



Subject: *Motion C22(349): Gravel Public Roads*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, February 20, 2024
Date Prepared: February 16, 2024
Related Motions: C22(349)
Prepared by: Debbie Uloth, Project Planner
Approved by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

In October of 2022, Planning staff presented a report to PAC on public gravel roads as part of the Plan Update. As part of that report, staff presented the cost of maintaining public gravel roads compared to public paved roads and provided two options for PAC to consider. The first option was to eliminate the ability to construct public gravel roads and only allow public paved roads. The second option was to maintain the status quo. Council decided to maintain the status quo and passed two additional motions.

At their October 26, 2022 meeting, Council passed the following motions:

- C22(349) Moved that Council authorize staff to maintain the current regulations that permit the construction of new municipal gravel public roads at this time but to bring back a report addressing some of the discussion held here today around what regions it might be appropriate or not and under what circumstances it might be appropriate to prohibit gravel roads.
- C22(350) Moved that Council authorize staff to bring a report reviewing the paving petition policy and possible incentives options for both developers and residents to pave their current public gravel roads.

This staff report addresses Motion C22(349), a second staff report will be presented to discuss Motion C22(350). Updates to the cost of servicing Municipal streets have been included in the report as well as an option for where public gravel roads may be permitted.

Financial Impact Statement

There may be a fiscal impact to the Municipality depending on what alternative option East Hants Council selects.

Recommendation

That Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council authorize staff to proceed with amending the SUB to remove the ability to construct public gravel roads.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *authorize staff to proceed with amending the Subdivision Bylaw to remove the ability for developers to construct Municipal public gravel roads in all areas of East Hants.*

Alternative Motion 1

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *authorize staff to proceed with amending the Subdivision Bylaw to remove the ability to construct Municipal public gravel roads in areas of the Municipality outside of the Rural Subdivision Development Area.*

Alternative Motion 2

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *maintain the current Subdivision Bylaw regulations that permit the construction of Municipal public gravel roads outside of GMA's and GRA's.*

Background

As part of the Plan Update, Council considered a report from staff on whether Developers should continue to be permitted to construct public gravel roads as part of their developments. The reason for the review was due to the maintenance cost of public gravel roads compared to public paved roads. Council decided to maintain the current Subdivision regulations regarding public gravel roads as part of the adoption of the 2023 East Hants Official Community Plan. In addition, Council passed the following motions:

- C22(349) Moved that Council authorize staff to maintain the current regulations that permit the construction of new municipal gravel public roads at this time but to bring back a report addressing some of the discussion held here today around what regions it might be appropriate or not and under what circumstances it might be appropriate to prohibit gravel roads.
- C22(350) Moved that Council authorize staff to bring a report reviewing the paving petition policy and possible incentives options for both developers and residents to pave their current public gravel roads.

This report reviews in greater detail road maintenance costs and provides two alternative motions for Council to consider.

Discussion

Under the current Subdivision Bylaw regulations, public gravel roads are not permitted to be constructed in the Growth Management Areas and the Growth Reserve Areas, only public paved roads are permitted. However, a public gravel road is permitted to be constructed in all other parts of East Hants where new roads are permitted. Developers have the option to choose between either paving their public roads or leaving them as gravel public roads. Although the choice to construct a gravel road may be less expensive for the Developer it costs the Municipality more per linear metre to maintain a gravel road, particularly for gravel grading.

East Hants owns approximately 8 km of public gravel roads. There is an extra cost to the Municipality for the maintenance of public gravel roads compared to public paved roads. Infrastructure and Operation staff have updated the costs associated with the maintenance of all public road types from the previous report presented as part of the Plan Update. Costs identified have increased since the last report.

Road Maintenance Cost Table

Road Details	Asphalt W/o SW	Gravel
Length	1000 m	1000 m
Width	7 m	11 m
Shoulder	3 m	
Sidewalk		
Ditches	2 m	2 m
Area of Road		
Travelled Surface	7000	11000
Shoulders	3000	0
Ditches	2000	2000
Sidewalk	0	0

Costs		
Lifespan replacement of Travelled Surface	\$ 723,278.00 Every 25 years	\$ 203,104.00 Every 10 years ($\$203,104 \times 2.5 =$ $\$507,760$ per 25 years)
Life Cycle maintenance	\$ 378,000.00 Per 25 years	\$ 100,000.00 Per 10 Years ($100,000 \times 2.5 =$ $\$250,000$)
Ditch Maintenance per year	\$ 8,333.33 ($8333.33 \times 25 =$ $\$ 208,333.25$)	\$ 8,333.33 ($8333.33 \times 25 =$ $\$ 208,333.25$)
Dust Control per year		\$ 10,600.00 ($10600 \times 25 =$ $\$265,000$)
Gravel grading per year		\$ 55,000.00 ($55000 \times 25 =$ $\$1,375,000$)
Life span Travel Surface	25	10
25-year life span	\$ 1,309,611.25	\$ 2,606,093.25
equal life cycles (50yrs)	\$ 2,619,222.50	\$ 5,212,186.50

The costs shown in the Road Maintenance Costs Table are estimates based on best practices from asset management. Current spending in East Hants per kilometer of gravel road is less than recommended. For example, in our current budget, East Hants is spending \$40,000 on 7.9 km of road for gravel grading. According to the chart above, East Hants should actually be spending approximately \$434,500 a year on gravel grading 7.9 km of road, a difference of \$394,500.

Looking at the numbers, the most cost-effective road type for the Municipality to maintain and replace are paved roads without sidewalks. The most expensive road type to maintain and replace are gravel roads. Another cost that should be considered with the construction of public gravel roads is the location of the road. Gravel roads located in rural communities cost extra to maintain the road.

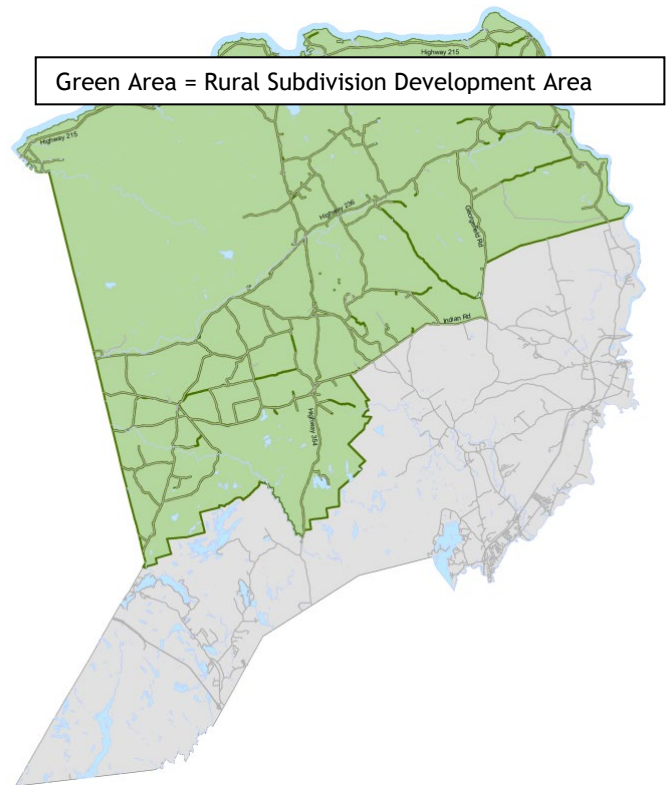
Other items PAC may want to consider when deciding whether to allow for public gravel roads is what is the intention of the road? What volume of traffic will be using it? A benefit of gravel roads is that the speed at which traffic flows is usually slower than paved roads. Gravel roads offer developers a less expensive option for the construction of a public road. In addition, these types of roads also offer a more rural experience compared to paved roads.

RURAL SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT AREA

Rural Councillors have had concerns with deterring development along the Noel shore and in central East Hants in the past. An alternative option is that new public gravel roads only be permitted in the Rural Subdivision Development Area shown on the map. This area is already included in the Subdivision Bylaw.

Property owners in the Rural Subdivision Development Area will still be able to construct private gravel roads if Council decides to move forward with amendments.

If Council would like to have consistency throughout the municipality in how gravel public road restrictions are applied then staff recommend only allowing for the construction of paved public roads and not allowing gravel public roads anywhere in East Hants. A discussion about roads may come forward as part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy.



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 is a cost to the Municipality if Council decides to proceed with amendments to the Subdivision Bylaw, including advertising. There is also a future maintenance cost to the Municipality if Council decides to continue to allow Developers to build public gravel roads.

Alternatives

There are three alternatives for Council to consider:

1. Amend the Subdivision Bylaw to only permit the construction of new public gravel roads in the Rural Subdivision Development Area.
2. Make no changes to the Subdivision Bylaw, which permits public gravel roads to be constructed outside of GMAs and GRAs.

Attachments

There are no attachments to this report.