



Ecology Action Centre – Candidate Survey 2024

Candidate for Councillor, District 7 – Halifax South Downtown

Name of Candidate: Laura White

1. The [Halifax Green Network Plan](#) (HGNP) should be used to guide the region's growth, but full implementation of the plan requires resources and enforceable rules to protect important greenspace and wildlife corridors. Will you support the full implementation of the HGNP to protect the Green Network? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. I'll need to read the plan and actions in depth in the future, but yes, I support bringing the plan to fruition.

2. Will you commit to ensuring Halifax Transit attracts and retains enough staff to implement the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network and ferry routes in the [Rapid Transit Strategy](#)? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. There is a lot more than staff required to implement BRT, but I am all for it. We need bus lanes, and priority to get through the 4 choke points (bridges, Windsor St Exchange, rotary). I think we can improve our current bus system by re-examining the need for split shifts and increasing the frequency to at least 15-minute service on routes 1-9. Transit needs to be frequent and reliable every day to all of HRM, not just around a 9-5 work schedule to and from downtown.

3. Will you commit to implementing the [Road Safety Strategy](#) and achieving its vision of zero injuries and fatalities across all modes of transportation? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. I presented to TSC on this issue 19 June 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/6nP-TxTYppk>

My comments begin at 26:05.

<https://laurawhite.ca/2024/06/21/transportation-standing-committee-19-june-2024/>

Most of the text fits here, but see my blog for full text:

"Thank you to the chair, members of the TSC & to staff for welcoming me to speak today about the Road Safety Strategy.

My perspective is one of a local driver, a transit user, a cyclist, a pedestrian and a parent of 3. I've also had the privilege of living in and travelling to places that provide space for alternative forms of transportation. I am also a candidate for councillor in District 7. Please join me in imagining infrastructure that keeps us safe and adds joy to our lives.

I see many good things in this proposed document. I imagine that you are all on this committee or work in transportation because you want to improve lives.

I'll start with a little story about my observations during a recent commute home from work via bike, that highlights our current reality.

As I crossed Robie Street via the North Common, I saw a pedestrian leap out of the way as a driver charged through the crosswalk.

Moments later, I witnessed a driver go the wrong way down Quingate and then drive over the median to avoid an oncoming cyclist.

Finally, I saw several drivers aggressively turn right both onto Quinpool and Quingate while pedestrians were crossing this very wide crosswalk. Several of these people had limited mobility.

Unfortunately, these stories are not unusual.

Regarding the Strategy and my comments, here is an abbreviated version of my concerns as expressed in my email of June 7th.

1) First, I believe we should track injuries both in terms of absolute numbers and per capita numbers. Per capita reporting distracts us from the truth of what is happening on our roads and feels disrespectful to those injured.

2) Second, regarding Safe Vehicles: there is no mention of the size and weight of vehicles on our roads. Large vehicles make collisions with vulnerable road users both more likely and more dangerous.

I know that other levels of government need to be involved to fix this.

3) Third, In the Safe Road Users section – I believe it should be stressed that drivers have the ultimate responsibility when it comes to the safety of all road users.

4) Fourth, In the Safe Roads section – There is no mention of trying to reduce the amount of vehicular traffic on our roads.

The only way to reduce hazards is to remove them, or to create barriers between us and them.

The goal of reducing the number of vehicle trips taken should be clearly stated in the new strategy.

5) My fifth point is Regarding Safe Speeds: over time, we need to change the design of some roads to a 30 km/h speed limit.

We need to eliminate straight road stretches with obstacles on either side, like bike storage, parkettes, bollards, cycle path curbs, chicanes, strategic parking, et cetera.

Case in point is Spring Garden Road between Robie and South Park. While canvassing this neighborhood, so many people tell me that Spring Garden is being used as a drag strip. Drivers are speeding down this section of road with extra-loud vehicles. And guess what, those two blocks are excessively wide.

6) Finally, for the Safe Land Use Planning section:

The HRM Charter states “In so far as is consistent with their use by the public, the Council has full control over the streets in the Municipality.”

What this says to me is that HRM is able to allocate space on our roads not only to vehicles, but to countless other modes of transportation.

Let’s focus on how to move people rather than vehicles.

Cities around the world such as London, Paris and Montreal are quickly changing how they allocate road space. We need to get on board and perform a real transformation of our system, in collaboration with the province and their JRTA.

In closing I would like to recommend a book that makes the case for equitable and....

4. Are you committed to ensuring the continued implementation and full funding of the [JustFOOD Action Plan](#) as the municipality's first comprehensive, long-range food strategy, which will increase collaboration across levels of government and among community partners, strengthening our collective capacity to build a just, healthy, and sustainable food system. Explain why or why not (optional).



Yes.

5. With climate change wreaking heat waves even in temperate climate zones, and the price of home-heating fuel spiking due to global conflict, access to affordable home energy efficiency has become a human right crucial to comfort and standard of living. Cities across Canada are seeing tenants mobilize for these rights. As an elected official, would you support a "right to efficiency" by-law supporting tenants' rights to affordable energy efficiency support? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. Great idea. I am familiar with Bridgewater's work on energy poverty. I'm definitely open to learning more about how council can help here in HRM.

6. There are multiple stressors on local freshwater quality and quantity such as increased development and an increase in water-related climate events (e.g., floods, droughts, storms). Do you commit to advocating for and supporting watershed level management in municipal planning? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. I'm supportive of this work. I'd need to learn more about it to become an advocate. Tangentially, making sure we maintain and upgrade as necessary our water & wastewater infrastructure in District 7 is key as we continue to densify.

7. Will you, in the absence of a provincial Coastal Protection Act, advocate for and work towards passing municipal by-laws designed to address development on vulnerable coastal properties and infrastructure? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. This work must be done. I don't know if HRM currently has the resources to do so. It is unclear to me exactly what municipalities have been tasked with by the province except this:

"municipalities help create climate-resilient communities by considering climate change in their approach to zoning, land-use planning, by-laws and the criteria they use to issue building permits"

<https://novascotia.ca/coastal-climate-change/>

