

FAQs – Proposed Spring Garden Road Transit-Only Pilot Project

What is being proposed?

The proposal is to consider restricting 400m of Spring Garden Road between South Park Street and Queen Street to transit vehicles, bicyclists and emergency vehicles between 7 am and 8 pm (Monday to Sunday), reopening to all users from 8 pm to 7 am, for a one-year pilot project.

In addition, Brenton Street (Clyde Street to Spring Garden Road) will be a northbound one-way street with a required left turn at Spring Garden Road (during the day). Before 2021, Brenton Street was one-way southbound. During the pilot staff may also consider closing Brenton Street tactically (i.e., with temporary free-standing planters) at its north end, to understand if this is possible or desirable.

Why is the municipality proposing this?

A transit-only street will augment the streetscape project's original goals of enhancing the pedestrian realm and prioritizing transit. There will be less overall noise and more mid-block crossing opportunities for pedestrians. Fewer vehicles using Spring Garden Road will improve reliability on Halifax's busiest transit corridor. Additionally, the transit-only segment will permit bicycles, creating better conditions for cycling as well.

There are no driveways on this segment of Spring Garden Road, and on-street parking, stopping, and loading will not be allowed due to the narrow roadway. Driveways, on-street and off-street parking, and on-street loading are located on side streets. This presents an opportunity to further prioritize transit and pedestrians along Spring Garden Road by directing cars and trucks to the side streets to access these other functions.

Is this a change from what was approved by Council in 2019?

In 2019, the Spring Garden Road Functional Plan was approved by Halifax Regional Council. The plan included a narrower roadway (only 8m from curb to curb – no space to stop and load) so that busy sidewalks could be widened (with streetscaping) and included left turn restrictions for vehicles.

At that time Council directed staff to review the traffic impacts in the neighbourhood of a transit-only corridor and to return to Council with more information based on traffic data collected during the street closure for streetscape construction. Staff are now preparing to return to Council before streetscape construction is finished.

A transit-only corridor was one of the original options evaluated for the functional plan and was determined to be the preferred option. It was also well supported by the general public in the extensive engagement carried out for that plan.

What did the data during construction show?

During construction of the 2021 streetscaping project, Spring Garden Road was closed from South Park Street to Queen Street (the 400m proposed as a transit-only corridor). Traffic volume and speed data was collected before and during construction to assess the impacts of the closure.

Overall, no significant change in the driving speed was observed on streets in the neighbourhood. Typical speeds ranged from 31 km/h to 41 km/h on Brenton Street, Clyde Street, Dresden Row, and Birmingham Street; 95% of drivers never exceeded the maximum posted speed limit (50 km/h).

Intersection analysis software was also used on the traffic volume data to assess driving performance of nearby intersections and model different scenarios. This revealed that all study area intersections met their *Level of Service* targets, including when 40% more traffic volume was added to the model. In fact, current traffic operations will improve once the pilot is underway, as buses will be rerouted from their current detour along Morris Street, where they must navigate some challenging turns.

How will I be affected?

If you've been driving in the area during 2021 construction, there will be no change for you! Continue to use the routes you have been using during construction to access area parking garages, park on-street, drop off people, or unload and pick up goods.

If you are walking, taking transit, or cycling – enjoy the new streetscape, but bear with us as finishing touches will be installed in the spring!

This is a business area, how is this all supposed to work?

In 2020, changes were made to streets in the neighbourhood to support loading and vehicle movement in advance of the 2021 streetscape construction. This included new traffic signals at Dresden Row and Sackville Street, and the conversion of portions of Dresden Row and Birmingham Street into a one-way couplet to allow for additional loading and parking space to replace what was to be removed when streetscape construction made Spring Garden Road narrower. In addition to allowing the use of both curbsides for loading and/or parking, the one-way couplet allows for smoother traffic circulation on these narrow side streets.

If you are delivering goods, please try to do so before 11am. Signage on side streets assigns curbside loading space to parking at 11am, encouraging deliveries (and large trucks) to complete their activities downtown before pedestrian volumes increase. Further adjustments to timing of side street loading availability can be made if necessary.

What if I need accessible parking or transit?

Accessible parking spaces were added on side streets near each intersection in 2020 to increase the amount of accessible parking and meet demand for drop-offs and short-term stopping as close to destinations and curb ramps as possible. It would be impossible to provide dedicated on-street drop-off space in front of every business, but good corner access coupled

with Spring Garden Road's short block lengths (60 -100m) will continue to make this one of Halifax's most accessible streetscapes.

Why now?

Vehicle routing to destinations in the neighbourhood under a transit-only scenario will be identical to the patterns established during streetscape construction. This means that unlike other street network changes that have been made in the past, a transition to transit-only on this segment will not require any routing adjustment for local drivers who have accustomed themselves to avoiding this segment of the street since construction began in June 2021.

How will you be communicating this if it is approved?

If the transit-only pilot project is approved by Council, it will be implemented in December, immediately after the construction fencing is removed. Drivers and residents will be notified of these changes using:

- Digital and radio ads
- Social media posts
- On-street signage and banners
- Regulatory signage and enforcement

How long will this last?

It is recommended that the pilot project be in place for a full calendar year to allow for all seasonal impacts and benefits to be understood. Halifax Regional Council will be asked to review these in one year and decide whether the project be maintained or discontinued.

How will you evaluate this?

Some of the possible evaluation metrics include:

- Pedestrian and customer experience on the street
- Average transit travel time
- Rider experience
- Pedestrian volumes along the corridor
- How people access the street
- Compliance review
- Speeds and volumes on surrounding streets
- With cooperation of the business association and individual businesses, business sales and customer volumes could also be measured.