

Presentation to the Transportation Standing Committee

The Crosswalk Safety Society of Nova Scotia

2023 Strategic Road Safety Framework (SRSF) Annual Report

August 24, 2023

The Crosswalk Safety Society of Nova Scotia's assessment of the Progress of the Strategic Road Safety Framework

We continue to be concerned about a number of shortcomings in the implementation of the SRSF

- There continue to be no specific Action Plans.
- As far as we are aware there have been no measures of the effectiveness of countermeasures.
- Beyond minimal social media not only has there been no Education plan or initiatives but the removal of the little funding previously available for Education points to a lack of commitment to this component of road safety.
- Declining numbers of Summary Offence Tickets (SOTs) raises questions as to the commitment to enforcement.
- Until the recent formation of the External Stakeholder Road Safety Committee there had been essentially no involvement of the Community.

We have chosen to provide our assessment of the progress of the SRSF as a Report Card, based on

A – above expectations

B – meeting expectations

C – approaching expectations

D – difficulty meeting expectations

F – not yet meeting expectations

Area		Grade
Budgets		C
Community engagement		D-
Engineering	Breadth of countermeasures implemented	B
	Assessment of effectiveness of countermeasures	F
Education		F
Enforcement		F

Measure of Goal

While we understand and agree in order to benchmark to other cities results per 100,000 of population are appropriate, we disagree that progress to the formal Goal of the SRSF should be measured based on anything other than absolute results.

The SRSF explicitly considered this issue, noting

“The Halifax Regional Municipality is growing and, as a result, so is congestion. A 15% reduction based on today’s population is a greater percent reduction after five years of growth”* *15% subsequently increased to 20% by Regional Council

After considering the issue, the SRSF Goal was adopted based on the **change in the absolute counts** of collisions resulting in an injury or fatality.

We therefore believe it is inappropriate to present results as

“Fatal and injury collisions per 100,000 population have been reduced by 11.6 % in comparison to the baseline statistics...”

Rather, consistent with the Goal adopted within the Framework the improvement has been a more modest **2.4 %** (787 Fatal and Injury Collisions in 2022 compared to the Baseline of 806).

Results by Emphasis Areas

While effort is important, at the end of the day it is results that matter. Following are 2022 results compared to the Baseline, by emphasis area.

Significant progress has been made in some emphasis areas, less in others, and none in three.

It is encouraging to see a couple of emphasis areas (distracted driving and aggressive driving) experiencing improvements beyond the Goal.

With respect to the young demographic and intersection related collisions, while good progress is being made the results have fallen somewhat short of the Goal.

However distressing is not only the lack of progress with respect to impaired driving, pedestrian collisions and bicycle collisions but the fact these three emphasis areas have actually experience deteriorating results.

HRM ROAD COLLISIONS WITH IN ONE OR MORE INJURIES BY EMPHASIS AREAS					
Emphasis area	2018 Injuries and Fatalities	2019 Injuries and Fatalities	Baseline Total	2022 Injuries and Fatalities	2022 / Baseline
Distracted driving	152	139	145.5	95	65%
Aggressive driving	300	348	324.0	265	82%
Young demographic	235	226	230.5	202	88%
Intersection related	378	449	413.5	366	89%
Pedestrian collisions	146	122	134.0	151	113%
Impaired driving	32	44	38.0	43	113%
Bicyclist collisions	25	51	38.0	46	121%
Total	767	837	802.0	755	94%
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> < 84%* > 84%* but < 100% > 100% </div>					
* 4 years into the 5 year goal of 20% reduction					

Budgets – ‘C’

As presented in Figure 3 (page 6) of the Report road safety improvement budgets have increased considerably over the past four years - from \$1.165 million (2019/20) to \$5.5 million (2023/24).

This should be reason to celebrate, and as a result of the increased funding there have been a number of investments.

However, our enthusiasm is tempered with our concern of the disproportionate allocation of this funding to Traffic Calming - \$3.0 million of the \$5.5 million budget in 2023/24.

