



Subject: *Rising Tide Shore Signage - Update*
To: Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee
Date Prepared: December 11, 2025
Related Motions: C23(145), C25(110)
Prepared by: Aurora Douthwright, Tourism & Events Supervisor
Alana Tapper, Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture
Approved by: Kim Ramsay, CAO

Summary

This report provides an update on the Rising Tide Shore signage program, an initiative aimed at enhancing visitor experience, improving wayfinding and supporting economic development along the Highway 215 shoreline route. Given the project timeline and changing conditions, staff recommend that the project be discontinued, that the funds be redirected to other tourism-related capital projects, and that staff be directed to update the existing East Hants Tourism Strategy released in 2019.

Financial Impact Statement

The project has a budget of \$100,000, as approved in the current capital plan, with a \$10,000 grant from the Provincial Beautification & Streetscaping program allocated for phase 1 as part of that budget. West Hants Council has allocated \$50,000 for similar signage in their municipality.

Recommendation

That Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee recommend that Council gives the CAO direction to discontinue work on the Rising Tide Shore signage program and for staff to reallocate grant funds and/or budget accordingly.

And that the committee also recommend that Council direct staff to update the East Hants Tourism Strategy, to reevaluate the need for directional signage as well as determine updated ways to enhance visitor experience, improve wayfinding and support economic development in current tourism conditions. A draft of this strategy would be presented to Council at a later date for approval.

Recommended Motion

Move that Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee recommends that Council gives the CAO direction to

- 1. discontinue the Rising Tide Shore signage program;*
- 2. request to reallocate the Provincial Beautification Funds to other appropriate projects or return funding and return any municipal funds to the Tourism reserve; and that*
- 3. Council direct staff to update the existing East Hants Tourism Strategy to reflect current tourism conditions, to be presented for Council approval at a future date.*

Background

Council approved the Rising Tide Shore signage project as part of the 2019 East Hants Tourism Strategy. Since the last update to Council in 2025:

- Consultation with NS TIR and Tourism NS on updating highway signage (phase 1) has not yielded progress. Change in provincial staffing has resulted in delays and there is no clear direction from the Province on if/when 100 series highway signage amendments will be approved.
- Cost of installation is likely to have risen since the last presentation to Council and it is unlikely that the original project budget will be adequate.
- There are not currently funds in the operational annual budget allocated to maintenance of tourism signage, but if the project moves forward, staff would recommend adding at least \$1000-\$3000 annually to operating budget as a contingency fund for maintenance/damage. This was not included for consideration in previous reports, but should be noted.

Circumstances within the tourism industry have changed significantly since this project began. A number of factors including increased awareness/traffic of municipal tourism sites and technology improvements have decreased the average visitor's reliance on signage.

Staff want to ensure Council is informed on the state of this project and are seeking input on next steps. Staff also recommend updating the original East Hants Tourism Strategy to reflect today's tourism landscape and adequately plan for the future.

Discussion

SIGNAGE AS A TOURISM PRIORITY

Improved adoption of digital technology and improved cellular service in rural areas of Nova Scotia have decreased visitor reliance on signage over time. Staff still recommend including signage as a piece of an updated tourism strategy, but recommend focus on maintaining/refurbishing current sign assets and working together with local businesses to help unify signage efforts/create a more cohesive visitor experience along the shore. Staff also recommend consulting local business for their input during a review of the Tourism Strategy.

CAPITAL PRIORITIES

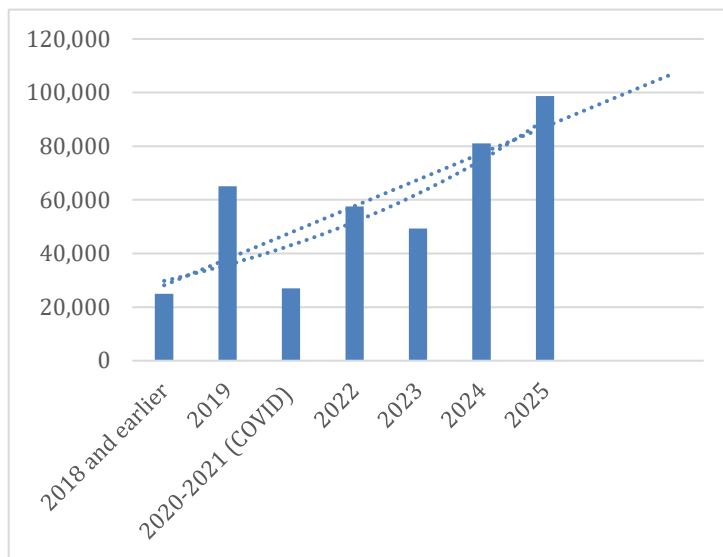
As visitation at East Hants' tourism sites increases, so do the stresses on existing infrastructure. While increased/improved signage is occasionally requested by visitors at our tourism sites, there are other capital improvements that will be required to maintain a positive visitor experience and sustain this level of visitation over time, such as:

- Larger/extended season for public washroom facilities
- Larger parking areas
- Additional visitor amenities e.g. picnic areas, ground improvements, replacing tree losses, flag poles

TOURISM GROWTH IN EAST HANTS

Since East Hants assumed ownership and operation of two key Highway 215-area tourism sites over the past decade, visitation to Burntcoat Head Park and the Fundy Tidal Interpretive Centre has more than doubled. It is estimated that the sites can expect an average of over 100,000 visitors per year in the next few seasons; these sites were recording combined visitation of 25,000-40,000 annually when originally acquired. This trend suggests that current signage, at least for municipally-owned assets, is meeting the basic needs of visitors and their ability to locate the sites.

Year	Visitor Count (BHP and FTIC combined)
2018 and earlier, average	25,000
2019	65,000
2020-2021 (COVID avg)	27,000
2022	57,478
2023	49,339
2024	81,091
2025	98,726



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Rising Tide Shore signage program is part of the existing East Hants Tourism Strategy as approved by Council in 2019. As outlined above, staff recommend updating this strategy to reflect current conditions.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This project has a budget of \$100,000 (\$90,000 of special reserves and \$10,000 of grant funding), which staff anticipates is no longer sufficient to complete all phases of the project. The budget was approved in 2019/2020, and based on 2024 pricing, the base cost of completing phases 1 and 2 would be estimated at least \$105,000 plus HST, without factoring phase 3 or any operational/maintenance costs moving forward.

Phase 1: 100 series highway signage

\$15,000 x 3 = \$45,000 (based on 2024 quotes from NS-TIR)

Phase 2: Directory signage at junctions - construction of 2-3 new wayfinding directory signs

\$20,000 x 3 = \$60,000

Phase 3: Individual attraction signage/further branding

Cost unknown - cost of individual signs, attractions signs, etc. Beyond current budget.

There is currently \$10,000 in grant funding allocated to this project. If it does not move forward, staff can approach to Province to request that the funds be used for an alternative signage project (pending approval in the 2026-27 budget). If not approved, staff recommend returning the unused grant funds to the Province.

Remaining municipal funds (\$90,000) would be released to the Tourism reserve to be used for other projects per Council's approval. This could immediately assist in funding capital improvements noted above, especially at Burntcoat Head Park.

Alternatives

That Council provide staff with alternate direction on the project.

Attachments

Rising Tide Shore Signage Manual - Draft (originally presented in 2025)

East Hants Tourism Strategy (released in 2019)