

July 17, 2025

Dear Premier and Minister for Transportation,

**Cc:** MLA Lina Hamid and Tim Outhit, Councillors Laura White, Mayor Fillmore, Kathryn Morse

I write concerning your [threat to overturn the municipality's plans](#) to convert Morris Street as part of an all ages and abilities cycling network, because you say it will worsen congestion.

[You were recently quoted as saying:](#) *"I think everyone is concerned with traffic at the moment. The only people who don't seem concerned are the people on Council"*

Given the statutory power you now have and have threatened to use, the municipality has no choice but to abandon its plans and initiate a new process of planning and development for this section of the all ages and abilities bike lane network.

This could take years and also be overturned, which will work against the reduction in car dependence and increase in active transportation options clearly identified as priorities for the public, [per consultation completed by the Joint Regional Transportation Agency](#): *"We heard that participants would like to use Active Transportation (AT) to reach nearby destinations, as a sustainable option for the "last mile" of longer trips, for fun and recreation, or as a viable mode for those unable to drive, but many cannot seriously consider this as an option until the system is safer, more connected, and better maintained."*

As a resident of HRM and commuter, I am aware that congestion in HRM is caused by too many people driving, also too many crashes involving vehicles at key locations. This can be seen from daily traffic reports and [municipal crash data mapping](#). The locations involved are often provincial highways, arterial roads and main intersections such as the Windsor Street Exchange or the Armdale Rotary. Levels of car use within areas not designed for large numbers of private vehicles is alarming, frequently causing congestion and danger.

Supporting large population increases alongside large increases in private vehicle use is surely not possible. HRM are working from a detailed plan, the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP), to accommodate a population increase yet reduce congestion - the result of much research and work by transportation professionals.

As part of that plan, consultation is completed on each aspect of proposed changes, whether that may be bus lanes, bike lanes or pedestrian enhancements. The IMP acknowledges a fundamental truth based on physics and math – the municipality cannot grow without absolutely ensuring that far more people do not drive, because that would result in unsupportable impacts on municipal funds and congestion, also land use.

From [staff's report dated 29 July 2024](#), at page 9: *Figure 6: Morris Street Concept 1A - Two-way Bikeway with One-way Traffic (looking east)*

Figure 6: Morris Street Concept 1A - Two-way Bikeway with One-way Traffic (looking east)



On 1 October 2024 Councillors, **including your own PC MLA, Tim Outhit**, approved the plans for Morris Street on 1 October ([Agenda item 15.4](#)) following express recommendations made in a 74-page staff report dated 29 July 2024, submitted by a senior municipal professional engineer. Councillors Purdy and Russell were the only dissenting votes.

That report contained detailed evaluation information including impacts upon drivers, commercial truck traffic, transit, fire and emergency services. I am sure that report required much assessment work from numerous transportation professionals, at substantial cost to municipal taxpayers. A review by your own transportation staff, together with discussions with municipal staff, should confirm the level of care and assessment that led to the Morris Street plans.

In other words, this did not proceed because of a misguided whim by Council to favour bike lanes over congestion. It was the result of considerable work and express recommendations by professional transportation staff, which is now wasted given your threat to intervene using statutory powers. Council would have been reckless to go against recommendations which were the result of substantial work, by their own staff.

As a resident of HRM who needs safe and reliable travel from A to B like everyone else, I am assured by the substantial groundwork that has been completed by transportation professionals on this project. I personally drive, take transit, cycle and walk for my transportation requirements and I am eager for the municipality to complete its work to reduce car use and encourage other modes of transportation, which by substantial consensual research and experience we know is the only way to defeat congestion in cities - as confirmed by the Province's 2013 transportation strategy, [Choose How Your Move](#).



## Choose how you move

Sustainable Transportation Strategy

NOVA SCOTIA

I would like the municipality to proceed, with direct support and encouragement from the Province, on measures we know must be introduced to reduce car use and congestion – including the connected cycle lane network and the proposed connected bus network (BRT) which so far your government has not funded, despite long-promised match funding from the Federal government.

Currently, options other than car use for residents are unsafe and are not supported with appropriate infrastructure.

This has been a result of historical choices to prioritise car

use over other modes of transportation, which has resulted in the levels of congestion and chaos we see now.

The kind of intervention now being threatened leaves Council with limited options – they cannot know that changes resulting from much work and recommendations by their own professional

staff will not be overturned by the Province, leaving them with no option but to maintain the Status Quo, to avoid fiscal risk.

There is no process for gaining Provincial approval for projects, no Provincial transportation plan, no means of moving essential changes forward without risk of Provincial intervention.

If simply ensuring all roads maximise vehicular traffic flow is what the Province considers will “fix” congestion, this threatens all municipal actions pursuant to its Integrated Mobility Plan. Nothing is at risk of not being overturned, given its foundation is a change in priority from maximising vehicle capacity to maximising capacity to move people and goods safely and efficiently.

Please can you let me know what assessments have been completed by transportation professionals which support your conclusion, that the recommendation by municipal transportation engineers to convert Morris Street is wrong (against the judgment of Tim Outhit MLA (Councillor and Transportation Standing Committee member at the relevant time)).

And what evidence-based actions your government will take to reduce congestion in HRM. This is vital given opinion-based acts and interventions are being taken by political agents who are not resident in HRM, who may not understand the actual causes of congestion here.

I urge you to collaborate with, not work against municipal staff and councillors, on its evidence-backed plans to address congestion in HRM by reducing car use and support alternatives to driving that can be used by a substantial portion of the population – including BRT and a bike lane network.

With best wishes, Martyn Williams (Clayton Park, Halifax, Nova Scotia)