



"for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Halifax as Common forever" (1763-2025)

Feb 27, 2025

Dear HRM Mayor Fillmore, Councillors and CAO,

Re: Acquisition Budget for Robie St Widening \$55m (2023) \$73m (2024) ? (2025)

Friends of Halifax Common understand that HRM has a budget adjustment list to try and save \$28million. We suggest you immediately cancel all expenditures on the proposed widening for the [Robie Street Transportation Corridor](#) to save at least \$75million. You have no obligation to proceed with the previous Council's plan.

Halifax residents living in the Robie Street area north of Cunard Street oppose the plan to wreck their neighbourhood and the very hidden planning process. We worry you don't know what a costly, destructive Plan this is. FHC's FOIPOP found HRM's 2024 acquisition budget of \$73 million in public tax dollars is a 30% increase since July 2023 \$55million. We don't know the 2025 cost. *For comparison, the Windsor St Exchange was stalled because of a \$53.75M cost.*

FHC's FOIPOP shows a plan for 10 historic multiunit buildings to be demolished along Robie St. south of North St. ANS reports that the NS Department of Public Works has already bought three of these as well as one extra.(See slides)

A previous FHC FOIPOP shows HRM's Plan to widen Robie will cut an estimated 80 trees from Cunard and Young Streets: 40 Cunard to North; 40 North to Young Streets. (Map details: <https://shorturl.at/tCDHU>)

Residents' efforts to get more information on the rationale for the street widening, impact and cost have been consistently stymied for over four years. Multiple efforts (emails, meetings, a petition, presentations, letters, public hearings, promised staff reports) to fully reveal and re-examine the plan have been ignored or reversed or frustrated.

At an HRM Regional Centre Community Council public hearing at Alderney Landing (Dec 14, 2022) citizens spoke to *some of many problems with the plan*:

- No public consultation; (staff reports/statements to the contrary are untrue);
- Direct harm to housing, especially First Nations, housing co-ops, youth shelters, small business, heritage;
- Cutting of an estimated 80 trees, many over 100-year-old Elm trees, with irreplaceable beauty and environmental benefit;
- Spending millions in public money to destroy natural traffic calming re [speed and driver behaviour](#) in one part of Robie Street and at the same time spending millions to try and slow or calm traffic further north on Robie.
- The known failure of road widening as a transportation strategy; even for public transportation data shows it [will not relieve traffic congestion](#); levels of traffic will be maintained (the status quo) or more traffic will be induced.
- Residents also advocated for the [reallocation of existing road space](#) - with signalized lanes changes like the MacDonald Bridge or Chebucto Road or re-routing as a faster, cheaper, effective, more equitable way to prioritize transit and one favoured by many cities.

At the public hearing evidently Councillor Cleary didn't even know about the demolitions or tree cuts. Both before and after citizens spoke at the hearing, he challenged the residents, wanting to know what all the emails, letters were about, that the hearing was to reduce the easement, no trees would be cut and no buildings were under threat. Councillor Cleary also questioned the \$10 million dollar budget estimate made by Howard Epstein. When asked HRM staff did not have a cost estimate and their report did not include any dollar value. Councillor Cleary asked staff for this information. (We don't what became of this request.)

During the hearing, HRM Staff presented only anecdotal evidence as to why reallocation of existing road space would not work, also stating that there was no time of day relationship to traffic flow on Robie. **These were major failings of HRM staff but HRM Committee Councillors did not request a detailed report on other possible options.** No Councillor voted no.

Canadians are living in a time of great economic precarity. This is desperate financial crunch time for the city with demands for affordable housing, infrastructure, public transit, and all being framed under the most urgent matter of climate change and extreme weather events.

As of Feb 12, 1130 people are homeless in HRM (AHANS) right now. But HRM is using at least \$73m or more in public money just to buy property and demolish buildings where people live? Spending public money on planned destruction of the very housing HRM [expects the NS government to build more of](#)? Even though data shows that even for public transportation widening roads does not reduce traffic? All when signalized lane changes or rerouting could work for this very short distance?

Why aren't lessons learned from the Harbour Drive and Cogswell debacle foremost in your decision making these days? Planning for a wider Robie Street as a cross-town-connector down the middle of the Peninsula in the service of private vehicles is too costly for housing, the trees and climate, the taxpayers, public health and safety, our collective future.