The SRSF was clear when stating

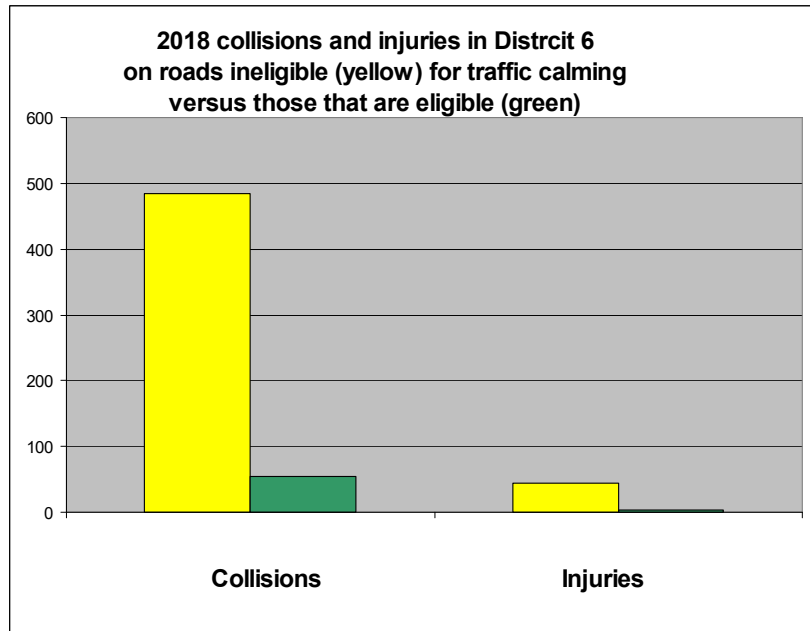
“To monitor progress, stakeholders must continually review and evaluate countermeasure programs through an official road safety task force. Based on this review and evaluation, under performing countermeasures may be altered, scaled-back or cut with their resources reassigned to new programs. To ensure an effective review and evaluation, the municipality and its partners must obtain and implement a data analysis program”

HRM is to be congratulated for obtaining Open Data that allows for the review and assessment of traffic collisions.

But regrettably there is no indication in the Road Safety Steering Committee (the ‘official road safety task force’) Minutes of any assessment or evaluation having been done with respect to the effectiveness of Traffic Calming.

Quite to the contrary our Society has completed two reviews that bring into serious question the decision to allocate the current level of funding to Traffic Calming

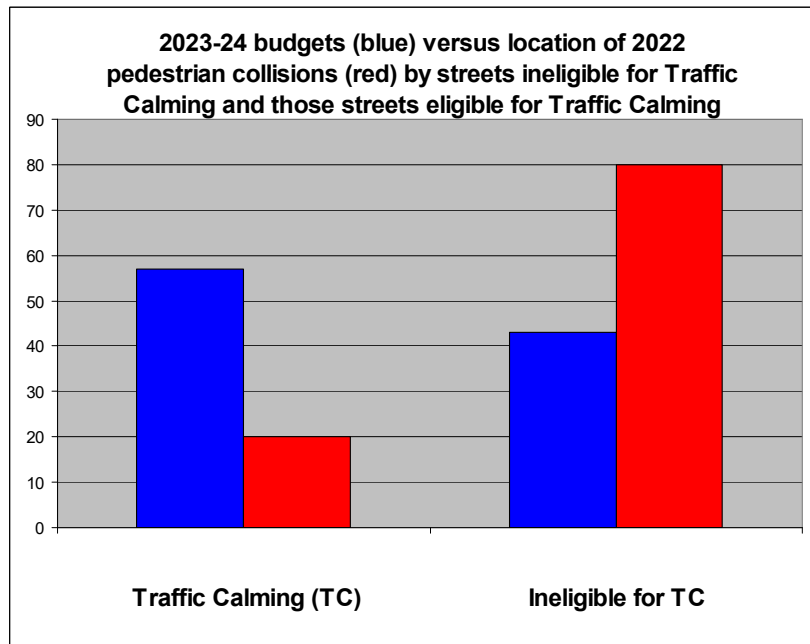
First was an examination of the 2018 collisions in District 6 as presented in Open Data, segregated by streets ineligible for Traffic Calming (arterial and major collector) in yellow and those eligible for Traffic Calming (minor collector and local) in green.



The vast majority (over 90%) of both collisions and injuries occur on streets **not eligible** for Traffic Calming

Then we examined where the \$ are being spent in comparison to where the collisions resulting in injuries or fatalities occurred.

While 57% of the Road Safety Improvement budgets are allocated to local and minor collector streets (those eligible for Traffic Calming) only 20% of the pedestrian injury collisions occurred on these Traffic Calming eligible roads.



It defies logic that such a significant amount of funding would be spent on streets where so relatively few collisions resulting in injuries take place.

The SRSF states evidence will drive decisions. This evidence is clear there is an over-investment in Traffic Calming.

Community Engagement – ‘D-’

The SRSF committed to

- A Collaborative approach: Ongoing engagement between government and community stakeholders, and to
- Implement an Outreach Program.

Until very recently neither of these happened. The assessment would have been an ‘F’ if not for the recently formed Road Safety External Stakeholder Committee (RSESC). It is still unclear whether this Committee will have any meaningful impact but it is a step in the right direction.

