

AGENDA

Residents' meeting about Northwest Arm Drive
and related issues

June 8, 2005
Captain Spry Centre

1. Welcome and opening comments – Graham Steele
 2. Review of Northwest Arm Drive study and proposed remedial actions – Bob Bieren
 3. Open session for all of your questions and comments
 4. Discussion, if desired, of the desirability/feasibility of forming one or more residents' associations
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Minutes of Residents' Meeting
Stoneridge, top of Kline Heights and Stanley Park
June 8, 2005 at 7pm
Captain Spry Centre

Panel:

Bob Bieren (NS Department of Transportation)
Darin Murphy (NS Department of Transportation)
Graham Steele (MLA, Halifax Fairview)
Constable Ian MacKay (HRM Police)
Linda Mosher (HRM Councillor, District 17)

Approximately 35 residents in attendance. *[Please note: In the interests of privacy, the names of residents attending and speaking at the meeting are not included in these minutes.]*

The following minutes are not strictly chronological, since the discussion sometimes returned to a topic previously discussed. In the interests of clarity, these minutes group the discussions by topic.

1. Opening remarks

MLA Graham Steele gave opening remarks at 7 p.m.

He explained that the origin of the meeting was in a neighbourhood survey done by a resident in the Stoneridge subdivision. This resident was concerned about the intersection of the Walter Havill Drive with Northwest Arm Drive (NWAD), and wanted to find out his neighbours' views. When he brought the results to Graham, together they took them to the provincial Department of Transportation (DOT). DOT said they were undertaking a broader study of traffic on NWAD. When the study was completed, Graham distributed it to every household living along NWAD. Copies of the study were also available at the meeting. *[Please note that the study will continue to be available on Graham's website, www.grahamsteele.ca/northwestarmdrive.html]*

The purpose of the meeting was to bring together residents and decision-makers, to establish a dialogue on Northwest Arm Drive traffic but also on related issues, such as development, law enforcement, and noise.

The evening's agenda was (1) hear residents' concerns and, if possible, respond to them, (2) hear from DOT representatives concerning the traffic study that was completed, and (3) discuss the possibility of one or more community associations.

2. Residents' Concerns

The floor was opened to residents to express any questions or concerns.

(a) Speed limit

There was an extensive discussion on the NWAD speed limit. The speed limit is 80 km/h from the BiHi overpass down to close to the intersection with Old Sambro Road.

The DOT traffic study concluded that there is not a serious speeding problem on NWAD, and that, from a technical perspective, a change in the speed limit is not warranted.

A member of the community from Ridge Park Lane expressed concern that the speed limit is too high. She said that she would like to see the speed limit reduced. She asked why the DOT report did not find that that a reduction in the speed limit was warranted. She asked why the speed limit could not be reduced to 60 km/h. She said that the area is becoming increasingly residential.

Darin Murphy (DOT) replied that vehicle speed on NWAD has been studied. Study results have said that speeding is not above what is acceptable for a road of this kind. He said that the problems on NWAD are not really problems of speed, but rather “conflict points” at the intersections. There was discussion of the technical terms used in the DOT study.

Constable MacKay talked about the challenges of enforcing the speed limit. A member of the audience pointed out that people slow down when they see the police radar. Cst. MacKay said that wouldn't affect the measurements, because speed has already been measured by the time a driver sees the radar. Cst. MacKay mentioned that, one time, he had to move the radar from the intersection because drivers were paying more attention to the police than the road.

Councillor Mosher pointed out that NWAD is a 100-series highway and is designed for high speed. She mentioned a study done on Bayview Avenue where the posted speed was reduced and people still drove at the same speed that was previously posted. Lowering the speed limit does not necessarily lower speeds.

Darin Murphy (DOT) said that collision rates can actually go up on highways when the speed limit is reduced. The “geometry” of the road may lead drivers to go a certain speed. That is evident on NWAD, which is built for the higher speed, so lowering the speed limit will not necessarily lead to lower speeds. From a technical point of view, a lower speed is not necessarily a safer speed.

Bob Bieren said that the intersection at Walter Havill and NWAD can be improved in ways other lowering the speed limit. For example, he drew a diagram showing how a change in curvature to the intersection could improve drivers' ability to turn.

Graham asked the audience to indicate their preference for decreasing the speed limit, or keeping it at 80. Of those who raised their hand, about half the audience were in favour of a reduction, while the other half wanted it kept the same.

