

To: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

Submitted By:

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

Date: March 28, 2023

Subject: **Pan-African Crosswalks Pilot Project Update**

ORIGIN

April 6, 2021, Halifax Regional Council motion (Item 12.1)

MOVED by Councillor Purdy, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report that assesses the feasibility of expanding the current Pride Crosswalks Graphics Program, using the same design as the current rainbow crosswalks, to include the painting of Pan-African colours on existing crosswalks in historic African Nova Scotia communities.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Motor Vehicle Act, subsections 89(1) and 89(2) provide:

89(1), Subject to such authority as may be vested in the Minister, the Registrar or the Department, traffic authorities in regard to highways under their respective authority may cause appropriate signs to be erected and maintained designating business and residence districts and railway grade crossings and such other signs, markings and traffic control signals as may be deemed necessary to direct and regulate traffic and to carry out the provisions of this Act.

89(2) The Department shall have general supervision with respect to the erection by traffic authorities of official traffic signs and signals, for the purpose of obtaining, so far as practicable, uniformity as to type and location of official traffic signs and signals throughout the province, and no traffic authority shall place or erect any traffic signs, signals or markings unless of a type or conforming to specifications approved by the Department.

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Part XII, subsection 322(1) provides:

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."

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Permanently expand the current Crosswalk Graphics Program to enable the painting of Pan-African colours on existing marked crosswalks in historic African Nova Scotian communities to be funded through District funds or other external funding; and
2. Allocate funding from the Public Works operating budget to be used to maintain the Pan-African crosswalk art at the marked crosswalk at Cherry Brook Road and Highway 7 and at Maclaughlin Road and Highway 7 as per the financial implications section of this report.

BACKGROUND

On February 8, 2022, Regional Council approved the installation of two crosswalks with the painting of the Pan-African colours at Cherry Brook Road and Highway 7, and at Maclaughlin Road and Highway 7. The cost to install the graphics was \$2,084 (net HST included) each. The addition of the Pan-African colours into the crosswalk graphic program was considered a pilot program at the time. Similar to the Pride crosswalk graphics, the graphics are designed and installed so that they covered only a limited amount of the crosswalk area and fit completely within the crosswalk without covering or modifying the standard crosswalk lines. This approach ensured the crosswalk remained substantially unaltered and maintained the typical appearance of a marked crosswalk.

Figure 1 – Crosswalk with Pan-African Colours at Cheery Brook Road and Highway 7



DISCUSSION

The Pan-African Colours

It is generally believed that Pan-African colours have their origin in the red, yellow, and green in the Ethiopian Flag and the red, black and green in the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) flag. These colours have been adopted into the national flags of several African and Caribbean countries, and they are similarly used as a symbol by many Pan-African organizations and movements. The design consists of a sequence of red, black, green, and yellow to make a block of four colours. The previously engaged group in 2019, viewed the Pan African crosswalk art installation as a focal point in celebrating and telling the story of the area as a historic African Nova Scotian community.

The Pan-African flag has garnered support across institutions, nationwide, as a symbol of global solidarity for people of African descent. Also in 2019, the municipality became one of the first municipalities in our region to raise the Pan-African flag in celebration of African Heritage Month.

Some of the key considerations that went into the decision to pilot Pan-African colours at crosswalks included:

- **History of African Nova Scotians:** African Nova Scotians are considered one of the founding communities of Nova Scotia. With history going back over 400 years, the story of African Nova Scotians is deeply rooted in their arrival, settlement, struggle and dispersion, as much as it is connected to the experience of discrimination and the stories of survival and ongoing contribution to the Nova Scotian society. In the 21st century, African Nova Scotians form a distinct community which is unique in the context of African descent communities in Canada.
- **Lake Loon/Cherry Brook Community:** Lake Loon/Cherry Brook is considered one of the oldest African Nova Scotian communities in the Preston area. Landmarks of historic significance within the community include the Cherry Brook United Baptist Church, which is a focal point for many in the community. The community is also home to a building that once housed a segregated school for Black children. The building was a segregated school until 1964. In the late 1960s, after the relocation of students, the former school functioned as the Lake Loon Community Centre until its closure in 1990. The community is also home to the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia which was established in 1983 to protect, preserve and promote the history and culture of African Nova Scotians.¹
- **Council Priorities:** The [2021-25 Strategic Priority Plan](#) identifies Community as a priority. This priority envisions a municipality that fosters “strong social equity through meaningful engagement to build safer and more inclusive communities for all”. The request can be filtered through the lens of Involved and Inclusive Communities – two of the outcomes of this priority.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Framework:** Inclusive Public Service is one of the goals of the municipality’s Diversity and Inclusion Framework. The intent of this goal is to “ensure inclusive and equitable access to and benefit of, municipal services, programs and facilities”. The municipality, in particular the business units involved, can leverage this request as an example of inclusive public service delivery to one of its historic communities.
- **UN International Decade for People of African Descent:** In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly passed a motion declaring 2015 – 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (the Decade). Through this proclamation, the United Nations is affirming the responsibility of the global community in recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected. The Decade provides an opportunity for governments and organizations around the world to adopt and act on the pillars of the decade: Recognition², Justice and Development. According to the UN, an objective of Recognition as a pillar of the decade is to “promote greater knowledge and recognition of and respect for the culture, history and heritage of people of African descent”, an objective that aligns with this request.

The municipality has been operating a Pride crosswalk graphics program since 2016 in support of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Over the past 5 years, the rainbow artwork program has grown from 18 locations (35 graphics) to 36 locations (53 graphics) of which 3 locations (12 Pride graphics) are funded from the Public Works budget.

Similar to the Pride crosswalk graphics, staff have no concerns about the safety of the Pan-African paint marking given that HRM has maintained strict adherence to a proven design approach. The only concerns around a significant expansion of the crosswalk graphic program would be the limited number of contractors that are available to fulfill these requests and the impacts that might have on the Municipality’s regular road painting priorities.

Based upon the pilot program’s success, staff recommends expanding the current Pride crosswalk graphic program to include Pan-African graphics. Staff recommends that the Pan-African crosswalk graphics be restricted

to historical African Nova Scotian communities: East Preston, North Preston, Cherrybrook/Lake Loon, Upper Hammonds Plains, Beechville, Lucasville, Maroon Hill (Sackville), and Africville. These communities could make requests to the HRM for Pan-African crosswalk graphics which would then be funded through Councillor district funds. Each location request will be evaluated by D&I staff for appropriateness and inclusion in the annual crosswalk graphics tender. The existing Pan-African crosswalks completed during the pilot program would continue to be funded through the operational budget in Public Works.

It should be noted that not all of the historically African communities have crosswalks within their boundaries that would qualify for the program at this time. In those cases, and upon community request, staff will work with community members to explore alternative approaches to represent the historic nature of their communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The overall cost for painting crosswalk graphics in 2022 was \$107,787 (net HST included) which included 53 rainbow crosswalk graphics, the 2 Pan-African graphics and two Black Lives Matters graphics.

The 2SLGBTQ+ crosswalk graphic program provides an example of how to expand the Pan-African crosswalk program. Of the 53 2SLGBTQ+ graphics, internal Public Works operational funding is utilized for 3 locations (12 graphics). The rest of the graphics are funded through local Councillor funds or Business Improvement Districts (BIDS). When a request is made and funding secured, staff then engage a contractor to install the graphics on behalf of the requester. The two existing Pan-African graphics are also funded through Public Works operational budget. Expansion of the Pan African graphics program could follow the same methodology of the 2SLGBTQ+ crosswalk program with any new request to be funded through external funding.

In 2022, the cost of each Pan-African crosswalk graphic was \$2,084 (net HST included). Given the inflationary pressures currently being experienced staff is expecting that cost to climb substantially (an additional 10-25%) for the summer 2023 program. Bids for the new street painting contracts are expected in spring 2023.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations were identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was completed as part of the pilot project.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council could choose not to proceed with a pan-African crosswalk graphic program and instead direct staff to explore other alternative approaches to mark the historical significance of these African Nova Scotian communities.
2. Regional Council could direct all Pan-African crosswalk requests to be funded from the Public Works operating budget.

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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