



Subject: *Supplemental Report: Consultation with Fire Service - Single Egress/Ingress Development*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, May 13, 2025
Date Prepared: May 7, 2025
Related Motions: C23(210), C23(237), PAC24(5), C24(15), PAC24(48), C24(257), PAC25(16), PAC25(20), C25(67), C25(68), and C25(69)
Prepared by: Debbie Uloth, Community Planner II
Approved by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

Since the wildfires in the spring of 2023, East Hants Council has directed staff to undertake the following:

- restrict the number of dwelling units permitted on a single egress/ingress as part of development agreement negotiations;
- directed staff to review the number of areas with one access and over 50 dwelling units;
- requested staff to develop amendments to the Subdivision Bylaw that may allow more than 100 lots to be created on a single access;
- requested staff consult with the East Hants Fire Service on their ability to service single access developments with more than 100 lots; and
- asked for research on when and why the 100 lot rule was developed.

In February 2025, staff presented a vulnerability assessment on each of the areas in East Hants with over 100 lots and with only one egress/ingress. As a result of the staff presentation, Council requested staff research when and why Section 10.16 of the Subdivision Bylaw (SUB) was created and requested that staff consult with East Hants Fire Services.

Financial Impact Statement

There are no immediate financial impacts with the adoption of this report.

Recommendation

Maintain the current Subdivision Bylaw regulations regarding 100 lots on a single ingress/egress.

Alternative Recommendation

Select an alternative from one of the proposed options.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *Maintain the current Subdivision Bylaw regulations regarding 100 lots on a single ingress/egress.*

Background

East Hants Council has expressed concerns regarding the number of lots and/or dwelling units that access a single ingress/egress road during an emergency event, such as the wildfires in the spring of 2023. As a result, Council has passed the following motions:

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| Motion C23(210) | <i>Direct staff to discontinue allowing developments to exceed the 100 unit minimum before requiring a second entrance/exit when negotiating development agreements prior to coming to Council.</i> |
| Motion C23(237) | <i>Direct staff to create a report highlighting the single way in and single way-out subdivisions in the Municipality (over 50 homes, or what is deemed appropriate) to send to EMO and explore lands available to provide the possibility of second exits within those subdivisions.</i> |
| Motion C24(15) | <i>Authorize staff to take the Secondary Access Report dated December 20, 2023, to EMO Planning Committee for prioritization of communities for the Fire Smart Assessment; and that Council authorize staff to review planning and subdivision regulations to aid in the implementation of Fire Smart principles.</i> |
| Motion C24(257) | <i>Moved that Council authorize staff to create lot access regulations based on the length of road, number of lots, and number of dwelling units.</i> |
| Motion C25(67) | <i>Moved that Council authorize staff consult through Fire Advisory Committee or the East Hants Fire Service (that service the development areas) for input on fire services in local areas regarding the department's comfort level and concerns regarding developments in their service area and ask for feedback based on what they see in their own service area.</i> |
| Motion C25(68) | <i>Moved that Council authorize staff send a letter to Provincial Public Works Department and copying MLAS and the Premier asking for reconsideration on performing maintenance on K Class roads (or other) in case they are required to be accessible for emergency access.</i> |
| Motion C25(69) | <i>Moved that staff be authorized to review the Single Access Road discussion and come back to committee with any suggestions on amendments to the Bylaw that they may have (if any), that they feel would perhaps reflect on what was considered the original intent of this when first brought into force approximately fifteen years ago.</i> |
| Motion C25(133) | <i>To direct staff to write a letter to the province regarding the K Class roads, particularly the Renfrew Road (with over 172 residents residing in the area) explaining the circumstances around Emergency Services; and to, direct Staff to take the previous report defining K Class Roads that could be used for emergency services and include them in the letter to the Minister of Public Works, also outlining the number of residents affected or potentially affected if these roads would be opened up, with a copy to go to the Minister of Emergency Management, and Minister of Municipal Affairs.</i> |

The purpose of this supplemental report is to provide additional information for PAC's consideration to assist in their decision-making process.

Discussion

Planning and Development staff have completed research on the origins of the 100-lot rule and have consulted with East Hants Fire Services, as directed by Council. Planning Staff also consulted with Engineering staff from Halifax to see what approach they are taking in regards to development on a single ingress/egress.

CURRENT METHOD OF DETERMINING LOCATION OF A SECOND ACCESS

Section 10.16 of the SUB states how many lots can be located on a single access road.

