

HIGHWAY 104 AT ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE (CLC)

Meeting Notes - Meeting #10

OCTOBER 7, 2009

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

COUNTY COUNCIL BOARDROOM

Attendees:

John Bain	Eastern District Planning Commission
Alan Bond	County of Antigonish
Paul Colton	Department of Transportation Antigonish
Dwayne Cross	Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
Ken Donnelly	Lura Consulting
Roger Garby	Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
Alisha Grant	Antigonish RDA
Gerry Grant	Regional Development Agency
Debbie Kampen	Town of Antigonish
Hugh MacDougall	Member-at-large
Bill MacFarlane	Councillor
Anne Marie MacKenzie	Antigonish Chamber of Commerce
Heather Mayhew	Fresh Air Society & Antigonish Harbour Watershed Association
Brian Segal	Antigonish and Area Partnership

Regrets:

Rose Julian	Paq'tnkek First Nation
Mary McCarron	Federation of Agriculture
Len Robertson	Member-at-large

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ken Donnelly welcomed attendees to the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

1.0 TRUNK 7 INTERCHANGE – UPDATE ON OUTREACH

Ken Donnelly distributed a short memo and provided a summary of outreach activities to residents living adjacent to the Trunk 7 Interchange:

- Folders were distributed door-to-door to residents in the area containing updates on overpass orientation and roundabouts, and an invitation to the September 29th neighbourhood meeting.
- 7 people attended the evening meeting. Many came because the local radio station had incorrectly noted that the roundabout would be at the intersection of the existing highway and Trunk 7. Participant questions and comments centred on: 1) safety issues with the roundabouts; 2) noise; and 3) viewplanes. Participants suggested the need for sidewalks on both sides of the street approaching the roundabout, lights under the bridge, and Jersey barriers on the ramps to reduce noise. Participants were generally supportive of Trunk 7 going over the highway.
- Concern was also raised about increased traffic on Trunk 7 between the new interchange and the old highway, as the intersection at the current highway has a short light for vehicles turning left.
- One gentleman felt quite strongly that there was no need for an interchange at Trunk 7 as there will be two others not far away (Addington Forks and Beech Hill.)

Ken Donnelly noted that he collected e-mail addresses from participants and stated he would get back to them on any discussion. Dwayne Cross noted that many of the concerns around safety, lighting, etc. would be worked out in a detail design process with the County.

Councillor MacFarlane expressed concern that he thought Council would be notified of substantial changes to the highway design. Since he was not notified, he was unable to answer questions he received by phone call on the day the local paper announced the major change at the intersection.

Ken Donnelly noted that the CLC had an extensive discussion about the vertical orientation in June. A discussion ensued about more effective communication within the CLC and with the public:

- Gerry Grant and Brian Segal felt that as CLC members they should have known about the September 29th meeting before the day it was held. Other CLC members agreed.
- Anne Marie MacKenzie noted that CLC members need to be informed of specifics so that they are more prepared to answer questions asked of them. For example, tenders awarded or posted, details on the detour (maps, plans, length of time), and a rumour circulating that the government will compensate residents for impact from noise [Dwayne Cross noted that no compensation will be given for noise; only for expropriated property]. She suggested using the website to post this information as soon as it is available to make it a more effective communication tool.

- Brian Segal noted that there needs to be a more effective method to get information out to the public – through press releases, the website, etc. Gerry Grant concurred that the absence of a press release leads to incorrect reporting as was seen by the Hawk for the September 29th meeting.
- Anne Marie MacKenzie suggested that when one individual on the CLC asks for information, that this should be sent to the whole committee, not just that one person, in order that all members are equally informed.
- Gerry Grant noted that it is a two-way street and CLC members also have to take a more active role in getting information out to their representative groups.

Ken Donnelly clarified the purpose of the September 29th meeting as one for residents near the interchange only as opposed to a full public meeting so as to focus on residents' issues specifically. Brian Segal noted that there are people who use Trunk 7 every day to get to work who will also be affected without necessarily living nearby, and these people may have interesting things to say.

In terms of communication, Ken Donnelly summarized the concerns noted by CLC members and noted the following suggestions to improve communication: 1) setting up an e-mail listserv to send updates to the CLC and public; the public can sign up to this listserv on the website; 2) putting structures in place to write up updates and information that can be submitted to existing newsletters and publications; 3) keeping the website up-to-date with more information; and 4) ensuring that responses to requests for information by one CLC member is forwarded to the entire committee. He asked CLC members to send him any additional ideas about how to improve communication.

2.0 CURRENT CONSTRUCTION STATUS

Anne Marie MacKenzie asked if all land acquisition was complete. Dwayne Cross stated not yet, and Roger Garby added that they have access to the majority of properties for Phase I yet on some the price is still under negotiation. Dwayne Cross stated that the completion date for Phase I is 2012.

Dwayne Cross and Roger Garby provided an update on current construction status:

- The Beech Hill road project is underway and should be completed by the end of December 2009. The intent is that upon completion traffic will go underneath the structure and the detour will be removed.
- The contract has been awarded for the west end 3km including grading, highway, interchange, re-profiling of Addington Forks, and the detour.
- The detour will be phased. It will start this fall or the spring of next year, and will be in place for the duration until 2012 as one roundabout is being built where the existing highway is located. Safety reviews have been conducted and taken into account for the detour.

- Dwayne Cross indicated on a map where the detour will leave and return to the existing highway noting that: there will be a stop sign at the detour intersection, driveways will be accommodated for, traffic along Addington Forks Road will reach a new T section that will be in place this year, and that the detour will be designed for 80km per hour traffic speeds.

