

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda - AMENDED
June 20, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive

Agenda is subject to changes up to and including during the meeting

This meeting is open to the public. It will not be livestreamed on Facebook



-
1. Call to Order
 2. Announcements
 - ~~3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions – AMENDED, QUORUM NOT MET~~
 - ~~4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – April 25, 2024 – AMENDED, QUORUM NOT MET~~
 5. Presentation
 - a) Cycling Nova Scotia Hub Project Accessibility Review
 6. Unfinished Business / Updates
 - b) Front Counter Accessibility Items for Review, Morison Drive
 - c) Silent Disco (and NAAW)
 - d) Accessibility Plan Update
 7. New Business
 - a) Bench Request Outside Morison
 8. Next Meeting Date / Meeting Adjournment

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes (Unofficial, Quorum Not Met)

June 20, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive

Agenda is subject to changes up to and including during the meeting



Present:

Jennifer Davison, Resident Member	Kevin Waters, Active Living Coordinator
Sarah Taylor, HR Specialist	Deanna Snair, Executive Assistant
Michel Bourgeois, Resident Member	Troy Burgess, Public Works Operations Manager
Tina McKay, Building & Fire Official	Melissa MacAskill, Resident Member
Carmen Dewar-Miller, Admin Assistant	Ethan Malech, Cycling Nova Scotia

Councillor B. Morton, Resident Members Long, Boyd and Stephens and CAO Phillips sent their regrets. Quorum was not met for this meeting so no motions or voting took place. It was agreed that the meeting should still proceed as it would be challenging to reschedule Mr. Malech's presentation.

1. Call to Order – Vice Chair Davison called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. Announcements – There were no announcements
- ~~3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions – AMENDED, QUORUM NOT MET~~
- ~~4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – April 25, 2024 – AMENDED, QUORUM NOT MET~~
5. Presentation
 - a) Cycling Nova Scotia (CNS) Hub Project Accessibility Review
Ethan Malech, CNS, was in attendance to present to the committee.
His goal was to provide an introduction to the project, including current status and proposed designs. The designs were created in-house by CNS's planning staff. They still require some engineering input before final designs are submitted to Council. Tonight's engagement includes receiving feedback from the committee on the designs. They want to make sure stakeholders are heard in advance of confirming costs of designs with engineers and getting their stamp of approval.

Mr. Malech is the second planner to work on this project. He came on board when the shift was made from HUB to Core AT. The goal is to help municipal units obtain funding via provincial and federal streams. There is a desire for 55% of communities to have a core AT network. They are a non-profit organization who does community design work and helps

communities start this process from scratch. They want to make space for everyone to share their thoughts and avoid fallacies.

Mr. Malech provided an overview of the greater Blue Route project (provincial). They want communities to be connected across the province and within communities to the cores of each community.

There are three phases of this core AT network project. They start with a concept plan, apply best practice design standards, then design and cost out (to leverage funding).

They are in the pre-engineering approval design phase of the project in Windsor, applying best practices and receiving feedback. Then they will go back to engineering partners to determine if studies are required. Traffic studies involving road widening, extended right of ways, intersection modification, etc. may come into play.

The main components of Active Transportation are walking rolling and cycling (getting people from point A to point B using human power). This is combined with implementing the infrastructure required to safely and successfully provide support. AT can apply to all communities and there are always hurdles to be overcome.

There is a goal of creating a network shaped by community and refined through ongoing feedback. Projects are conceptual, subject to change, not shovel-ready. They would be implemented in phased approaches after they receive Council approval and funding. This allows for review and updates.

The West Hants AT plan is based off of the Active Avon plan. Four reports (Active Avon, survey engagement, the network report and engagement report) were used to identify the Windsor Network Plan - priority routes for developing designs. Route 3 and a bit of Route 1 were flagged as priority within this plan.

The province is eager to see the progress being made with the Windsor plan, including designs and assigned funding for design of the entire network, not just priority routes. This allowed CNS to develop the preliminary designs for all three routes within the Windsor network.

The design work that has taken place is still very flexible, which allows for engagement time and revisions based on feedback received through engagement. This way, Council understands what the community is looking for and that designs are representative. They will then take preliminary designs through to engineering approval and costing stage. To identify any intersection modifications that may be required. Once completed, the package can be presented to the municipal unit (Council) and if approved, can be used to leverage federal or provincial funding as the streams open up in the coming years. Past funding has seen up to 74% cost sharing by the federal government. This creates a tangible cost-sharing model to motivate municipal units to adopt these plans and possibly start work on the priority routes within the next five years.

The next steps would be to enter into an engineering partnership through an RFP process. Once that stamp of approval has been achieved planners will continue the mapping and engagement processes.

Some of the key intersections have been flagged as possibly needing some feedback from a local level. This would be best practice combined with nuance of what the community is looking for. Today is a great opportunity to flag anything that may have been overlooked or missed from this stage. Mr. Malech would like to open the floor to flag any sections that may need comment. Committee members and the public can provide feedback after this session for about a week by leaving their comments through the online format or creating digital notes.