It is not only unnecessary it is counter to the problem which you are attempting to deal with which is too many cars on and coming to the Peninsula.

We urge you to stop this project before any more steps are taken. Save \$75 million. Protect the community. Keep the trees. Spend money on signalized lane changes, buses, driver salaries, lower fares, and public safety.

Yours truly,
Peggy Cameron and Howard Epstein
Friends of Halifax Common

Slide 1

Involvement of Nova Scotia Department of Public Works, \$18million to buy 10 properties. (FOIPOP)

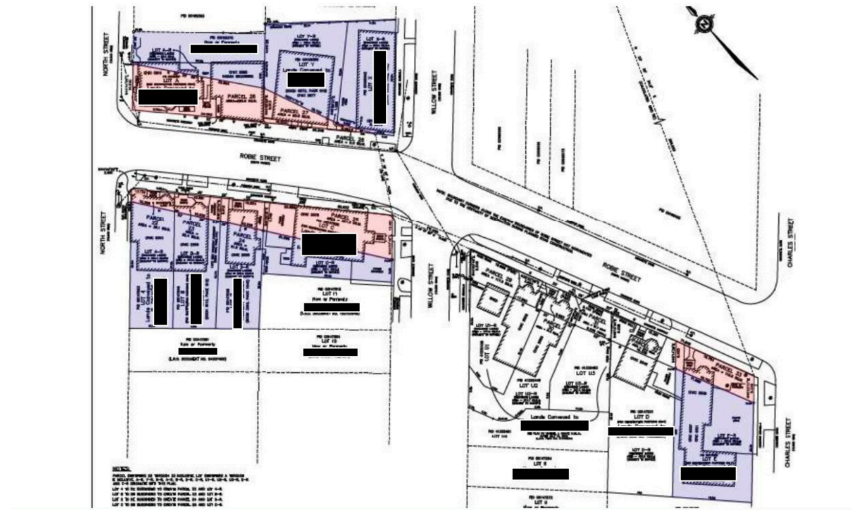
Potential Approach – Robie Street

- DPW acquires full takings (i.e., properties that need to be demolished)
 - 10 properties, ± \$18 million.
 - Meet Capitalized Expense criteria.
 - Fulfills two mandates:
 - HRM corridor acquisition (red).
 - DPW strategic land assembly on Peninsula (blue).

Please note: The redactions on this page are records that are publicly available and available for purchase and as such are not subject to processing under the Municipal Government Act.

Slide 2

Robie St, North to Charles Streets (FOIPOP)



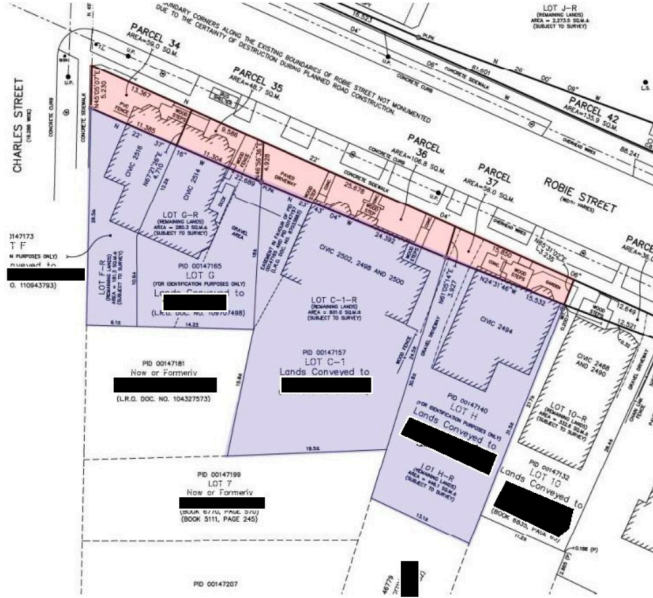
Slide 3

Four buildings North & Robie purchased by NS DPW. Note the building facing North Street is in addition to the original 10 proposed for purchase in Slide 2.



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Slide 4
Charles St and south on
Robie St (FOIPOP)



Slide 4
Goggle Map details of 80 trees to be cut here:
<https://shorturl.at/tCDHU> (based on data from FOIPOP)

