

HIGHWAY 104 AT ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes – Meeting #7
December 15, 2008

Attendees: John Bain
Alan Bond
Dwayne Cross
Roger Garby
Gerry Grant
Ken Donnelly
Hugh MacDougall
Anne Marie MacKenzie
Heather Mayhew
Kyle McKenzie
Ken Proctor
Elizabeth Pugh
Brian Segal

Regrets: Len Robertson
Mary McCarron
Rose Julian

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting started at 11:00 a.m. with 13 participants. Ken Donnelly chaired.

1. Review and approval of Minutes of Meetings 5 and 6

Ken Donnelly asked people to send him comments about previous minutes, as not everyone had a chance to read them and both meetings were several months ago.

Elizabeth Pugh mentioned that there was a recent heritage assessment of a house on Dunn Loop that has to be moved. There are heritage items in and on the building that will be preserved. Elizabeth asked for contacts for a local museum or other facility that might be able to display the items. Ken Proctor said he had contacts and will send them to Elizabeth.

2. Roundabouts and Bridge Aesthetics

Dwayne Cross presented an example of how the Addington Forks interchange will look with roundabouts in place of diamond intersections. There was a question about the cost difference between roundabouts and regular intersections. Dwayne said that the cost of a roundabout is about the same as a signalized intersection.

Dwayne then showed some examples of potential aesthetic treatments for bridge structures. The treatments employ moulds that create patterns, such as bricks, in the concrete blocks used to build the structure. The effect is a more visually pleasing structure. He was asked about a sidewalk, and answer that yes, there will be one. He was then asked if there would be a crash barrier between the traffic lanes and the sidewalk, and replied no. Roger Garby qualified that this is normal; crash barriers are unusual.

Ken Donnelly asked if there were examples of a bridge with this kind of treatment in Nova Scotia. Dwayne Cross couldn't think of any, and said that this was something new for the Department.

Ken Proctor asked if this is what all bridge structures will look like from now on. Dwayne Cross said yes, that was the intention.

Dwayne Cross said that more detailed landscaping can be installed at structures by the province, but there needs to be an agreement that it will be maintained by the municipality. If the province has to maintain it then the vegetation will be chosen for low maintenance requirements rather than aesthetic purposes.

Dwayne Cross presented some different concrete textures for retaining walls. The fancier one he showed is now preferred by the province and has been used at Dartmouth Crossing.

Alan Bond stated that he liked the aesthetic improvements to bridge design, but wondered if the envelope could be pushed a bit further. In the discussion, it was mentioned that the province can't currently quantify the cost for these aesthetic improvements, as it is dependent on the availability of forms and other factors. Dwayne Cross said that for the Gunning View Bridge in Riverview, N.B., \$1.5M was put into aesthetics.

Brian Segal asked if the federal government has guidelines for incorporating cultural components into public works. No one present thought so.

The Department has put a lot of investigation and consideration into the aesthetics of structures, and expect to employ better aesthetics going forward. The Committee is generally happy with this effort and likes what it sees so far.

As far as timing on the bridges is concerned, they should be put to tender over the winter, although current federal issues may delay the project.

3. Trunk 7 Intersection

This item was put on the agenda for questions from the committee. It was clarified that some aspects are property sensitive, so could not be discussed.

Dwayne Cross said that with the current design of the Trunk 7 intersection, the interchange ramp should provide noise mitigation. He pointed out that changing the design (putting the highway over Trunk 7) might reduce that effectiveness. Hugh MacDougall asked if other mitigating measures would be better than ramps. Elizabeth Pugh and Dwayne Cross both replied that they didn't think so. The goal is to meet provincial noise guidelines. Ken Donnelly offered to find the noise guidelines and distribute them to the committee members.

No noise studies have been done on the existing highway. Elizabeth Pugh indicated that baseline studies have been done on the new route for comparison after completion. Noise studies are in the environmental assessment and are available on-line.

Heather Mayhew asked why putting the new highway over Trunk 7 is being considered now. Dwayne Cross said that there were many issues, including business concerns, elevation changes, wetland, the use of roundabouts, and property acquisition.

Heather Mayhew and Hugh MacDougall expressed concern about residents not liking the highway being elevated at Trunk 7, and pointed out that people in the community had been expecting that the highway would go under Trunk 7. Concerns about increased noise were also raised. Hugh MacDougall said he wanted more detail about the over/under issue. In putting the highway over trunk 7, the roundabout would be on top of the highway, as opposed to two (one on either side) at Trunk 7.

Concerns about the visibility of the community were expressed. Dwayne Cross said he felt visibility of the town would not be significantly different in either configuration going eastbound. John Bain said that supports the idea of having the visitors' centre at the Addington Forks exit. Westbound traffic will have a better view of the town.

Brian Segal feels that any design should minimize harm to residents.

