

Re: Item No. 11.1.6

HALIFAX



HRM Accessibility Strategy

May 18, 2021

Motion to Council

October 31, 2017, Regional Council motion (item 14.3.2):

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Craig, seconded by Councillor Whitman:

(...)

3. That the CAO prepare a report outlining progress to date on the accessibility framework.

This motion led to the development of the current Accessibility Strategy.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

- Adopt the Accessibility Strategy as set out in Attachment 1;
- Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to carry out the actions contained in the Accessibility Strategy as part of the multi-year budgeting and business planning process; and
- Request that the Chief Administrative Officer provide annual progress reports on the implementation of the Accessibility Strategy to Regional Council.



Rationale

- *Accessibility* is an issue which concerns Nova Scotians of all ages, from those with disabilities to parents travelling with their children in strollers to seniors in our communities.
- The *Accessibility Strategy* will outline how all business units, employees, and citizens of the Halifax region can continue to improve accessibility and contribute to the goal of a fully accessible province.
- Consultations both internally and externally strongly support the need for an accessibility strategy to guide and support work within the municipality



Rationale

- In 2017, the Province of Nova Scotia passed the Accessibility Act which prescribes public sector bodies, including municipalities, to complete two key items:
 - Create an Accessibility Advisory Committee and;
 - Develop an accessibility plan.
- Halifax Regional Municipality has had an Accessibility Advisory Committee in place since 1996

Nova Scotia Accessibility Act

- In 2015, NS government public consultations on the creation of a Nova Scotia Persons with Disabilities Act
- In 2017, the legislation passed becoming the Accessibility Act
- Two prescriptions:
 1. Creation of an Accessibility Advisory Committee
 2. Accessibility plan per city/municipality



Accessibility Strategy

- The strategy contains recommended action items developed to align with the NS Accessibility Act
- The strategy is designed to follow the Accessibility Directorate's goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030
- The Accessibility Strategy contains a total of 30 action items to be actioned over the next 9 years.
- Actions of the strategy may be impacted or adjusted if and when new requirements come out from the province





Built Environment

The recommendations around Built Environment will cover areas such as:

- Rick Hansen Gold Certification for future infrastructure
- CSA B561-18 Accessibility Standards
- Developing an accessibility audit system for buildings, public facilities, recreational parks and playgrounds, and trails when repairs or upgrades are done to maintain/ensure accessibility.



Employment

The recommendations around Employment will cover areas such as:

- Through employment equity reporting collect and maintain data on employees with disabilities
- Incorporating accommodations into hiring procedures
- Training hiring managers on workplace accessibility
- Identifying work placements and internships for students with disabilities
- Workplace Accommodation Policy



Goods & Services

The recommendations around Goods & Services will cover areas such as:

- Accessibility of signage, signage templates, walkways, and equipment (for example to beaches, parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities)
- Accessibility improvements to recreation services and operations
- Increased accessibility training for municipal staff



Information & Communication

The recommendations around Information & Communication will cover areas such as:

- Improving information sharing with accessibility community stakeholders
- Developing an accessibility guide for municipal promotional materials, plain language and clear format for municipal communications
- Relationship-building between municipality and Accessibility Directorate



Information & Communication

- Developing accessible public consultation procedures
- Developing an accessibility policy and procedure development
- Developing Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 compliance
- Updating accessibility information on Halifax.ca



Public Transportation & Infrastructure

The recommendations around Public Transportation & Infrastructure will cover areas such as:

- Identifying and implementing Access-A-Bus service improvements
- Developing a passenger survey regarding accessible services
- Improving public awareness around snow removal
- Identifying how to increase the number of accessible taxis and/or accessible taxi providers

Financial Implications

Regional Council's approval of the Accessibility Strategy will result in an increase in multiple municipal service level standards and therefore require an increase in funding for future operating and base capital program budgets. The specific Action Items listed in the Strategy (Attachment 1), required to meet its Objectives, have been included in the 2021/22 four-year funded capital plan presented to Council February 26, 2021, with the understanding that some project scopes and estimates will fluctuate.

Examples of existing capital projects integrating accessibility improvements include:

- HRM Facilities Accessibility project (implementing Rick Hansen standards);
- New Transit Technology (Paratransit booking methods);
- Park Recapitalization;
- Regional Centre AAA Bikeways;
- Bus Stop Accessibility/Improvements;
- Road Safety Improvement;
- Access-A-Bus Replacement

Financial Implications

Some of the Strategy's Action Items proposing new HRM programs and processes may be absorbed within current staffing and other capacity.

Additional service program delivery outside of current capacity, as well as any new or increased capital work added will require an increase to the average tax bill or reductions within other services.

Should provincial legislation for establishing accessibility standards influence the prioritization of recommended accessibility capital work, causing a greater funding and resource pressure on the existing high-risk asset renewal and desired growth projects.



Questions?

