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Information Item No. 2
Transportation Standing Committee
November 26, 2020

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

-Original Signed-

SUBMITTED BY:

Caroline Blair-Smith, Director, Human Resources

-Original Signed-

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 1, 2020

SUBJECT: Update on Implementation of Flexible Work Arrangements

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

On April 2, 2020 the Halifax Regional Council passed the following motion:

MOVED by Councillor Whitman, seconded by Councillor Russell

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to promote and encourage the use of the Flexible Work Arrangements Business Practice for all non-union employees as an option for managing congestion and reducing single occupancy vehicle trips in alignment with the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) and that staff return to the Transportation Standing Committee in six months with an update on implementation of the flexible work arrangements business practice.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Administrative Order One, the *Procedures of the Council Administrative Order*, Schedule 7 – Transportation Standing Committee Terms of Reference

Coordination of Priorities and Initiatives

5 The Transportation Standing Committee shall:

- (a) promote and enable public safety campaigns and outcomes that advocate safety;
- (b) provide policy direction related to neighbourhood transportation initiatives for traffic calming and mitigation;
- (c) provide input and review of By-law S-300, the Streets By-law, as it relates to approaches to routing, right-of-way management, accessibility and management of priorities for uses; and
- (d) oversee the Municipality's transportation demand management strategies.

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, subsection 34 (3):

9. The Transportation Standing Committee shall perform such other duties and responsibilities as may be determined by the Council.

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter,

34 (3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

Integrated Mobility Plan, Action 61

Work across municipal departments to implement flexible work schedule pilot programs for employees.

BACKGROUND

At their February 27, 2020 meeting, the Transportation Standings Committee (TSC) recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to promote and encourage the use of the Flexible Work Arrangements Business Practice for all non-union employees as an option for managing congestion and reducing single occupancy vehicle trips in alignment with the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) and requested that staff return to the Transportation Standing Committee in six months with an update on implementation of the Flexible Work Arrangements business practice.

On March 15, 2020, following the Province's statement regarding the first three presumptive cases of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia, the CAO directed all Halifax employees who could work from home to do so. The Province declared a State of Emergency on March 22, 2020, and work-from-home arrangements were extended until further notice. At their April 2, 2020 virtual meeting, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Regional Council unanimously approved the TSC's recommendation regarding the promotion of flexible work as a traffic mitigation strategy.

DISCUSSION

In response to the COVID-19 emergency measures, more than 1,400 municipal employees worked from home during the period between March and September 2020. This reality has delayed the implementation and promotion of flexible work arrangements as a stand-alone initiative, as employees began working from home in the context of the extraordinary circumstances created by the global pandemic and not as a result of a flexible work arrangements program.

While the pandemic has delayed the promotion of the Flexible Work Arrangements program, it provided a unique opportunity to determine what positions could be fulfilled in a work-from-home capacity and to develop techniques to address the challenges posed by managing and working within a distributed team. Staff conducted a survey for employees working from home in order to learn from the experience of the pandemic and collected data to inform the Flexible Work program going forward. The survey, which was open from June 23 to July 14, received 955 responses and indicated a strong desire from employees for the continuation of flexible work arrangements beyond the emergency measures created by the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, 15% of respondents reported having access to some form of flexible work arrangement and 92% of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to request a flexible work arrangement in the future. For an infographic summarizing the survey results, please see Attachment A.

The results of survey have been incorporated into the development of Flexible Work Arrangements Guidelines for Employees and Leaders. Drafts of these Guidelines are currently with the Business Unit Directors and Senior Managers for final review and once the feedback has been addressed, they will be introduced to the Municipality through an internal communications campaign that will promote the use of flexible work arrangements as a stand-alone practice from the work-from-home arrangements put in place

during the pandemic. The guidelines include an application process that will allow flexible work arrangement to be documented and traced for data-collection purposes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the implementation of flexible work arrangements. A flexible work arrangement may change the location and/or the schedule of an employee's work hours but will not have an impact on service delivery. If a significant number of employees begin (or continue) working from home as part of a regular flexible work agreement, the Municipality may be able to reduce the footprint of its office space.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Experiences Working from Home Survey Infographic

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.

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Halifax Regional Municipality

Experiences Working from Home

Halifax Regional Municipality conducted a survey among employees who experienced working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

955

Respondents completed the survey.

Commuting Pre-COVID



61% of respondents drive to work alone, while another 7% carpool with 1 or more people.



20% of respondents take transit to get to work.



12% of employees walk, bike or use other methods to get to work.

KM One Way to Work



19% <5 KM

23% 5-10 KM

28% 11-20 KM

30% >20

Flex Work Stats



15% of respondents had a flexible work arrangement before the pandemic.



76% of respondents rated the culture of flexibility as nonexistent or inconsistent before the pandemic.



80% of respondents report being able to complete more than 85% of their regular duties while working from home.



67% of respondents report working the same hours and time frame as before the pandemic.



77% of respondents say their time management has not been negatively impacted by working from home.



97% of respondents say they have regular contact with their team and manager.



92% of respondents are more likely to request a flexible work arrangement post-pandemic.

Next Steps



The data from this survey will be used to help support management in making decisions around returning to work during the current pandemic. It will also assist Human Resources in the development of the new Flex-Halifax Guide for Flexible Work Arrangements.

HALIFAX