



TO: External Stakeholders

CC: Halifax Complete Streets Guidelines Steering Committee

FROM: Shannon O'Connell, P.Eng., Program Engineer, Infrastructure Planning

DATE: January 19, 2021

SUBJECT: **Halifax Complete Streets Guidelines Updates – Summary for External Stakeholders**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for being part of the review of the draft of the updated Halifax Complete Streets Guidelines (formerly referred to as the Red Book). We are currently seeking input from external stakeholders. Please note that the target audience for the document is designers of municipal infrastructure, and therefore technical language is used throughout. The following is a summary regarding the updates to the Guidelines.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are two objectives to this project:

- Amending the *Regional Subdivision By-law* to adopt new Guidelines that are in line with current best practices; and,
- Establishing a process for regular updates to the Guidelines.

For the 2021 update, staff have been asked to incorporate changes for specific topics. These are:

- Complete streets design approach;
- Streetscaping guidelines in the Regional Centre;
- Tree guidelines;
- Street lighting design guidelines; and,
- Details for traffic calming measures, multi-use paths, pedestrian ramps, tactile walking surface indicators, protected bike lanes, and new traffic signal bases.

The guidelines are being updated to:

- provide more flexibility by requiring practitioners to understand the design philosophy and apply it contextually;
- be applicable to greenfield, infill, and recapitalization projects;
- recognize the priority of accessibility and connectivity needs for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit;
- consider the road network from road safety, traffic calming, and sustainability perspectives; and, reflect Regional Council direction, HRM policy targets, and changes in industry standards.

A complete street serves the needs of the people that use it in a way that's appropriate for where it is: Not all streets are the same and each street should be complete based on its intended function. The complete street approach considers all users but doesn't accommodate them all the same way on every street. Streets should be viewed as part of a complete network; some streets will prioritize pedestrians and cyclists, some vehicles and goods movement, and some transit. A network of complete streets serves the mobility needs of all users in a balanced way, recognizing that every street cannot be everything.

The proposed changes have been vetted: The proposed guidance has considered Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Geometric Design Guidelines - 2017, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) design guides, various HRM policies, and other jurisdictional guidelines. It has been reviewed and discussed by the steering committee and written or reviewed by relevant internal staff. The next stage is for review and input by external stakeholders of the Municipality.

The document reflects council priorities: Supporting Regional Council direction includes the *Regional Plan, Centre Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, HalifACT, Active Transportation Priorities Plan, Strategic Road Safety Plan*, and the *Rapid Transit Strategy*. It also considers the "Accessibility Act" of Nova Scotia. The guidelines align with industry best practices.

These changes will impact many people: While providing positive impact to pedestrians, bicyclists, accessibility, transit, and sustainability, we acknowledge it may pose challenges, particularly considering the HRM topography, *i.e.*, Halifax has many hills, but minimal slopes are required to achieve accessibility. We consciously choose to strike this balance based on council direction and industry standards.

This is not our only chance to make changes: This is the first of a multi-phase process to update and refine the guidelines. This fundamental shift is taking time, but will become more expedient with each update.

Key updates include:

- *Narrower* lane widths, with consideration for design vehicles and street classifications. Narrower streets encourage slower vehicle speeds and make roads safer for all users which is in alignment with Regional Council direction, approved policy, and industry best practice.
- *Reduced* maximum grades on roads and sidewalks. This aligns with other jurisdictions in Canada such as Toronto and Ottawa and is supported by provincial accessibility legislation. Flatter streets are also better for transit, winter maintenance, and erosion prevention.
- *Increased* space for boulevards, sidewalks and active transportation. This aligns right-of-way use with priorities and maintenance needs, while also providing community and environmental benefit.
- *Updated* streetscaping design guidance; providing clarity of standards and more robust design.
- *Updated* urban forestry design guidance; including guidance from the Urban Forest Master Plan.
- *Updated* streetlighting design guidance to reflect the HRM ownership of streetlighting and LED standards.

Next steps:

The following items will be the focus of the next phase of updates:

- Full review of Street Classifications;
- Graphic formatting to match the Integrated Mobility Plan;
- Traffic Signal guidelines;
- Retaining walls, signs, bridges and bus stops;
- Review of existing standard details (Part B of the Guidelines);
- Stormwater management guidelines; and
- Utilities and trench reinstatement.

CLOSING

We are seeking your input on the draft document to date, with specific focus on the updated chapters (1, 2, 3, 5, and 7, as well as cross sections). Please feel free to share this with others in your organization as you see fit.

Responses can be sent to Shannon O'Connell at connesh@halifax.ca. Responses must be returned by February 9, 2021 to be incorporated into this update.