10.16 No more than 100 lots and a remainder shall be serviced by a single road access to a collector or arterial street.

Notwithstanding 10.16, the Municipality may permit more than 100 lots with a single road street to a collector or arterial street if the development is subject to a development agreement, master plan, Comprehensive Development District, or phased Subdivision application which requires that a second road access to a collector or arterial street will be built in a future phase of development, in a manner and timeframe acceptable to the Municipality.

Other than the distance required between intersections as outlined in the Municipal standards, which can range from 75 m to 300 m depending on road ownership and type of road, the SUB does not identify where a second access road shall be located. Therefore, the location of the second access road is not reviewed as part of the subdivision plan review.

HISTORY OF THE 100 LOT REGULATION

In 2004, the East Hants Engineering Services Committee passed a motion referring the issue of requiring subdivisions containing more than 100 lots to include at least two access points onto collector or arterial roads to Planning Advisory Committee. The Engineering Services proposal was aimed at addressing safety and emergency access/egress concerns for large subdivisions serviced by only one access point. Elmwood subdivision, with the addition of Greenside Estates, was the first development to trigger East Hants to review their regulations. A full background and discussion about subdivision access road requirements starts on page 13 of the 2006 Final Plan Review Staff Report, attached as Appendix A, and ends on page 18.

As part of the 2006 Plan Update the following policies were added to the Municipal Planning Strategy.

10.13 No more than 100 lots and a remainder, shall be serviced by a single road access to a collector or arterial street within Growth Management and Growth Reserve Areas.

10.13 A Notwithstanding section 10.13, the Municipality may permit more than 100 lots with a single road access to a collector or arterial street if the development is subject to a development agreement, master plan, NCDD, or phased subdivision application which requires that a second road access to a collector or arterial street will be built in a future phase of development, in a manner and timeframe deemed acceptable by the Municipality.

In 2013 a review of the East Hants Subdivision Bylaw was completed. As part of the review, the Municipal Department of Infrastructure and Operations requested that the above SUB regulations be amended by removing “within Growth Management and Growth Reserve Areas”. The request stemmed from the construction of larger rural subdivisions being developed on one egress/ingress with similar traffic and safety

concerns as the GRAs and GMAs. East Hants Council adopted the Subdivision Bylaw Amendments on July 25, 2013. A copy of the staff report has been attached as Appendix B.

- 10.13 a. No more than 100 lots and a remainder shall be serviced by a single road access to a collector or arterial street ~~within Growth Management and Growth Reserve Areas.~~

Council made no changes to the 100 lot SUB regulation during the 2016 and 2023 Plan Reviews, although other SUB amendments were made that encourage increased connectivity. As well, in 2016 a road classification map was initially adopted by Council but none of the areas that are restricted by the 100 lot regulation had roads that were classified as arterial or collector roads.

In relation to Motion C25(69), the intent of Section 10.16 of the SUB does comply with the intent of Council's previous direction. Council decided in 2013, to have the 100 lot limit apply to the entire Municipality based on a recommendation from Infrastructure and Operations. If Council believes the concerns from I&O are no longer relevant they may direct staff to amend Section 10.16 to once again only apply to GMAs and GRAs.

EAST HANTS FIRE SERVICE ENGAGEMENT

East Hants Fire Services had a meeting on March 1, 2025, at that meeting the Director of Corporate Services discussed single access subdivisions and the current limit on development on a single ingress/egress. The majority of the conversation centred around dry hydrants. Below are comments from the meeting:

- Varying perspectives from the chiefs with no definitive direction provided.
- Each development is different and the need to look at each development independent of others was a theme.
- Include Fire Smart principles in land use planning documents.
- Desire from the fire service that the municipality should regulate dry hydrants in the rural area. Dry hydrants should have standardized requirements and be maintained by the municipality. Discussion that new developments in the rural area should be required to install dry hydrants.

Further to the March Fire Service meeting, staff contacted individual Fire Chiefs who have over 100 lots on a single ingress/egress road to understand their perspective on continued development on a single access. The following comments were provided to Planning staff:

Enfield Volunteer Fire Department

Feedback on the Grand Lake Monte Vista Road;

- Concerns with the current situation in this area
 - 8km of single access road
 - This has a high forest fire risk being all forest one side of the road and lake on the other side
 - Evacuation of the area would be a challenge with single access and fire apparatus trying to get into the same area.
 - The road condition is poor at the best of times, Monte Vista road would need to be improved.
 - The current dry hydrant is near the mid point of the road which also could be a risk point
 - Some of the newer roads being built (Viannes Way, Justyne Marie Lane) are narrow lanes - would be hard to get fire trucks in these two lanes when cars are trying to evacuate

If the area was to see an increase of homes and lots, we would need a second point of access (or at least a second evacuation route). It would need better water supply for fire operations, 1 or 2 more sources. If the developers could have a plan on water supply and/or provide access to Lake with a road, or a dry hydrant this will be a great help.

