with the needed background to engage with the Halifax Port Authority in the development of its Master Plan.

As the report states:

HRM is not the primary decision maker in planning for port infrastructure, but the city has a major stake in the outcome, and current decisions will affect the regional transportation system for decades to come. Close cooperation between HRM, HPA and other stakeholders is critical. The current Master Planning exercise by HPA may provide an effective mechanism for this cooperation to take place.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications of this report. Any financial implications related to the management of goods will be identified in the Integrated Mobility Plan.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Regional Goods Movement Scoping Study project was undertaken by Davies Transportation Consulting Inc. in collaboration with MariNova Consulting, Group ATN and S5 Services for Halifax Regional Municipality. It represents the starting point in examining goods movement issues in the context of development of a new Integrated Mobility Plan which will expand the focus of regional transportation planning.

The inclusion of goods movement issues in regional planning efforts is relatively new. Within North America, the U.S. leads in the theory and practice of goods movement planning, due to federal statutes governing Statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes.

Current research on urban goods movements can be divided into two broad categories. One stream focuses primarily on freight movements, which include a broad range of industrial and large volume international, interregional and interurban freight flows. The other focuses on “last mile” issues related to delivery for local consumption by businesses and consumers. Environmental issues and land use also have a major influence on goods movement planning.

The consulting team conducted extensive consultations to identify issues related to goods movements which are of concern to the public. Meetings were conducted in person and by telephone with commercial stakeholders involved in goods movement, public agencies and community organizations.

Downtown Truck Traffic

The goods movement issue most often identified by both commercial and community organizations is container truck traffic transiting downtown Halifax to and from Halterm. Analysis of available truck traffic data suggests that port-related activity is the largest generator of heavy truck traffic on the Halifax Peninsula and on the A. Murray MacKay Bridge. Based on HRM Police data, commercial vehicles account for a larger share of collisions in the downtown area and along the port truck routes (7.7% to 7.9%) than in HRM as a whole (4.9%).

Public recognition of the vital economic role of the Port of Halifax has been a factor in public tolerance of heavy truck traffic. However, the realization of HRM's plans to create a more densely populated and liveable urban core in the downtown area is likely to result in increased public pressure for resolution.

Any solutions must maintain the competitiveness of the Port of Halifax as an international trade gateway. HRM needs to play a key role as a champion for the Port. It is particularly important to maintain the diversity and scale of container shipping services to support local and regional export industries in the future.

Solutions adopted by other gateway cities were reviewed in a number of Case Studies, and an extensive review of previous Halifax studies related to this issue was conducted. As a result of that review, we recommend further exploration of a number of potential solutions.

- Operational improvements: There are a number of operational improvements which have been adopted in other gateway cities to reduce congestion due to truck-related traffic congestion including appointment systems, financial penalties for peak hour trips, and off-dock storage of empty containers. All of these solutions have financial impacts for commercial stakeholders, and their effectiveness depends on characteristics of trip patterns and other operational factors. Further analysis would be required to quantify the potential costs and benefits of any of these solutions.
- Truck Route through the Rail Cut: During our consultations, a variety of stakeholders suggested development of a truck route through the rail cut to alleviate truck traffic downtown. The feasibility of this option is dependent on decisions on other potential competing uses for the corridor, including commuter rail. We recommend that further study on this option be delayed until some clarity on this issue is achieved.
- Rail Shuttle: The Distripark study and the subsequent Integrated Transportation Corridor Study done for NS TIR recommended that a more detailed assessment of costs and benefits, and the conditions that would need to exist in order to make the distripark concept viable, be carried out. Given the changing circumstances in 2016, this should still be done. The merger or consolidation of Ceres and Halterm and the potential movement of significant additional volumes through Halterm present an opportunity to examine the potential for a Ceres – Halterm shuttle. It may also be useful to review Railrunner technology as an alternative to a conventional rail shuttle, and assess the potential for its use in Halifax.
- Cross-Harbour Ferry: This concept has been suggested as a potential alternative for container movements from Halterm. We recommend that further analysis be conducted on the feasibility of load on/load off (LO/LO) and roll on/roll off (RO/RO) options for a cross-harbour ferry operation to transport containers to and from Halterm.

- Relocation of Halterm: The current Master Planning exercise being undertaken by Halifax Port Authority includes development of additional terminal infrastructure to enable simultaneous handling of two “ultra-class” container vessels of up to 400 metres in length. Relocation of terminal operations to a new location on the Dartmouth shoreline, either in Shearwater or on the former Esso refinery lands, is one potential option. A number of items should be considered in these discussions and in any future analysis, including comparative costs; potential revenues from redevelopment of the existing Halterm site; and potential trade-offs between development of a new terminal across the harbour, and investment in infrastructure to mitigate truck traffic from the current Halterm location.

HRM is not the primary decision maker in planning for port infrastructure, but the city has a major stake in the outcome, and current decisions will affect the regional transportation system for decades to come. Close cooperation between HRM, HPA and other stakeholders is critical. The current Master Planning exercise by HPA may provide an effective mechanism for this cooperation to take place.

Planning Recommendations

HRM's Integrated Mobility Plan is being developed to expand the focus of regional transportation planning. The traditional focus on people's need to move about the region will be supplemented to encompass issues including goods movement, higher-order transit, parking management, active and healthy communities, connected and autonomous vehicles, emerging options for ride sharing (such as Uber and Lyft), and the long-term potential for car sharing.

Currently there is no formal mechanism within HRM's planning process to ensure that goods movement issues are considered in planning decisions.

There is currently great interest in “Complete Streets” policies. In planning for goods movements, it is critical that the “users” include trucks, which are critical for the economic vitality of a region. For HRM, a first step towards integrating goods movement considerations into planning decisions could be development of a checklist to ensure that all users' issues and interests have been considered. For goods movements this could include information on whether or not the location is on a major truck route, local land use patterns, and potential safety or economic impacts from changes to the volume or mix of traffic.

U.S. experience has highlighted two key functional requirements for goods movement planning:

- Input from key stakeholders, to discuss issues and build consensus for solutions. In U.S. cities, this is often done through a regional freight advisory committee. For HRM, the most expeditious means may be through an expanded focus for the existing Halifax Gateway Council. The inclusion of regular discussions on HRM's transportation policy and investment decisions as a regular item in the Gateway Council's agenda could enable the organization to be used as a more effective mechanism for exchanging information and consulting on potential impacts.
- Data and analytical tools, to identify needs and assess effects. We recommend that Halifax work with major regional stakeholders to develop a program for collection of truck traffic data, and explore the possibilities for senior government funding for collection of data and modelling of truck traffic, and assembly of other key goods movement data to support the continuing competitiveness of the Halifax Gateway.