As additional background, Mr. Malech advised that three municipal staff and two planners from CNS have been providing assistance with this project.

With supporting maps provided, Mr. Malech gave an overview of the three routes identified in the project.

Route #1 – including Gerrish and Stannus Streets, is mainly flagged as a pedestrian corridor.

- Painted curb extensions with flex bollards allow for a reduction in crossing distance at many of the intersections. Make crossing distances as narrow as possible.

- Looking at designating Gerrish a local streetway which would include shared space for cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles and reduce traffic volumes
- Flagged where they will apply as many sidewalks and curb extensions as practical.
- Cost prohibitions will prevent some of these measures.
- In this design these curbs are painted as a form of tactical urbanism which reduces the initial cost and allows the community to pilot some of these designs to determine proceeding with costlier implementations.
- Allows for street beautification (planters, bike racks, street furniture). The street is reclaimed for AT users.
- Helps with the “daylighting of crossings”. The motor vehicle act prevents drivers from parking within five metres of a crosswalk but without some design interventions, the policing of that can be minimal. Prevents vehicles from encroaching on pedestrian space.
- A section was flagged towards King Street to address thoroughfare traffic. One technique would be to add a painted traffic/pedestrian island to reduce crossing distances. More space is returned to AT users.
- Back on Stannus Street they are considering accessibility standards, sidewalks on both sides of the street and improving connectivity. This can be cost prohibitive.
- By designing this now and preparing it for Council motions, it can preserve the community’s dedication to a complete network.

Concern was expressed regarding narrowing at intersections possibly creating an issue for emergency vehicles/fire trucks. Per Mr. Malech, the beauty of flex bollards is that they are flexible and can be pushed over to accommodate emergency vehicles. They act as more of a deterrent for private vehicles. Turn radiuses on these intersections are created within a standard.

Route #2 – located in the core of the community, centers around pedestrian traffic, walkers and those using mobility aids.

- Focused on more sidewalks for streets in this area, with an option to designate this a local street and alert drivers that cyclists might be using this street.

- Because there are some more route options on route three, this route hasn't been prioritized for cyclists.
- Flagged to improve some of the sidewalks closer to the intersection of Water Street and looking at a more permanent curb cut. Adapted to painted version, but with intention of having the radius widened.
- Route 2 is fairly similar to Route 1, filling in sidewalks. Some more intricate designs offer painted curbs and a few more locations for marked pedestrian crossing.
- Largest implementation would be a multi-use path onto Wentworth Road, north side (with asphalt). Wentworth Road is dominated by vehicular space; designs have entailed wanting a multi-use path on the North side.
- Existing sidewalks are prohibitive to this design, would require possibly widening the sidewalk with more concrete and then lining it. In the realm of AT this is not a preferred surface treatment, so there would also be a design for a multi-use asphalt path, continued down the entirety of Wentworth to the highway overpass.
- Flagged for community approval of "crossrides". These aren't approved engineering standards but the province has voiced support for installation in HRM. Crossrides give the right of way to those walking and rolling ahead of cars. Currently requires liability of Council, however CNS is making the assumption that with the Motor Vehicle Act being updated in the next year, these will see a legal parameter added (preemptive design).
- They also took in consideration the possibility of a roundabout being installed at Wentworth and Payzant. How could the multi-use path be keyed in and possibly extended down Payzant towards the hospital.
- Path continues down towards Cole Drive area and includes left-turn bike boxes for those trying to merge back into traffic. Allows a safe space for AT travelers. Ends where the overpass starts with recommendations to continue multi-use path up into the industrial park.

Route #3 – Road comes from the south of the community.

- Road widening to allow for bike lanes on King Street requiring more protected infrastructure / buffers (flex bollards, bike boxes).
- Install new AT lights including AT/cycling lights. Allow for clean transition.

- Improved line delineation, tactical urbanism, painted curb cuts with flex bollards to reduce speeds.
- Requires some removal of street parking to preserve existing asphalt curb to curb. Create buffer between bike lane and cars.
- Continues down King with parking removed on Southern side up to Upper Water St. to adopt protected bike lanes.
- Designs take into account some of the planned work completed by Active Avon.

Mr. Malech opened the floor to questions and feedback.

It was asked if there would be an opportunity on Route #2 to make a connection to the sports complex as part of the active transportation network as there is currently no pedestrian connection.

Mr. Malech responded that this can be noted from this engagement to explore. Staff Member Burgess advised that this sidewalk project was included in this year's budget and the municipality is in the process of getting quotes.

Feedback was offered regarding the fact that many people will express displeasure over losing parking spaces in the downtown core. There is not much accessible parking currently and it does not seem to be a consideration for these routes.

Mr. Malech responded that they are trying to preserve as many accessible parking spaces as possible – they are not typically removed. These designs are in line / on record with the Avon Plan. We can use that in the conversation with Council.

It was stated that lost parking equals lost business on Gerrish Street and that Stannus may be a better option.

Mr. Malech advised that Gerrish Street won't lose any parking. The only perceived loss of parking would be from the extended curb design /passive design policing measures.

There was a question regarding adjusting the plan to ensure that accessible parking is being considered.