(b) Left-turn signal/space to decelerate

A Ridge Park Lane resident suggested that a left-turn signal be put in, to allow Stoneridge residents to turn more safely from NWAD to Walter Havill Drive. She expressed frustration that when turning off of the NWAD that people who are not turning are tail-gating and do not leave enough time or space to decelerate. She said that she believes a left-turn signal at the intersection would save lives.

Bob Bieren (DOT) said that a dedicated left-turn signal is one of the options being considered. It could not be done as a “temporary” measure, both because of the cost and because it might prove to be counter-productive. A left-turn signal might be installed as part of the final improvements to the Walter Havill intersection.

(c) Improvements to the Walter Havill Drive intersection

A resident from Walter Havill Drive asked if there was anything done regarding the recommendations in the DOT report about changes to the intersection at Walter Havill and NWAD. He asked how and when the changes would start.

Graham pointed out that, according to the DOT study, the accident rate on NWAD is almost double the provincial average for this kind of road. There are problems at the Osborne Street and Cowie Hill Road intersections, but the worst intersection, for collisions, is Walter Havill Drive. There was general agreement in the audience that there are many near-misses and minor collisions that are not reported; so official collision statistics must be understated.

Bob Bieren (DOT) said that the study was performed by DOT's "Traffic Authority", Jim Jerram. Mr. Jerram has identified the problems at the Walter Havill Drive intersection, and proposed some solutions. However, Mr. Jerram is not a design engineer, so his proposed solutions will not necessarily be adopted. The file is now in the hands of DOT's design engineers. The next step, after design, is to obtain capital funding. As far as Bob knows, there is no funding for the Walter Havill Drive intersection in this year's (2005-06) budget. Graham noted that the province's fiscal year starts on April 1st, so if there is no funding in this year's budget, the earliest the work could be in the next fiscal year, which starts April 1, 2006.

A resident asked who would be responsible to pay for changes to the intersections since they are municipal streets that enter a provincial highway.

Bob Bieren (DOT) said that any changes would likely be cost-shared, possibly with the developer. Many attendees groaned when he said this. Some made comments indicating that they didn't expect the developer would agree to cost-sharing.

A Roxbury resident said that he thinks that the problem with the intersection is that people are impatient. He said that people need to take their time to get out. The resident compared the intersection to ones in other parts of the city and said that the problems at the other intersections are more severe.

A resident of Ridge Park Lane said that he would like to know how the province and municipality divide the issues, i.e. where precisely are the boundaries between provincial and municipal responsibilities.

(d) Development Issues

There was extensive discussion of the proposed "The Waterton" development, on the south end of Hail Pond.

A resident of Walter Havill Drive referred to the big billboard that shows a drawing of "The Waterton". He said that the billboard shows that there are two new buildings coming and that they are being sold now. He was concerned about the traffic. He also asked if the two sides of Walter Havill will eventually join.

Councillor Mosher said that the Stoneridge subdivision was approved in 1990 and that nothing can change until it has been approved. The approved new development will consist of two more 4-storey buildings and one 12-storey building. Linda said that the building on the billboard appears to show a building that has not been approved. She said it looks more like the developer is trying to build two large buildings instead of one, and that they are possibly trying to work around design and horizontal controls and angle requirements. She promised to investigate with city staff.

Another resident said that she heard that the bottom of the new building was going to have a Nubodys, and that she is sure they are in discussion and have plans for it. Councillor Mosher said that development is not allowed to have commercial space and that the building would not be permitted to have a Nubodys. She said that council hasn't approved it.

Councillor Mosher noted that the original plan allowed for a high building at the beginning of the cul-de-sac, and that traffic issues were taken into account.

A resident of Bald Eagle mentioned the possibility of a development on the lot between Bald Eagle and Tim Horton's. He is concerned that it may be a very ugly new development. Linda Mosher said that the land is zoned commercial and that the owners can build anything they want, provided it complies with commercial zoning and any other applicable by-laws.

(e) Noise on NWAD

About 20% of the audience raised their hand when asked if they have a problem with noise on or around NWAD.

A resident of Bald Eagle said that he has never seen a police presence at the intersection. He said that he is very unhappy with the noise level, in particular with noisy "after-market" mufflers.

Constable MacKay said he has been issuing tickets for excessive noise with mufflers, but it is hard to get a conviction on noise complaints like that. The reasonableness of noise is subjective. In addition, by the time he arrives in response to a noise complaint, the person is often gone.

There has also been an issue with noise from the Tim Horton's parking lot. The problem is with people revving their engines and teens hanging out. The resident from Bald Eagle said he has personally gone over to the Tim Horton's to ask people not to rev their engines.