John Bain asked if having the roundabout over the highway would minimize its footprint. Dwayne Cross replied no, the design was intended to minimize elevation change for Trunk 7. Increased elevation means that ramps need to be wider and take up more land.

Elizabeth Pugh and Dwayne Cross explained that some noise modelling is being done to evaluate these options. Models will determine noise and noise mitigation requirements, but not the over/under issue because many more extensive factors influence this.

Brian Segal asked what traffic capacity the road is designed for. Dwayne Cross explained that enough land along Trunk 7 will be preserved to allow for four lanes in the future. Brian Segal said that truck traffic is increasing and may increase substantially more if the Melford container terminal is developed.

Ken Donnelly asked if, with this design and some mitigation measures, is there confidence that provincial noise guidelines will be met. Elizabeth Pugh said she was not confident that this is the case at this time; other factors may be more important than noise mitigation. Sometimes a buyout of people is cheaper than noise mitigation.

Heather Mayhew asked about the view of the highway from residents' perspective. Roger Garby replied that there will be a screen one way or another (whether 104 or 7 is raised).

Elizabeth Pugh thinks the topography will hide most of it from the town. Ken Donnelly asked for a better sketch at some time so people can understand what it would look like.

Alan Bond said there needed to be citizen input on such a change and pointed out that a lot has changed since the initial public consultation. Dwayne Cross replied that the CLC was meant to provide citizen input through community representatives.

The new designs need to be visually represented in order for the public to understand well enough to comment.

Ken Proctor asked how long the new noise assessment will take. Elizabeth Pugh said it shouldn't take long, but it can't be done until the design is finalized. Dwayne Cross thinks it could take several months. Elizabeth said that there is impetus to get it done quickly because there are associated design issues.

Ken Donnelly pointed out that the CLC lets this group get information earlier that they would otherwise, and that is why they are getting a briefing on the fact that the interchange is being reviewed. Otherwise, there might not be any consultation with the community until the decision had been made.

Roger Garby said that there may be sub-grade construction in 2009.

Hugh MacDougall asked if there's a limit to reasonable movement of material. Roger Garby replied that they don't want to move material in for one part of the job, if they are going to have to remove it from the same location for a subsequent part of the job. Discussion ensued about how far excavated material can be moved economically.

4. Signage

Ken Donnelly told the committee that the signage task force met a few weeks after the previous CLC meeting and discussed a few things:

1. They would like to see a proposed solution to the lack of signage beyond the community (east and west of Antigonish).
2. They recognized that signage alone will not compensate for vehicles not longer seeing the amenities in the town as they pass. Therefore the community needs a better presence (marketing, web site, promotion, etc.).

3. Collaboration between the two municipalities and community organizations should be required to develop a better presence.
4. The new highway and attention to signage is also an opportunity to clean up the existing signage on Post Road.
5. Attention will have to be paid to having an effective gateway to the community at Addington Forks Road.

5. Gateway

Alan Bond mentioned that EDM has done gateway work elsewhere, and could be hired to develop a gateway plan for Addington Forks, complete with a tourism information Centre. Ken Donnelly suggested that a gateway plan could show the revised Post Road, possibly with sidewalks. It was felt that marketing, the gateway, a nice entry, sidewalks, etcetera all should be integrated into a plan to boost the presence of the community. Work would have to be done to coordinate the development of an integrated plan.

Alan Bond and Anne Marie MacKenzie asked if money is available for the coordination of the plan. Ken Donnelly said that there may be room in the current budget for him to assist in that coordination. John Bain asked Ken Donnelly what TIR said about this. Elizabeth Pugh replied that there is a budget for Ken Donnelly's time, but not sure where more money would come from for other aspects. She added that there is no money to actually implement the gateway, for instance. Ken Donnelly's role could only be coordination.

6. Communications

Ken Donnelly passed around a mock-up of a newsletter that could be produced. It wouldn't have a lot of detail, but would have a lot of hooks to the web site. He is working on the web site as well. The idea is to use these two tools to better engage the community. Because this newsletter is a draft Ken wants opinions on it. He will circulate the address of the new web site to members for their review.

Ken Proctor asked when this will be ready. Ken Donnelly replied that it can be done in December and be discussed in January. He will talk to *The Casket* about delivery.

Alan Bond likes the idea. Ken Proctor asked about its frequency. Ken Donnelly replied that it's intended to be done cheaply and quickly. He thinks that the web site should be updated regularly, but the newsletter only occasionally. Ken Donnelly wants input from the RDA, business owners, etc., on content and frequency issues.

Heather Mayhew asked about forum capabilities on the website. Ken Donnelly said that he is testing a question and answer system. Brian Segal said it could be blog style on the web page. Ken Donnelly is looking into bulletin board software that would allow for comments and answers to questions.

7. Other Items

Ken will distribute dates for next few meetings in January. Expect them to be on Wednesdays. He will also e-mail everyone the day before to cancel the meeting if it looks as if there is going to be a storm that day.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.