Per Mr. Malech, the plan can be adjusted, but modifications made after applying for federal funding would be at the cost of the municipality. They can audit King Street to ensure accessible parking is in place.

Mr. Malech was asked if there is a measurable culture shift in communities after implementing these changes.

He replied that there is a large jump in increased AT users when there is protected infrastructure in place, “if you build it, they will come” is quite true. But ensure you build the proper infrastructure and come from the highest standard at the start. These changes need to be safe and they need the support of the Accessibility Committee. It would be great to have documented support from the committee to share with Council.

Staff Member Waters added that ensuring proposed changes to the built environment meet standard is written directly into the plan. And reminded members that there is still a week to provide input.

Other comments included:

- It is great to see more active transportation in our smaller communities. An important project that may see some pushback and resistance to change.
- There was public outcry in downtown Halifax when these measures were first implemented. Once over that hump, it all worked very well. Stay the course.
- Fiscal aid and support are key.

Mr. Malech was thanked for his presentation and invited to stay for the rest of the meeting, which he did.

6. Unfinished Business / Updates

b) Front Counter Accessibility Items for Review, Morison Drive

Resident Member Bourgeois provided a report on the front counter including a universal design example highlighting both higher and lower counter sections. Due to lack of quorum, we can't decide anything tonight. We also do not know the fate of 76 Morison, long term.

Staff Member Snair advised that Council has directed staff to assess both 76 Morison and 100 King through the accessibility lens and consider having the same assessment that was

done at 76 Morison done at 100 King. This would be for the entire space and right now, viewed as a high-level assessment, including asbestos abatement and minor repairs to potentially have 100 King accommodate all staff.

c) Silent Disco / NAAW (National Access Awareness Week)

West Hants was one of two NS municipalities chosen to celebrate with a live DJ at the Windsor Community Centre. We were provided with a large movie screen, ASL and close captioning. AMANS (Association of Municipal Administrators, NS) paid for headsets and three channels were available, as well as a virtual option for folks participating at home. Attendance for this inaugural silent disco was low. It takes time to establish something new but community interest in this event will hopefully grow over time. It was mentioned that Acadia holds regular silent discos.

During NAAW, the municipality's accessible equipment was promoted. Photos were posted to our Facebook page, very well received. Next year Staff Member Waters hopes to have a flag raising for the start of NAAW, with a request going to Council to make an official proclamation. Staff Members Waters and Taylor are working together on organizing flag raising events for the Accessibility and Diverse and Inclusive Communities (DICC) committees next year.

A discussion surrounding communications was sparked, with one suggestion being to push communications out when sidewalk construction to the sports complex gets started. It was then noted that the shoulders from King Street to Kendall Drive are going to be paved (pending provincial approval). These are accessibility wins that should be promoted. Going forward, committee members will be encouraged to share accessibility wins during the announcements portion of our meetings. These wins can also be emailed to Kevin to share via social media posts.

d) Accessibility Plan Update

Staff Member Waters advised that they are starting to get a good idea of what this update will look like. The committee has done regular monitoring of the report card piece included with the original plan, running through the top priority items to see where we stand. In order to stay current with the timeline and update deadline of April 1, 2025, another year of reporting on these priorities will be reviewed by municipal staff. They will check off completed items and highlight outstanding items to be completed by 2030. The municipal group will report back to the committee at our next meeting. The committee

will discuss items to be rolled over, conduct a gap analysis and add any new items that will contribute to meeting the goal of being accessible by 2030.

In the big plan update, there will be both municipal and community consultation. The plan will also come in line with the Anti-Racism and Hate Plan. Both plans will look to be completed and up to date on the website by April 1, 2025.

Staff Member Waters looked to committee members who went through the process of creating the initial plan to provide feedback. Thoughts were that the plan was progressing well. We do struggle to get in-person consultation with public. Does that require a re-think of how we did it then versus how we proceed? The suggestion was made to incorporate public consultation into a committee meeting.

Staff Member Taylor mentioned that the DICC is required to go through the same process and that in some municipalities the DICC and Accessibility committees are merging their plans together. This allows for community engagement through equity and accessibility lenses at the same time. This may be something for us to consider moving forward as both groups evolve in a likeminded direction.

It was suggested to approach stakeholders first for help with the engagement strategy. Could be via pop-up events or town hall type gatherings, but with direction from those who represent stakeholders as this has been an effective means by which to increase turnout.

Support was expressed for combining minds from both committees. Great time to form a connection between committees, especially with so much overlap.

7. New Business

a) Bench Request Outside Morison

There was a request brought forward from a community member to consider placing a bench outside the front entrance at 76 Morison Drive. Customers who visit this municipal office via taxi may have to wait upwards of 20 minutes to be picked up. They need a safe and accessible space to sit while waiting. There is also a beautification element to consider, potential to implement new bench design and bike rack. How can we best move this forward when it is still unknown if staff will be staying at 76 Morison or moving to 100 King. Putting something permanent in place at this point may not be a viable option.

8. Next Meeting Date / Meeting Adjournment – Tentative for September 12, 2024

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.