The island (after the gate) also has a risk as the lane is one way, and more homes are being built on it - would be nice for a water source here also (access to lake, or dry hydrant)

As we have seen in other areas in the province with wildfires single access puts our residents at a high risk of injuries or death. We have examples in this area just structure fires being an issue, with putting residents at risk because of the single access and the road being blocked. If residents need to be evacuated the road is blocked, or someone needs EHS or another emergency. This is a long distance of 8km.

Uniacke & District Volunteer Fire Department

After discussing this with the outgoing chief and the new deputy chief, we do have some concerns with the access and egress of these roads in an emergency. With the growing global warming that's been occurring the windstorms, hurricanes, and heavy rainstorms that we have been having has been leaving a high fuel load on the forest floor IE dead falls and downed trees. The severity of the rainfall events has been increasing as well causing flooding as seen in Brooklyn a few years ago. This does affect the shoulders of the single dirt roads that most of the areas in the analysis covers. Our trucks cannot pass on the Piggott Lake Road because it is very narrow and windy. When we shuttle water back and forth during an emergency there is a possibility of one of the trucks flipping due to the soft shoulders. In the spring when the roads are soft, we can sink into them and get stuck, which makes our response delayed or not at all. Below will be listed the areas and concerns:

Piggott Lake Road

- Winding road.
- Single lane limited or no passing with heavy apparatus.
- Soft shoulders, chance of flipping apparatus.
- Fire loads on the forest floor and dwelling close to the woods causing rapid moving fires.
- Waterview Dr and Cockscomb Lake Dr S should be linked to give 2 ways in and out.

Uniacke Mines Rd

- Cockscomb Lake Dr S, single lane limited passing with heavy apparatus.
- Heavy fire loads on forest floor and dwellings close to the woods causing rapid moving fires.
- Soft shoulders, chance of flipping apparatus.

Old Mines Rd

- Rockwell dr should loop back around and connect to Old Mines Rd.
- Heavy fire loads on forest floor causing rapid moving fires.
- Good access roads paved.

Lakecrest Dr

- Road very soft in spring causing heavy apparatus to sink into road during response.
- Road very rough through other seasons causing slow response times.
- Fire loads on forest floor and dwellings close to the woods causing rapid moving fires.
- Jorphie Dr and Lakecrest should connect to allow 2 ways in and out.

South Uniacke Rd

- Flooding issues above the bridge during heavy rain events could wash out the bridge.
- Trailer park owner wanting more homes in park.

For any future planning in the area, we would recommend subdivisions with two ways in and out to allow the residents to escape the area during emergencies. I thank you for the opportunity to allow us to voice our concerns in this matter.

The RCMP were also asked for their comments regarding developments with 100 lots or more on a single egress/ingress, comments are below:

My general feeling is one based on the NS wildfires and particularly the ones in Tantallon. While miraculously nobody was hurt, the issue for most of the effected subdivisions was the lack of access and egress. This is an issue that can be applied to any natural disaster for first response and to a slightly lesser degree policing.

To me it is the number of homes that makes a single pt of access a far less desirable, it's the fact that there is only a single egress. The problem it creates is only multiplied by the number of homes.

I am seeing fire roads being built in as an emergency egress. I think this would be a step towards a more positive look on single entry points.

In my opinion as the District Commander of the RCMP is, I will not support not having a secondary egress route.

MOTION C25(68)

At their February 2025 meeting, Council passed motion C25(68), which “...authorize staff send a letter to Provincial Public Works Department and copying MLAS and the Premier asking for reconsideration on performing maintenance on K Class roads (or other) in case they are required to be accessible for emergency access.” A letter was mailed to the Minister and a response has been received. A copy of the response letter has been attached as Appendix C.

NSPW indicates that K-class roads are considered unmaintained roads owned by the Province. Developers or nearby property owners can undertake improvements on these roads to meet standards for reclassification. In order to do so a permit from the local NSPW office is required.