A woman asked why there could not be a sign forbidding noisy cars. Teens at Tim's are a problem and so is drag-racing. She also said that motorcycles are a problem. Constable MacKay mentioned one particular project where a large number of motorcycles were stopped and checked for compliance, but 100% of them have been legal with their exhaust. The resident said she would like to see the Motor Vehicle Act changed, because she cannot see how the noise level can be legal.

Constable MacKay talked a little about jake brakes (engine brakes used by trucks). He said that they are not illegal on a road with a speed limit higher than 50 km/h, so there's nothing the police can do to stop truckers from using them. He did point out that there is no reason, from a safety perspective, why a trucker should be using jake brakes on a road like NWAD.

Graham Steele noted that he has been working extensively on the jake-brakes issue on the Bicentennial Highway. Residents interested in more information on what has happened there, can look at his website (www.grahamsteele.ca/jakebrakes.html). The installation of "No Engine Braking" signs on the portion of the BiHi that passes Fairview has resulted in a marked reduction in the use of jake brakes there. Graham promised to work with DOT to see if similar signs could be posted on Northwest Arm Drive.

(f) Other Issues

A Ridge Park Lane resident asked if any new NWAD intersections are planned. She had heard a that one would go in soon. Graham said that he knew of no current plans for an intersection onto

NWAD, except for the new development planned for Fairview, between the Bicentennial Highway and the CBC broadcast tower. There will be a new intersection to serve that development.

As for Walter Havill Drive eventually connecting all the way through, Linda said that at public hearings in the past that the people said they didn't want it connected. The developer was okay with that, and so that's how it has remained. HRM would like to see the street connected for purposes of Metro Transit.

A resident of the Roxbury said that they are concerned about on-street parking. She said that there is a safety issue with people driving out of the subdivision. There was discussion of the "No Parking" signs on the Roxbury side of the street, and whether something similar might be appropriate for the Stonebury side. A resident from Walter Havill said that she tried to get HRM to install no parking signs but without success.

A resident from Tamarack said that he has concerns about parking connected with the sports field on his street. He said that there is parking on both sides of the street during games and that the streets gets congested. A bus on the route cannot pass. Linda Mosher said that she has tried to get no parking signs installed there for some years, but with no success.

Councillor Mosher also said that the suggested 4-way stop at the corner of Tamarack and Osborne is "no go" because it doesn't meet regulations. She suggested that maybe it might go in if Walter Havill Drive is connected.

Another resident noted that, with increasing population of the area, more and more people are using the shoulders of NWAD for walking, jogging and similar pursuits. No provision is made on NWAD for pedestrians.

Councillor Mosher distributed a list of useful Police Department telephone numbers. *[See back of page 5 of these minutes]*

(g) Residents' Associations

Graham suggested that Residents' Associations can effectively marshal a street or a neighbourhood and push to get things done. He invited people to stay afterwards if they were interested in exploring the possibility of one or more residents' association. [Note: About 10 people did stay afterwards. They were about evenly divided between the Stoneridge area and the Bald Eagle area. There was agreement in both groups that a residents' association, whether formal or informal, would be useful to advance residents' interests.]

3. Concluding Remarks

Graham thanked everyone for attending. He noted that this meeting was neither the beginning nor the end of a process. It was part of an ongoing attempt to address residents' concerns about NWAD and related issues such as development in the Stoneridge area.

Graham promised to prepare minutes and distribute them to the households in Stoneridge, the top of Kline Heights, and Stanley Park that had received a notice of the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8.35 p.m.

To: Peter Merritt, P.Eng
District Director - Central

From: James S. Jerram
District Traffic Authority

Subject: Proposal for Improvements - Northwest Arm Drive, HRM

At the request of Graham Steele, MLA Halifax Fairview, an extensive study of Northwest Arm Drive (NWAD) has been completed. Among Mr. Steele's concerns were speeding, deer crossing accidents, lack of signals at the intersection of NWAD and Route 306, and accidents at the various intersections along the route from the 102 interchange to Route 306. During this investigation, a number of local residents have also contacted me and listened to their problems and points of view and have considered them when examining other details as described here.

The various subjects were investigated as follows;

1. Speed Zoning. The roadside development, intersections, accident history and radar samples were examined in light of the existing 80 km/h speed zone throughout the study area. Development is controlled and access to NWAD is controlled by three signalized intersections, the accident history shows that the majority are intersection related and handled later in this letter. The prevailing speeds as determined by radar samples are in the region of 83 to 95 km/h and show a reasonably good compliance with the existing posted speed. Furthermore, all of the 85 th percentile speeds are within their respective 16 km/h paces, indicating that a major speeding problem does not exist. The existing 80 km/h speed zone does not warrant a reduction to a lower value.

