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Item No. 13.1.2
Halifax and West Community Council
July 13, 2021

TO: Chair and Members of Halifax and West Community Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Brad Anguish, P.Eng, Executive Director, Transportation & Public Works

Original Signed
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 18, 2021

SUBJECT: **Addition of Candidate Route to Active Transportation Priorities Plan: Oak Street to Westmount Local Street Bikeway Connection**

ORIGIN

September 8, 2021 Halifax and West Community Council motion (Item 7.1.3):

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Cleary **THAT** Halifax and West Community Council request a staff report regarding possibilities for establishing a connection from George Dauphinee to through Saunders Park across Chebucto to Armcrescent, to Third to connect to across Connaught to Allan/Oak for consideration as a candidate route for bicycle facilities in the Active Transportation Priorities Plan and the Regional Centre 'AAA' Bikeway Network project. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Section 229(1): A municipal planning strategy may include statements of policy with respect to any or all of the following: (b) the physical, economic, and social environment of the Municipality; [...] (i) the provision of municipal services and facilities; [...] and (q) any other matter related to the physical, social, or economic environment of the Municipality.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax and West Community Council recommend that Regional Council amend the Active Transportation Priorities Plan by designating the Oak Street – Westmount corridor (including Third Street, Armcrescent East Drive, and Benjamin Green Drive) as a “candidate local street bikeway” route and improve the walkways through Saunders Park to Peter Lowe Avenue as described in the Discussion section of this report.

BACKGROUND

Making Connections: The 2014-19 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan (AT Plan) was approved by Regional Council in September 2014. The AT Plan describes the approach that the Municipality is using to build connected walking and cycling facilities. Maps 2A, B, and C of the Plan identify specific streets as candidate corridors for cycling facilities (e.g. bike lane, local street bikeway, or bikeway desired-type to be determined) or AT greenways (more recently known as multi-use pathways). These candidate corridors are then planned and implemented (subject to various factors) over the life of the AT Plan.

Since approval of the AT Plan in 2014, several new potential candidate routes have been added to the Plan. The corridor identified below in the “Discussion” section is recommended for addition to the AT Plan as a candidate route. This will enable these streets to be considered for AT infrastructure enhancements in the future.

The addition of this corridor to the AT Plan does not necessarily constitute approval to implement the facilities. The designation of these corridors means that Staff is given direction to pursue further study on these connections as they relate to the larger walking and cycling network. When preparing to implement, a functional planning study would be conducted including elements of neighbourhood engagement to confirm the preferred routing and propose AT infrastructure enhancements along the corridor. This more detailed report would be subject to Community Council review and Regional Council approval prior to installation.

All Ages and Abilities Considerations

Where new infrastructure is being designed for consideration, an all ages and abilities (AAA) approach is taken wherever possible. This is consistent with the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) objective to “Encourage walking and cycling by building complete and connected networks that respond to the needs of urban, suburban and rural communities, for all ages and abilities” as well as the vision to develop a connected AAA Bikeway network in the Regional Centre. The intention is to build bikeway facilities that serve the highest number of people and make it easier and safer to choose cycling as a mode of transportation. Professional guidelines (e.g. TAC and NACTO facility selection guides) are used to inform which AAA cycling treatments may be best suited for each street.

‘Local Street Bikeways’ are a AAA cycling facility recognised in both the AT Plan and the IMP. These bikeways are often located on low volume residential corridors that follow the desire line of cyclists as quiet alternatives to nearby busier streets. Motor vehicles and bicycles share the lane in single file where possible and the corridors are optimized for the safety, comfort, and connectivity of people on bicycles. This may include consideration of traffic calming features (e.g. speed humps, speed tables) to manage speed, traffic diversion measures (e.g. raised medians, partial closures, turn restrictions, etc.) to manage volume, and measures to help crossing major intersections (e.g. user activated beacons/signals, refuge islands) where required to improve safety and connectivity along the route.

The IMP and AT Plan also recognize ‘AT Greenways’ or multi-use pathways (MUPs) as a type of shared AAA facility to support both walking and cycling. These MUPs are typically off-street and separated from vehicle traffic which makes them generally safer and more comfortable for new users. Professional guidance (e.g. TAC, NACTO) informs the preferred width and layout of these facilities based on the expected volume of users at peak. A 3.0m – 4.0m asphalt pathway is recommended in urban areas which facilitates winter snow clearing and year-round use.

