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Item No. 12.1.1
Transportation Standing Committee
August 24, 2023

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: **Original Signed**

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 8, 2023

SUBJECT: **Summer Sunday Road Closures Policy**

ORIGIN

Transportation Standing Committee, May 18, 2023 (Item 13.1)

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Mancini

THAT the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report regarding implementing a pilot to designate certain main streets as vehicle free on Sundays during the summer months (June-August).

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. R.S.N.S. 2008, c.39, clauses 44 (1): Where approval or permission by the Engineer is required pursuant to this Act, the Engineer's decision to refuse the approval, or permission, may be appealed to (a) the Council; or (b) where there is a committee designated by the Council, by policy, to hear appeals, that committee; and

clauses 44 (2): On an appeal pursuant to subsection (1), the Council or the designated committee shall (a) direct the Engineer to grant the approval or permission; or (b) uphold the decision of the Engineer; and

clauses 332 (b): The Engineer may temporarily close a street, or part thereof, for the protection of the public, to allow work to be done on the street or on lands and buildings adjacent to the street or for any other purpose beneficial to the public interest.

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to draft amendments to S-300, the Streets By-law, to provide a clear process for requests for summer Sunday road closures on municipally owned roads, as outlined in the staff report dated August 8, 2023.

BACKGROUND

Ciclovía, which translates to "cycleway" in Spanish, is an innovative urban concept that originated in Bogotá, Colombia, in the late 1970s. It began as an experiment to promote healthier and more sustainable modes of transportation and has since become a global phenomenon, transforming the way cities think about public spaces and urban mobility. The idea encompasses temporarily closing certain streets to motorized vehicles and opening them up exclusively for cyclists, pedestrians, and recreational activities.

The first Ciclovía event took place in 1974, covering approximately five miles of roadways. It was an immediate success, with thousands of people embracing the opportunity to reclaim the streets for non-motorized activities. The positive response from the public led to the regular implementation of Ciclovía, which now occurs every Sunday and on public holidays, covering over 75 miles of Bogotá's streets.

Ciclovía has not only reduced traffic congestion and air pollution but, has also promoted physical activity and social interaction among the city's residents. People from all walks of life, regardless of age or socio-economic background, come together to walk, bike, run, skate, and participate in various recreational activities along the car-free streets. It has become a symbol of inclusivity and community engagement.

The concept of Ciclovía has spread beyond Bogotá, with cities around the world adopting similar initiatives. From New York City's Summer Streets to Paris' Paris Plages, the idea of temporarily transforming streets into vibrant, car-free spaces has gained momentum. In Canada, most communities have some sort of Open Street program that is similar in structure during the summer months. Halifax already has the annual Switch Open Streets which is handled through the Special Events Task Force and coordinated through the North End Business Improvement District and Dartmouth Business Improvement District. Additionally, HRM already has different policies and By-laws which allow residential street block parties and the closure of roads or sections of roads for the summer to create pedestrian spaces.

DISCUSSION

Like the process for temporary long-term road closures, staff is recommending that the process for summer Sunday road closures be integrated into the Streets By-law (S-300). The process for temporary summer Sunday road closures should mimic the guidelines that already exist for other temporary road closure situations in HRM. This ensures a consistent and clear process regardless of the application type (whether for a block party or a temporary long-term closure). Those guidelines include:

- a plan showing the proposed closure limits.
- a petition showing 100% support of any owner fronting the area of the proposed closure. If a stratum is part of the proposed closure, then strata approval is required. If 100% support cannot be achieved, the applicant can appeal to the Engineer. If the Engineer does not approve, the applicant can appeal to the Appeals Committee.
- a plan showing that the sidewalks will remain fully accessible.
- the closure will not impact transit service.
- a plan showing that a 6-metre fire lane must always be maintained. This fire lane can have easily movable objects (light tables and chairs), but any large objects, like tents or heavy picnic tables, that cannot be easily moved are not allowed within the 6-meter fire lane; and
- any other information concerning the closure as the Engineer may reasonably require.

The applicant should take special care to not block driveways or accesses without the explicit approval of

the owner.

Please note that the intent of the language will be represented in S-300, however, the exact form and scope of the application may be subject to changes.

Once a complete application is submitted, the Engineer will review the application to ensure that impacts on traffic flow can be managed, any safety issues are identified and addressed, and other potential issues are identified and managed. The Engineer will then make the decision on whether the road can be closed. The application would follow the typical process to receive a ROW permit. There would be no new costs associated with the application. Long-term, if a particular street closure is successful and popular, Council could make the temporary closure an annual event which would eliminate the need for an annual application from the applicant. Applications are required 30 days prior to the proposed closure date.

Staff recommends that the summer Sunday road closures program be in effect from July 1st to August 31st in any given year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Depending on the popularity of this program, Sunday road closures have the potential to substantially burden HRM operational staff. HRM staff already provide support, typically through overtime, providing barricades and other infrastructure for a wide variety of events throughout the summer. There is already difficulty supporting existing summer events and staff will likely be bringing forward a request for additional resources as part of this year's budget planning.

New signage would also be required as every parking meter would require a "No Parking on Sunday" sign as well as additional signage at both ends of the road closure. Assuming staff availability, the estimated cost for placing barricades on Sunday morning at an estimated 4 locations and removing them on a Sunday night would be \$1200 per weekend. Assuming eight weekends during the summer, the total cost would be approximately \$10,000 including temporary signage. This cost would be managed within the Public Works annual operating budget. Additional locations would require additional staff and would increase the cost to approximately \$20,000.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement required.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

A summer Sunday road closure program would support HRM's initiatives and goals around climate change by reducing vehicle usage and encouraging citizens to utilize other modes of transportation.

ALTERNATIVES

Transportation Standing Committee may:

1. refuse to recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the process for summer Sunday road closures, as outlined in this report; or
2. recommend that Halifax Regional Council approve the process for summer Sunday road closures subject to modifications. This may include removing the application criteria requiring owner consent within a proposed closure area. This may require a supplementary staff report.

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: Lucas Pitts/Director of Traffic Management/Public Works 782-641-5670