2. Deer Crossing accidents. I interviewed naturalists from the Dept of Natural Resources and asked them to suggest areas where Deer Crossing signs might be of use in warning motorists. Several locations, along Highway 118, 102, 103 and NWAD, were identified. Instructions have already been set to erect Deer Crossing signs along the various highway sections identified.

3. Signals - Intersection of NWAD and Route 306. A count was analyzed that shows this intersection has 59 priority points of the 100 required for the installation of signals. Signals are not approved at this time.

4. Accident analysis. The accident rate for NWAD is 248.0 / HMKV while the provincial average is 142.9 / HMKV. Being almost double the provincial average, the accident rate for NWAD is unacceptable and is therefore treated as a separate subject in this investigation. As stated previously, a high percentage of accidents are associated with intersection traffic. The five year accident history shows that of the 174 total number, 123 or 71 percent of all accidents happened at one or other of the intersections with the intersection of Albert Walker/Walter Havill Drive/NWAD reporting 66 accidents or 38 percent of the overall total. Collision diagrams were prepared for each of the intersecting roadways to determine the cause, type and frequency of accidents at those sites. Each

intersection is dealt with separately as follows;

A. Intersection of Albert Walker/Walter Havill Drive. Accidents here are of two basic types - head-on left turns from NWAD in both direction from NWAD to either Albert Walker or Walter Havill Dr., and rear end accidents on the Albert Walker approach to NWAD. Complaints from residents that sight lines to approaching traffic are hindered by left turning vehicles when attempting left turns are correct and proven by the accident record. Also, complaints regarding rear end accidents on Albert Walker are proven. In addition to the accident record, the intersection was viewed to determine any other operation difficulties that might be present that could add to the accident record or seriously effect operations. One observation centers on restricted curb radii and deceleration/acceleration lanes. The tight curb radii and lack of acceleration lanes effects operations in several ways. Because of the tight curb radii, many drivers to move as far left as possible before making right turns and by doing so they cross the detector loop that places an unnecessary side street call to the signals which then forces a green on the side street while holding up traffic on NWAD. This lowers the level of service on NWAD while adding to frustration due usually to the fact that the vehicle placing the call has already gone. In addition, not having an acceleration lane when entering an 80 km/h highway from a dead stop causes the obvious hazards such as rear end and swerving accidents. The number of rear end accidents on Albert Walker are related to grade and congestion. The lack of a full length right turn lane along this road is causing separation problems at the intersection while also creating line ups well back toward Trunk 3. Due to the unexpected length of the line ups, many more rear end accidents are the result. This intersection would benefit by taking the following actions; 1. Provide dedicated left turn signals at the intersection, 2. provide increased curb radii for smoother ingress and egress and provide acceleration lanes for right turning vehicles onto NWAD., 3. Construct a right turn lane for the full length of Albert Walker Drive from Trunk 3 to NWAD.

B. Intersection of Osbourne Street. While this intersection has a much better accident record there are some similarities with the Albert Walker/Walter Havill Drive intersection. The sight line for left turning vehicles from NWAD are restricted by through traffic, tight curb radii forces vehicles into adjacent lanes and give false detector calls and the lack of acceleration/deceleration lanes is resulting in rear end and sideswipe, same direction accidents. This intersection could also benefit from dedicated left turn signals, increased curb radii and acceleration/deceleration lanes.

C. Intersection of Cowie Hill Road. The problems at this intersection are virtually identical to those found at Osbourne Street and the same improvements are justified.

5. General signing. The existing signing was checked against previously approved drawings and was found to be correct. The standard approved regulatory signing and warning signing as well as advance intersection warning and Wrong Way signs are in good condition - no adjustments necessary.

6. Additional. A number of accidents have happened on the curve just north of the Trunk 3 overpass. In several instances the accident description mentions that vehicles have come to rest on the inside of the curve which is an unusual position. A survey is being conducted to determine if roadway geometry is contributing to this situation or if it is coincidence that a number of vehicles have followed an unusual route. Results of this survey are not forthcoming yet. I will report on my finding later rather than hold back the remainder of this report any longer.

In summary, Northwest Arm Drive needs improvements to bring the accident rate to within reasonable limits of the Provincial average for this type or highway. The improvements are intersection related and focus on what seem to be cost cutting measures, taken when they were constructed.