Anne Marie Mackenzie asked if the CLC can have a copy of the maps shown, and if hard copies can be provided for municipal access for public viewing. Ken Donnelly noted that he will send the CLC a user friendly map of the detour, and that the municipal offices have offered space for display and he will coordinate with Debbie Kampen and the County to arrange these displays. Brian Segal added that a quick descriptive paragraph with details would be helpful as well. Ken Donnelly suggested he could prepare a Fact Sheet about the detour with a map which could be posted on the website and distributed. A Fact Sheet can be produced for each of the major construction issues (e.g. roundabouts). The committee supported the idea.

Several questions were asked with respect to construction and timing:

- Heather Mayhew asked if there will be adequate temporary signage designating the detour area. Roger Dalby noted that signage will be provided.
- Councillor MacFarlane asked if the timeframe for paving the highway can be shortened. Dwayne Cross noted that the next contract is going out in April for the interchange ramps. If these were paved now, then when the roundabouts were put in the paving would have to be pulled out and redone, which is not cost efficient. He noted that this delay gives the County time to make important decisions about servicing (water, sewer, etc.).
- Heather Mayhew asked if a decision had been made regarding the design over the South River. Rober Garby replied that they are going with the same chosen design with some fine tuning (eg. may have to change design in footing to accommodate gypsum in area)
- Anne Marie MacKenzie asked what was on plan for next year. Dwayne Cross noted that next August will be a tender for the 3km from the current area under construction to West River, including interchanges and Trunk 7 structures, although work on the bridges only may occur in 2010 with the remainder in 2011.
- Brian Segal asked why the tenders were given out in pieces as opposed to one for the whole length of highway. Roger Garby replied this was mainly based on funding, economy of scale, and being able to hire local contractors with the capabilities to do smaller sections.

3.0 SIGNAGE UPDATE

Ken Donnelly suggested postponing this agenda item to the next meeting as it was not time pressing and it was important to get to the next agenda item.

4.0 WEST RIVER BRIDGE

Dwayne Cross provided an explanation of changes that are currently being considered for the construction of the West River Bridge:

- The original design was for a pair of 240m bridges across the floodplain. As cost has escalated on the project, the team is looking at reducing costs to construct these bridges. Specifically, as the watercourse is only 50m the option of shortening the bridges and adding a causeway at either end is being considered.
- This change in plans will require a new Class I Environmental Assessment on the bridge alone due to potential impacts to plant and wildlife species, scouring of the channel, flooding, ice, etc.
- Stantec and Hydrocom Technologies have produced a report analyzing the new option, and have concluded that from a hydraulic perspective 90m is acceptable and from a floodplain perspective 130-140 m is acceptable; which contrasts with the 240 m length of bridge originally planned.
- He illustrated on a map the original and proposed changes to the bridge construction.
- He noted that they still need to list groups to consult with and the timeframe could be anywhere from 6 months to 2 years to complete. They estimate \$6-7 million could be saved on the budget, but a detailed design process is still necessary.
- At the end of October a meeting is being held to decide if the team will proceed with this new option for the bridge.

Heather Mayhew expressed concern and disappointment that the design change was being considered from a monetary cost perspective alone given the environmental vulnerability of the area and the potentially significant environmental damage. She noted that the highway is already having a large impact by crossing wetlands and that the West River is a significant waterway which could be severely affected by the new bridge option.

Heather Mayhew asked at what point the new option would be considered an unacceptable possibility. Dwayne Cross noted that they need to work through the issues with the Department Executive to decide if the delay and level of risk are acceptable. Heather asked how the public can have input to these plans and if there would be an opportunity for public to voice their concerns before it goes to the EA process, given that an EA is an expensive process to go through. Dwayne noted that there is a public process through the Terms of Reference and the Environmental Assessment. She noted concern with the short timeframe of reporting back to her groups about this proposed change and getting comments in to Dwayne before the end of October meeting where a decision will be made.

Ken Donnelly asked CLC members to send any concerns about the new option for the bridge directly to Dwayne Cross or to himself so that he can distribute them to the rest

of the group. Dwayne Cross noted that he will send around the Stantec report once it has been finalized, which has more specifics about the proposed changes in terms of threats, impacts, and concerns. Cost estimates are not included in the report, as detailed design will involve full costing. It was noted that this report is not yet publicly available and must be kept within the CLC

5.0 OTHER ITEMS

Anne Marie MacKenzie asked about adding an update of the Access Management Plan to a future meeting. Ken Donnelly noted he will check and confirm if the plan had been finalized and presented at the CLC.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 pm.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION TO BE TAKEN	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
1. Set up an e-mail listserv for effectively distributing updates about construction process	Lura Consulting
2. Prepare small news pieces that can be distributed to existing newsletters	Lura Consulting
3. Keep website up-to-date	Lura Consulting
4. Communicate with group they are representing about discussions at the CLC	CLC members
5. Ensure that information is forwarded to all CLC members when one member requests additional information or the answer to a question.	Lura Consulting
6. Provide suggestions on how to improve communication effectiveness	CLC members
7. Coordinate with Town and County about putting a display in the municipality offices	Lura Consulting
8. Send user-friendly map of detour plans to CLC	Lura Consulting
9. Produce a fact sheet summarizing key details of detour plans and other key construction issues.	Lura Consulting
10. Distribute Stantec report on West River Bridge to CLC once finalized	Dwayne Cross/Ken Donnelly
11. Submit comments or concerns about West River Bridge to Ken Donnelly or Dwayne Cross	CLC members
12. Confirm status of Access Management Plan	Ken Donnelly