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Item No. 14.5.1 (i)
Halifax Regional Council
August 14, 2018

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by Director

Dave Reage, Director, Halifax Transit

Original Signed

Steve Higgins, Acting Director, Planning and Development

Original Signed by 

John Traves, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 31, 2018

SUBJECT: Complete Streets Details – Gottingen Transit Priority Corridor

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the July 26, 2018 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, a supplementary report was requested that outlines the detailed design of the complete streets pedestrian realm improvements for the Gottingen Street Transit Priority Corridor for consideration by Regional Council.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, subsection 318(2): "In so far as is consistent with their use by the public, the Council has full control over the streets in the Municipality."

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, subsection 322(1): "The Council may design, lay out, open, expand, construct, maintain, improve, alter, repair, light, water, clean, and clear streets in the Municipality."

BACKGROUND

As a foundational policy of the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP), 'Complete Streets' underscores the need to take a holistic approach to designing streets, which considers how streets function as **places** as well as transportation **links**, and aims to improve comfort and safety, particularly for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users.

With the opportunity to secure funding from the Department of Energy's Connect2 program, staff sought to identify complete street enhancements for the Gottingen Transit Priority Corridor project which was initiated before the IMP was approved last December. To do this, staff engaged with community members and businesses during the detailed design phase of the project. There was a survey as well as open houses and on-street pop up engagement sessions. The survey gauged the community's interest in various streetscape improvement options. Most of the survey respondents were residents of the area who frequently walked on Gottingen Street. They identified trees and benches as the main types of things they would like to see more of. Curb and sidewalk improvements were also identified as desirable (refer to Attachment D of July 26, 2018 Transportation Standing Committee report).

On June 7, 2018, confirmation was received that the application for Connect2 funding was successful in the amount of \$100,000. The funding was contingent upon confirmation of matching funds and integration of the pedestrian improvements with the bus lane project. Further to an analysis of options, and considering the budget available, it was possible to incorporate some Complete Streets enhancements into this project. These primarily consist of curb extensions at Cunard Street, Portland Place, and Uniacke Street; as well as a soil trench to support urban trees on the west side of the street in front of 2202 & 2188 Gottingen Street (former Company House and MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects).

DISCUSSION

Complete Streets

Further to approval of the IMP, a Complete Streets Toolkit was developed to assist designers in assessing the transportation mode priorities for any given street, and identifying strategies to improve the comfort and safety of priority modes. The toolkit identifies strategies such as the addition of transit priority measures like bus lanes or queue jumps on transit priority streets; protected bicycle lanes on streets identified as part of the all ages and abilities (AAA) bicycle network; or the addition of sidewalks on streets lacking pedestrian infrastructure (these are particularly important if there are bus routes and high residential or employment densities nearby).

Some strategies can be considered on any corridor. For example, 'right-sizing' is a strategy which might reallocate road space to other uses, or tighten curb radii to slow turning traffic. Curb extensions can be added to "visually and physically narrow the roadway, creating safer and shorter crossings for pedestrians while increasing the available space for street furniture, benches, plantings, and street trees" (NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide). 'Greening', which seeks to add elements such as street trees, is another strategy that can provide many benefits (particularly for the pedestrian realm) while helping to implement the HRM Urban Forest Masterplan.

In addition to the transit priority measures that are the focus of the project, staff identified **curb extensions** and **greening** as the main strategies to help Gottingen become more of a 'Complete Street'.

Curb Extensions

As shown in more detail in Attachment #1, curb extensions supporting the pedestrian realm are proposed on both sides of Portland Place, the north side of Cunard Street, and the south side of Uniacke Street. Each curb extension reduces the pedestrian crossings of each side street and includes a unit paver (i.e. 'brick') surface with one bench and two black bicycle racks. These materials will be in keeping with the Capital District area style and streetscaping improvements that were carried out in the early 2000s.

