



**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original signed by 

**SUBMITTED BY:**

Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** January 23, 2014

**SUBJECT: Regional Trails Program - Funding and Related Agreements**

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**ORIGIN**

- Committee of Whole, April 22, 2008, Regional Trails Program; and
- Identification of requirement for staff to seek specific authority from Regional Council to execute program.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter sections 79(1) (o) authorizing Council to spend money required by the municipality for public transportation services, 79(1) (ah) authorizing Council to spend money required by the municipality on trails and 79(av) (v) authorizing Council to spend money required by the municipality for grants or contributions to organizations within the Province including those which are community focused and/or recreational in nature.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve the following authorities for the Chief Administrative Officer (or delegate) required to administer the Regional Trails Program:

1. The authority to execute Regional Trails Capital Funding Agreements;
2. The authority to execute a Regional Trails Maintenance Funding Agreement; and
3. The authority to execute expenditures related to the development and maintenance of regional trails by way of a contribution to the Halifax Regional Trails Association member groups;

All subject to the annual HRM budget process and funding approved by Regional Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

During program delivery of the approved 2013/14 Operating and Project Budgets, it was discovered that the presumed authority required to administer the Regional Trails Program does not exist; explicit approval, as recommended, is required from Regional Council.

The Regional Trails Program, in place since 2000, employs a partnership approach to trail/greenway building that provides HRM resources, both financial and staff, to volunteer members of the Halifax Regional Trail Association (HRTA) to assist in the planning, development, maintenance and promotion of trails and off-road greenways in HRM, as part of the Active Transportation Plan.

On April 22, 2008, Regional Council recognized the HRTA as its principle partner in planning, developing and operating HRM's regional trail system and approved a funding criteria and disbursement process for trails maintenance funds. In an effort to support trail development in the municipality, staff has since expanded the funding model approved by Council by incorporating both the building of trails as well as trail maintenance. The funding model continues to utilize a community development strategy, in combination with some direct delivery of services provided by HRM staff when community delivery is not practical, safe, or suitable. However, the explicit approval required to continue to administer the program is not in place.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Regional Trails Capital Funding Agreement and Regional Trails Maintenance Funding Agreement:**

HRTA, and its participating members, enter into an annual Regional Trails Maintenance Funding Agreement and Regional Trails Capital Funding Agreement with HRM, with respect to their receipt of municipal funding. The process commences each year when members of the HRTA are asked to submit a detailed funding proposal to the Association, pursuant to HRM's stated criteria. Once all proposals are reviewed by the association, the ones deemed compliant are submitted to the board, and forwarded to HRM Planning and Infrastructure for inclusion in the HRM budget review process. Once the HRM budget is approved, the final funding amounts are submitted to the HRTA Board for approval and funding is disbursed pursuant to the agreements.

The agreements, which are the principle mechanisms through which HRM manages the community development aspect of regional trails development, ensures that the municipality's risk is minimized by outlining the responsibilities of each party, as well as ensuring that participating members of the HRTA meet eligibility criteria and agree to terms and conditions set by HRM before funding is disbursed. The ability of HRTA to draw upon its volunteer force, and to qualify for additional funding from other levels of government, ensures that HRM is maximizing the resources available for trail development and maintenance in the municipality.

Since 2006 (which is shortly prior to the current relationship Regional Council approved with HRTA) this model has demonstrated the ability to leverage funding as demonstrated below:

Total Federal Provincial , CN Land Acquisition: MRIF, RINC & Stimulus Funding	\$5,728,000
Total Provincial RFD, TCT NS Moves Funding	\$1,480,728
Total Funding leveraged from Federal and Province with HRM Investment	\$3,299,394

**Expenditure Execution:**

Following identification of the authority issue, staff reviewed various options ranging from sole source procurement to grant models, to direct service delivery models, permitted within the HRM Charter to ensure that the Regional Trails program is able to continue to leverage the value of volunteers and volunteer organizations and meet Council and Community trail objectives. Alternative models, such as direct service delivery or sole source approvals, would eliminate the received value of volunteers contributing to the trails projects. Staff will continue to work on improving the Regional Trails service delivery framework in 2014/15, to ensure that both the value of the volunteers is optimized in meeting Regional Council’s objectives and that the value for taxpayers money is maximized.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

HRM’s long term financial commitment to the Trail Community Development Model, and HRTA as our principle community partner, is consistent with the implementation of AT Greenways and Trails vision in the Active Transportation Plan and Regional Plan. The annual approval by Council of the Regional Trails Budget provides the necessary incremental adjustment and oversight in the ten year business planning process for Facility Development, Regional Trails. Consideration for on-going trail maintenance will be presented by TPW Municipal Operations during the annual budget cycle.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

On the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Continuum of Community Engagement adopted by HRM, the community development model employed by the Regional Trails Program is fully engaged, providing for active participation of the community. Individual community trail associations plan, develop and maintain major sections of the trail network.

Many volunteers make a full time commitment to trail development, resulting in positive feedback at the community level. HRTA meetings are hosted by a different community association each month and all of the volunteer members of the host group are encouraged to attend. The total number of volunteers engaged with the Regional Trails Program is in the range of two hundred (200) volunteers.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Active Transportation provides alternative Transportation modes for commuters and short travel.

**ALTERNATIVES**

Council could choose not to authorize staff to continue to fund the development and maintenance of regional trails by way of contributions to HRTA member groups, and proceed to use the direct delivery model for trail development and maintenance. This is not recommended.

Council could choose not to authorize the Director of Planning and Infrastructure to, for each year that Council approves the associated funding, execute the Regional Trails Capital Funding Agreement and Regional Trails Maintenance Funding Agreement and to negotiate, approve and execute any required amendments thereto. This is not recommended.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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