In relation to creating second accesses NSPW states the following:

DPW remains open to working with municipalities to identify long-term access solutions, including secondary routes to support emergency response. However, the responsibility for constructing new roads or upgrading existing K-class roads to a maintained standard lies with the municipality. This framework has been in place since the 1995 Municipal Service Exchange, which transferred the responsibility for new local road infrastructure to municipal governments.

Should the Municipality wish to take on responsibility for any specific K-class road, the province is open to discussing a transfer of ownership to support local planning and access needs.

Essentially, it is up to the Municipality to improve any K-class road they feel would improve access to an area.

At their April 2025 meeting, Council directed staff to further consult with NSPW on the K-class road issue.

CONSULTATION WITH HALIFAX ENGINEERING

Halifax is also grappling with the issue of existing subdivisions constructed on one access. In Hammonds Plains, two emergency access points have been constructed to date and a new emergency access point was just approved this past winter. Halifax staff are now working on a project to identify all developments in the Halifax Regional Municipality constructed with a single ingress/egress road. Future emergency access connections could potentially be developed by the municipality but the purpose of these emergency access points would not be to allow for increased development, it would only be for an emergency purpose. As a deterrent for general public use Halifax may use bollards with a universal key that fire and police would have. Halifax is also in the process of writing a technical memo, which will identify the criteria for an emergency access.

Other items being discussed by Halifax staff include where the location of the two access roads in new developments should be located, for example, should they be located at opposite ends of the development. Halifax is also looking at counting accessory dwelling units towards the entire total number dwelling count on a single ingress/egress road.

Options

As part of the February 2025 staff report four different options were presented for PAC's consideration. At the time, PAC didn't appear comfortable in making recommendations based on the options presented. Below are a set of questions for PAC to consider to help in selecting an option:

1. Is PAC comfortable in permitting unlimited development and population growth in single ingress/egress areas? If no, what limit should be set?
2. How much weight should be given to the concerns of EMS providers compared to the concerns of residents wanting to develop their lands?
3. Does the road condition, length, and ownership matter if additional growth is permitted to continue on existing single access roads?
4. Like Halifax, East Hants continues to grow. Would PAC like to keep regulations similar to Halifax as their regulations change in response to growth and EMS concerns?

Proposed Options

As a result of the Vulnerability Assessment presented to PAC in February and after consulting with the local fire services and HRM, staff do not recommend that the number of lots on the single access roads reviewed be permitted to increase without a second access. Based on staff evaluation the risk to the residents seems to outweigh the benefits specific to land owners. However, Municipal staff have developed four alternative options for the consideration of PAC.

1. Prepare amendments to the Subdivision Bylaw that would permit over 100 lots be created on a single access road, where a vulnerability assessment shows that the road has a very low to moderate risk assessment.

AND

Prepare amendments to the Official Community Plan that permits a maximum of 300 dwelling units on a single access road in a GMA serviced by Municipal water and wastewater; and prepare amendments that would permit a maximum of 150 dwelling units on a single access in all areas of East Hants not serviced by Municipal water and wastewater.

2. Maintain the 100 lot regulation and prepare an amendment to the East Hants Official Community Plan that would limit the number of dwelling units to 300 units on a single access in the GMA's serviced by Municipal water and wastewater and 150 dwelling units in all areas of East Hants not serviced by Municipal water and wastewater.
3. Direct staff to investigate the feasibility of constructing emergency accesses (financial and engineering requirements) to service the areas identified in this report to allow for increased development. Emergency access could be built and owned by East Hants or built to the East Hants private road standards with easements in favour of all impacted properties.

4. Amend the Subdivision Bylaw to create a Municipal classification of roads. Separate from the provincial classification.
5. Make no changes to the current regulations and allow for the development community to build second accesses to the identified areas when development pressure warrants the cost of constructing the second access.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Proposed amendments to the East Hants Official Community plan require a public information meeting. If Council selects an option that requires amendments to the MPS or SUB, staff will organize a public information meeting to discuss the proposed amendments with the public.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Amendments to the East Hants Official Community Plan aligns with Council Strategic goal to build strong communities by “Ensure[ing] the East Hants official community plan is effective in managing changes in the community, reducing land use conflict and protecting both natural resources and community character.”

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Municipality has Legislative Authority to create land use policies and regulations under Part 8 of the Municipal Government Act.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no immediate financial impacts from the adoption of this report.

Attachments

Appendix A - 2006 Staff Report

Appendix B - 2013 Staff Report

Appendix C - Response Letter from NSPW