Soil Trench/ Trees

In typical urban conditions (i.e. when the sidewalk extends to the curb with no grass boulevard in between) it is difficult for trees to grow because the ground is packed very hard all around them. Roots have little space and trees planted in such conditions often remain very small, if they survive at all, and contribute very few benefits to the public realm. A soil trench essentially consists of a buried concrete planter that is designed to contain a sufficient volume of soil under the sidewalk to support the growth of a tree, while ensuring the structural integrity of the roadway and sidewalk on either side.

Also shown on Attachment #1, HRM plans to pilot the installation of a soil trench approximately 33m long with enough soil for three trees to grow to maturity. The location on the west side of the street outside of 2202 and 2188 Gottingen Street was selected because this side of the street lacks any other buffering of the pedestrian realm due to its narrow sidewalks (a series of planters were installed on wider sidewalks on the east side of the street about 15 years ago which provide some buffering, vegetation, and informal seating). The tree species that has been selected for the soil trench has a mature height below the wires, thus minimizing utility conflicts, while masking some of the negative visual impacts of overhead wires (Figure 1).

This soil trench design was recently developed by consultants for HRM specifically for narrow urban sidewalks and this project will represent its first application. This will allow the municipality to test its effectiveness before considering further deployments. The system is different than the soil cells used on Argyle Street which consist of a load bearing plastic structure under the sidewalk to contain the soil needed for successful tree growth.

Other Enhancements

Through public engagement, residents identified a concern with the distance between the pedestrian push button and the crosswalk at Uniacke Street. In response, the project team integrated a stand-alone pedestrian push button directly beside the crosswalk to address this concern. All new curb ramps will also have tactile warning bumps as an aid for people with visual impairments.

Through consultation with the local councillor, an opportunity was also identified to add three additional trees in grass (more cost effective than trees in trenches) within the street right of way, but behind the sidewalk opposite the Uniacke Street curb extension (Attachment #1).

Staff will also investigate opportunities to remove concrete and reinstate a grass boulevard with trees where residential properties are fronting on the east side of Gottingen Street between Uniacke Street and the North End library (Figure 2). It is not clear why the boulevard was hardened beside the extra wide sidewalk that is located here. If budget allows, it will be considered with this project and if not, it can be integrated with future repaving work.



Fig. 1 Ornamental Pear matures below wire height



Fig. 2 Concrete boulevard on the east side of Gottingen St.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As described above, the Nova Scotia Department of Energy recently confirmed this project as a recipient of \$100,000 in funding to support pedestrian realm improvements in association with the transit priority corridor. The provincial funding is contingent upon matching funds, and will be combined with up to \$220,000 budgeted in project account CM000009 – Transit Priority Measures, as described in the Financial Implications Section of the July 26, 2018 Transportation Standing Committee report.

Budget Summary:	<u>Project Account No. CM000009</u>	
	Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$ 643,837
	Add: Funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Energy	<u>\$ 100,000</u>
	Balances	\$ 743,837

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement efforts were briefly described above and are fully described in the July 26, 2018 Transportation Standing Committee report. Additional engagement specific to the curb extensions was carried out with the North End Business Association as well as business owners abutting the Portland Place extensions.