DISCUSSION

Whether or not a proposed route should be added to the AT Plan as a “candidate route” is assessed based on factors such as:

- Proximity to origins and destinations such as high-density residential areas, schools, employment destinations, major parks, recreation centres, commercial areas, transit terminals, other services;

- Classification of road and existing desire lines;
- Relationship to existing walking and cycling facilities or other proposed routes in the AT Plan or IMP to ensure network connectivity; and,
- Existing Council direction.

There are four classifications of “candidate routes” based on the recommended type of facility below:

AT Plan Classification	Most Appropriate Context
Candidate Bike Lanes	Streets with higher speeds and traffic volumes that require designated space for cyclists.
Candidate Local Street Bikeway	Low volume residential streets with lower travel speeds to promote safe and comfortable lane sharing.
Candidate Bikeway Desired (TBD)	Most flexible category. More study is required to determine recommended type of cycling facility.
Envisioned Greenway	Primarily off-road multi-use pathway facilities for shared walking and cycling.

Whether or not a candidate active transportation route would be selected for further functional planning, detailed design and construction, would depend on a prioritization process comparing all candidate routes. Factors such as cost, constructability, and integration opportunities would guide a decision on whether a candidate AT route is brought forward for further planning and implementation.

Oak Street – Westmount Bikeway Connection

The proposed connection between Oak Street and Peter Lowe Ave / George Dauphinee Ave is detailed in **Attachment A** and includes elements of local street bikeway and multi-use pathway (envisioned greenway).

The extent of the candidate route proposed as local street bikeway includes:

- Third St between Connaught Ave and Armcrescent East Dr;
- Armcrescent East Dr between Third St and Benjamin Green Dr; and,
- Benjamin Green Dr between Armcrescent East Dr and Chebucto Rd.

This proposed local street bikeway route represents a connected corridor of local, residential streets with under 1,000 vehicles per day. This facility would connect with the Allan-Oak Local Street Bikeway, which is partially complete and to AT facilities in Westmount, with connections to the Halifax Shopping Centre and the Bayers Road Multi-Use Pathway. As these streets are currently operating within reasonable volume thresholds of a local street bikeway, minimal improvements would likely be required to realize this route. The focus would be on speed management (if required) and incorporating pedestrian and bicycle enhancements to cross at major intersections.

To make the connection across major roads, two enhanced crossing treatments could be considered as part of the local street bikeway in the following locations:

- Connaught Ave to bridge short section between Oak St and Third St; and,
- Chebucto Rd to connect Benjamin Green Dr to the pathways in Saunders Park.

These are busier arterial roadways that could act as barriers to the AAA connectedness of the route. Measures to help people walking and cycling to get gaps to safely cross these multi-lane roads will be an important consideration in the functional planning process. In particular, Oak Street and Third Street are offset by approximately 30m and some form of transitional treatment could be required (e.g. a short section of multi-use pathway or bi-directional protected bikeway on Connaught Ave). There is an existing RA-5 crosswalk on Chebucto Rd at Benjamin Green Dr that improves connectivity and crossing safety across this major street. However, as it stands today this RA-5 activation does not protect the right-of-way of people cycling without dismounting to cross as a pedestrian. Improvements to the existing treatment would be considered in functional planning.

As an addition to the local street bikeway elements described above, the feasibility of improvements should be investigated to the described walkway through Saunders Park (see **Attachment A**) to connect this corridor into the Westmount neighbourhood. This walkway connects through the park to Peter Lowe Ave / George Dauphinee Ave and would represent a network link to the West End AAA Bikeway and Bayers Road Multi-Use Pathway.

This walkway currently functions for low volumes of people walking and cycling (approx. 2.0m width), however, it could be considered for upgrade to a multi-use pathway standard in future years as the Oak-Westmount connection is implemented. Widening this walkway to a multi-use pathway and improving the asphalt surface would improve the safety and comfort for all users by allowing more space to pass. Staff have also heard that a wider MUP means greater accessibility for users with limited hearing and vision.