Discouraging though is the position that Stakeholder groups who were actively involved in the development of the 2018-2023 SRSF will not be similarly involved in the development of the next iteration.

While we have been told the input of the SRESC will be considered, and every indication is that it will, the absence of the opportunity to review and comment on drafts of the updated Strategy strikes us as a step backward.

Education ‘F’

From the SRSF

“Educational countermeasures have the greatest opportunity for widespread and permanent change.”

Yet, over the past five years there have been no education or outreach programs.

The only medium to communicate any information has been through social media, and that has been sparse. In our view the soft messages of ‘be careful’ have been woefully insufficient.

Actual educating of drivers, pedestrians and cyclists on the rules of the road has been non-existent. In fact the only effort we are aware of to do so is through our Society’s [Crosswalk Safety Brochure](#)

While we do not argue **Heads Up Halifax** was not as effective as we would like it to have been, regrettably rather than strive to improve education all investment was scrapped, demonstrating how unimportant education is viewed by Regional Council

Enforcement – ‘F’

We are very appreciative of the enhancement to the Annual Report to include HRP / RCMP Summary Offence Tickets (SOTs).

Yet an examination of those numbers presents a disturbing trend.

With respect to Enforcement the SRSF presents

“The primary goal is to reinforce the rules of the road. The secondary goal is to educate drivers about the consequences of their actions

The impacts of enforcement depend on the consistency and degree of effort.”

While we would have expected the levels of Enforcement to have increased over the duration of the SRSF, as measured by the number of Summary Offence Tickets (SOTs) issued, the exact opposite has occurred – they have decreased, quite considerably.

Further details can be found in a Report our Society recently submitted to the Board of Police Commissioners, found here [Road Safety and Enforcement](#).

A few highlights

DOWN 41% - 2022 SOTs as compared to the to Baseline (average of 2018 and 2019)

DOWN 70% - 2022 speeding SOTs as compared to 2012*

DOWN 64% - 2022 distracted driving SOTs as compared to 2012

DOWN 61% - 2022 pedestrian related SOTs as compared to 2012

* as provided by the Province of Nova Scotia – available upon request

Let us repeat our the Summary we provided the Board of Police Commissioners

“We recognize the Board of Police Commissioners cannot direct HRP or RCMP as to how to use their resources.

However it is disingenuous to claim attention and focus on road safety enforcement when the data indicates the opposite.

We believe it is contrary to HRM’s road safety efforts for enforcement to have decreased so significantly since the Framework was adopted. It is hard to believe this was a conscious decision of HRP / RCMP. But the fact is in-spite of the supportive statements enforcement has declined.

Given the HRP and RCMP believe “Enforcement is a pillar of the framework...” we believe the focus and level of SOTs need to materially increase, not decrease.”

Engineering – ‘B’ (Breadth of Countermeasures Implemented)

There have been some good efforts with respect to Engineering. Certainly a considerable number of Countermeasures have been installed, including

- Traffic Calming
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB)
- Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI)
- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)
- Reduced (40 km/h) speed neighbourhoods
- Advance Yield Lines
- Concrete curb extensions
- Tactical temporary curb extensions
- Protected bike lanes
- Multi-use pathways
- Sidewalk renewals
- Intersection pilot projects and Micro traffic evaluations
- Speed cushions
- Raised crosswalks
- Additional RA-5 crosswalks, and
- Corridor speed management

This is a long list, demonstrating the noticeable accomplishments of Traffic Management. Staff should be commended for all they have done.

Engineering – ‘F’ (Evaluation of effectiveness of Countermeasures)

However what has been missing is evidence of evaluation as to the effectiveness of each of these countermeasures. From the SRSF

5. Evaluate the Success of Countermeasure Programs

*The success of individual countermeasure programs will be evaluated as they are implemented. **If a countermeasure is deemed ineffective, then its resources will be reallocated to another countermeasure and the action plans adjusted.** (emphasis added)*

We are unaware of any evaluation of the success or failures of particular countermeasures.

Yet without any staff evaluation (again as far as we are aware) or any evidence as to its effectiveness, more and more funding has consistently been directed to Traffic Calming.

The absence of any evidence of evaluation warrants a grade of an ‘F’.

While the overall assessment / Report Card is that there are a number of opportunities for improvement there is one area that we would grade significantly higher – that being the responsiveness of Staff.

We have found Staff to be helpful and timely in their responses to our observations, questions and inquiries. We are appreciative of Staff's efforts, and look forward to continue to work with Staff in our collective efforts to improve road safety in HRM.

Thank you for considering our input.

The Crosswalk Safety Society of Nova Scotia