ATTACHMENTS

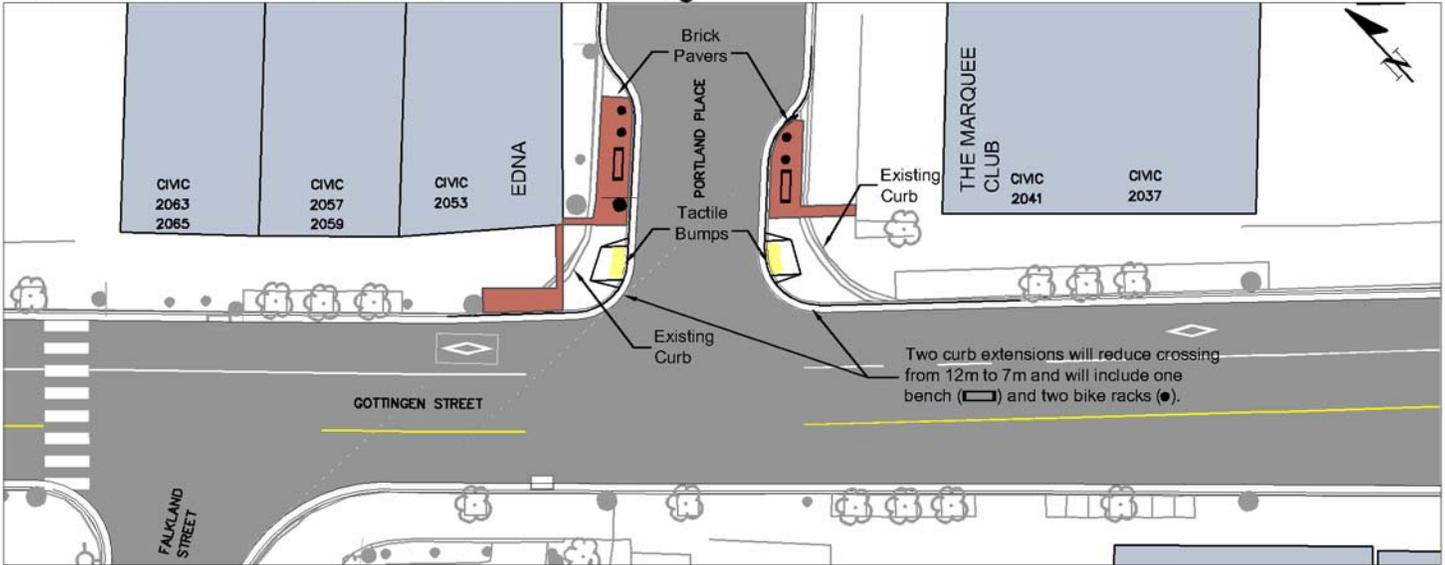
Attachment #1: Curb Extensions and Tree Planting

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

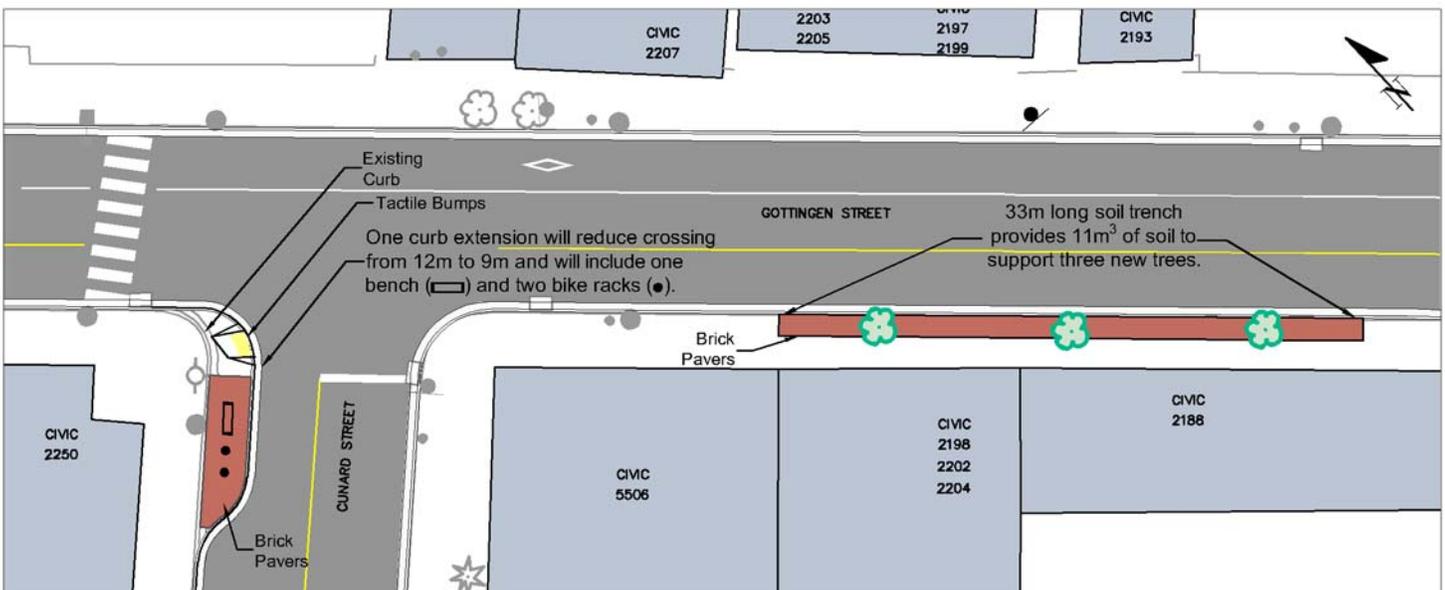
Report Prepared by: Hanita Koblents, Principal Planner, Urban Design 902.292.2680