The entirety of this Oak-Westmount connection should be built to AAA standards where possible. It represents an important link in the Regional Cycling Network that was missing from the AT Plan. In choosing to move forward with the designation, planning, design, and construction of this route, HRM would be improving the connectivity of the network and making it easier and safer for people to choose cycling as a mode of transportation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with adding these corridors as candidate routes to the Active Transportation Priorities Plan. Future expenditures will be brought forward for consideration in the appropriate capital and/or operating budgets.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no risks associated with the recommendation in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The suggestion to add an enhanced walking and cycling connection from Westmount to the Allan-Oak Local Street Bikeway route was heard from the public as part of the West End 'AAA' Bikeway functional planning process. These ideas were echoed by the area councillors in raising the motion for this Staff Report. Further public engagement would be required in this neighbourhood through the functional planning process to confirm desired routing and proposed design features before the route could be constructed (pending Council approval).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications associated with the recommendations of this report. The potential future enhancement of this walking and cycling corridor will make it safer and more convenient for residents to travel using sustainable modes of transportation.

ALTERNATIVES

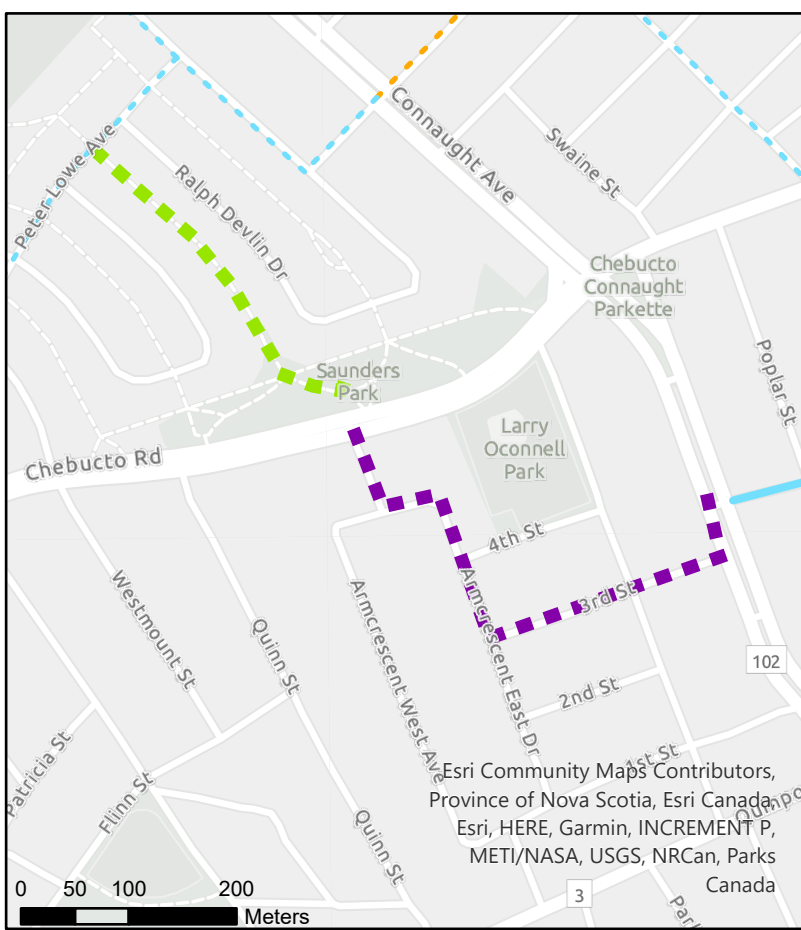
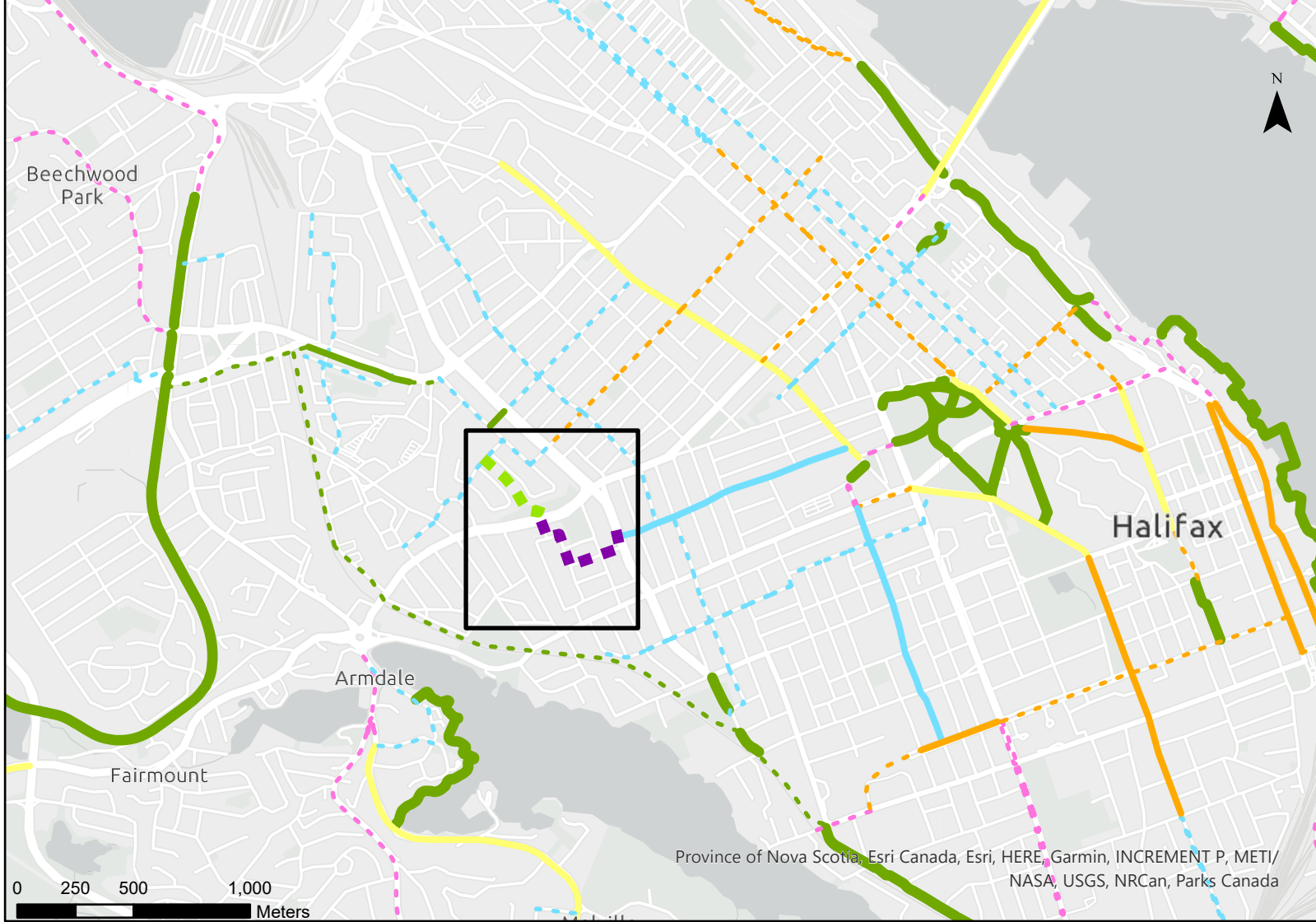
Halifax and West Community Council may recommend that Halifax Regional Council does not amend the Active Transportation Priorities Plan to include consideration of this Oak-Westmount candidate route. This alternative is not recommended as there is demand for people walking and cycling to connect through this area, and the existing AT Plan routes leave a noticeable gap here.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Proposed Oak – Westmount Local Street Bikeway Connection for Amendment to AT Plan

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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Attachment A:

Proposed Oak-Westmount Cycling Connection (Candidate Local Street Bikeway and Multi-Use Pathway Upgrades) for Amendment to AT Plan

- ### Proposed Amendment to AT Plan
- Oak-Westmount Local Street Bikeway Connection (Candidate)
 - Existing Walkway for Upgrade to Multi-Use Pathway

- ### Existing Infrastructure + AT Plan Routes
- Existing Protected Bike Lanes
 - Existing Painted Bike Lanes
 - Existing Local Street Bikeway
 - Existing Multi-Use Pathway
 - - - Candidate Bike Lanes
 - - - Candidate Bikeway Desired (Type TBD)
 - - - Candidate Local Street Bikeway
 - - - Envisioned Multi-Use Pathway

Date Exported: