

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

Dear Mayor Fillmore,

Re: Re-think Robie St transportation corridor

Here is a brief summary of the points we made at our meeting on May 22.

We ask that you stop further expenditures on the Robie St Corridor widening, repopulate the buildings that have been or will be purchased south of North Street and employ any of the various better, cheaper options for prioritizing transit that do not involve demolitions or cutting trees and road widening.

*There are many reasons to re-think the proposed widening of Robie St between Almon and Cunard (especially applicable for the short North to Cunard portion).

*While recognizing Robie St as a traffic corridor, the issue is configuration. There **is no need to widen the street from three lanes to four for a second bus lane**. As shown even for public transportation, widening roads does not reduce traffic or congestion. Wider roads increase speed and harm public safety. It is very broadly understood that widening roads is not prudent and that progressive cities work to reallocate existing road space.

*There is **no legal obligation** on HRM to pursue the Robie Street widening: see s.232(2) of the HRM Charter. Council may leave this project aside for any number of legitimate reasons e.g. a desire to re-think it; high cost; to investigate alternatives; to allow for renewed public consultation; an awareness of community impacts; a preference for other transportation projects as higher priority.

*The **designation as a transportation corridor was adopted without the cost being known**. The amount is rapidly inflating. The property acquisition alone was \$53m in 2022 and \$73m in 2023. Current staff estimates are **now almost \$200 million**.

***These costs are not equated with any known or projected time savings for either buses or private vehicles**. That is the hundreds of millions spent may save minuscule amounts of time.

***Transit may be accommodated and prioritized through alternatives** such as overhead bi-directional signals as used on the MacDonald Bridge, Chebucto Road, Herring Cove Road. The savings can be used to optimize public transportation throughout HRM with *buses, salaries, terminals, shelters, public safety, lowered fares, micro transit*). We also mentioned Transit Priority signals, traffic signals or other of many configurations for BRT. ([Please see details via links at the bottom](#))

*The proposed **demolition of existing affordable housing involves dozens of units**. Many of these small scale multi-unit buildings, the so-named missing middle, are newly

and expensively renovated and the majority are well maintained. We are presently in a time of economic precarity, confronting a housing crisis and climate crisis, facing a labour and materials shortage. HRM offers no protection of affordable housing or requirement for new. Even if there is new construction this is future based and will not be affordable, or will include only a few such units and only for a limited time.

***The loss of 80 mature trees** before their time means loss of significant environmental service (carbon capture, shade, clean air, noise reduction, habitat, traffic calming,) and beauty. Some of these Elms date back to the 1860s or 70s. The larger the tree the more significant its services. **These trees can never be replaced.**

***Widening Robie puts pressures on the adjacent neighbourhoods**, a unique community of small scale multi-unit buildings with some single family homes. There is an unusually high concentration of housing co-ops, First Nations, youth shelters within the designated Woodill heritage conservation district. **The proposed widening is strongly unpopular with residents**, demonstrated most recently at a May 7 public information meeting attended by over 100 persons where everyone expressed their opposition.

***Overall the project has an extreme lack of rigour or analyses that one would expect for such an extraordinary expenditure with regard to its impact, objectives, alternatives, outcome. There is simply not a case to justify pursuing it.**

***Maintaining the neighbourhood status quo is both necessary and relatively easy: refrain from the demolition of the existing housing; refrain from cutting down existing trees; rent the housing to tenants. Direct HRM staff to work within the constraints of the existing road allowance.**

Thank you for your time and interest.
Peggy Cameron & Howard Epstein

Further information on better, cheaper options:

1. **Congestion protection and priority for public transportation: A short video with Dr Peter Furth**, Professor College of Engineering, Northeastern, Boston <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBVhx3KGRGk>
2. **Bus Rapid Transit lane options & images of 5 different configurations:** <https://www.cdmsmith.com/en/client-solutions/insights/breaking-down-bus-rapid-transit-lane-options>
3. Please see previous correspondence and images.