Financial Approval by: Jerry Blackwood, Acting Director of Finance and Asset Management/CFO, 902.49036308

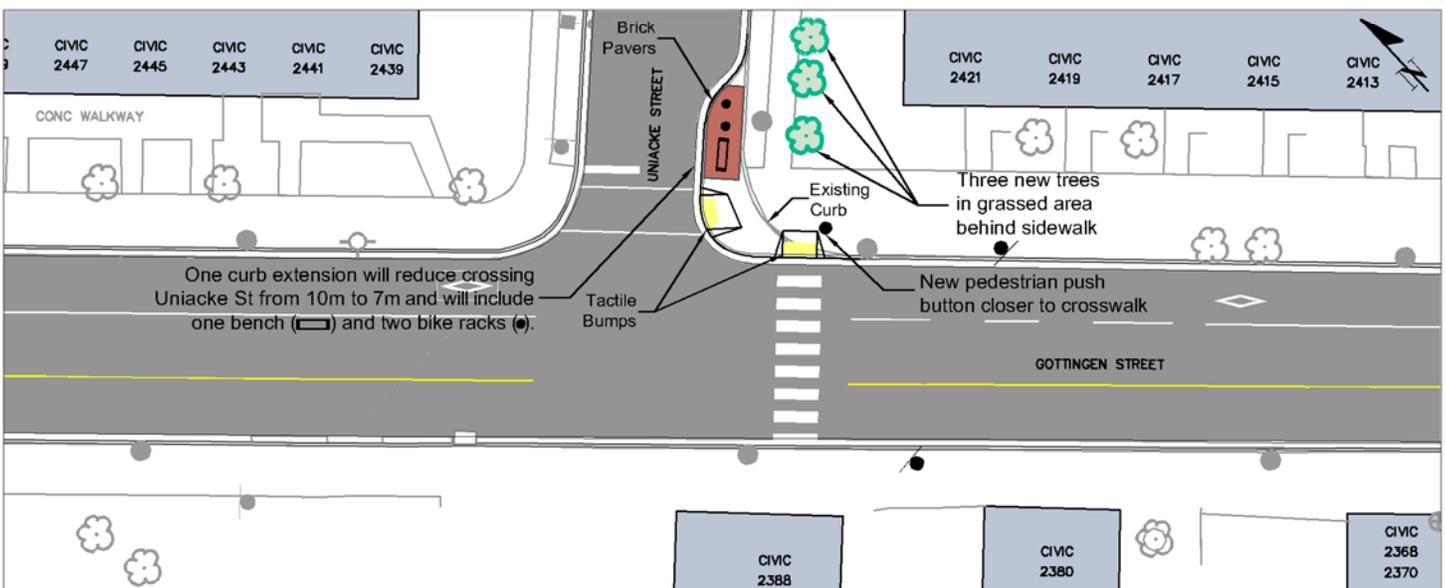
Attachment 1: Curb Extensions and Tree Planting



Intersection of Portland Place and Gottingen Street



Intersection of Cunard Street and Gottingen Street



Intersection of Uniacke Street and Gottingen Street