

# Ditch dedicated bus lane, says North End Business Association

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A Halifax business group says it's opposed to a proposal for a dedicated bus lane on Gottingen Street.

The North End Business Association said in a news release Wednesday that the impact on the social, environmental and economic well-being of the street has not been fully considered.

A Halifax Regional Municipality staff recommendation is due to go before the transportation standing committee Thursday to proceed with the detailed design and implementation plans for the bus lane.

"Gottingen Street is a destination, a neighbourhood, and commercial main street. It was never designed, planned or zoned to be a transit corridor," the association said. "On top of that, it is one of the most socially and economically sensitive areas in the city. It requires special consideration, and that has not been demonstrated in the staff report."

The association said it is asking the transportation committee to reject the staff proposal to eliminate parking and loading all day, and reject the dedicated bus lane as proposed.

The group said it would like to see a six-month trial period of no parking or loading in the southbound lane from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and in the northbound lane from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., with better parking enforcement of both sides.

The association also wants studies to determine key issues with transit along the street.

"To date we are disappointed with the level of consultation and communication that resulted in the current staff recommendation coming forward," the association said. It said residents, businesses and developers who are most impacted by potential changes to the street should be active participants in planning decisions.

Association executive director Patricia Cuttel said in an interview Wednesday evening that this is the second scheduled meeting of the committee on the topic. The first was delayed after the association complained that it wasn't advised that the committee was meeting to discuss the bus lane.

"When there is a planning decision that has the potential of having such a profound impact on the stakeholders, there should be effort made by the city to inform those stakeholders of what's about to happen," she said.

“Process is really important and when you take a project like a bus corridor and only look at it as an exercise in transportation efficiency and not consider the outcomes to the community that will be impacted, it doesn’t engender a lot of trust and faith in democracy.”

Business owner Victor Syperek said Gottingen Street “has been on a down trend for years and is finally showing some signs of life, and I feel that having a dedicated bus lane would be throwing us under the bus for the good of people who live in Dartmouth and Bedford and Sackville who don’t live downtown. They work in a tower and then transit downtown.”

He said, if anything, buses that don’t stop on the street should be using Barrington Street, which has no residential on one side and has four lanes.