

TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES

April 26, 2012

MEMBERS
PRESENT:

Councillor Reg Rankin, Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts, Vice-Chair
Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor Darren Fisher
Councillor Jackie Barkhouse
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
Councillor Debbie Hum

OTHERS
PRESENT:

Councillor Barry Dalrymple
Councillor Gloria McCluskey
Councillor Jim Smith

REGRETS:

Councillor Bob Harvey

STAFF:

Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation & Public Works
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 1, 2012

MOVED by Councillor Hum, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the Transportation Standing Committee minutes of March 1, 2012 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Additions:

- 8.1 Matter Referred from Regional Council – Metro Transit Evening Ferry Service
- 8.2 Presentation – HRM Medallion Agency – HRM Taxi Medallion Proposal
- 8.3 Councillor Hendsbee – Matter Referred from Regional Council - Traffic Assessment for Caldwell Road

With regard to added item 8.3, Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation and Public Works, advised that staff are preparing a report to the Transportation Standing Committee on the traffic assessment for Caldwell Road that was requested at the April 24, 2012 Regional Council meeting.

Councillor Barkhouse noted that Caldwell Road runs through three Districts, and asked that all three Councillors be included in discussions on the subject.

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the order of business be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Chair noted regrets from Councillor Harvey and that Councillor Hum has to leave the meeting early. He also acknowledged the presence of Councillors McCluskey, Smith and Dalrymple in the gallery.

4. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Correspondence - None

4.2 Petitions - None

4.3 Presentations

4.3.1 Sackville River Association – Proposed Sackville Greenway

A copy of the presentation was before Committee members.

Mr. Walter Regan, Sackville Rivers Association, presented to the Transportation Standing Committee on the proposed Sackville Greenway Corridor, including the following:

- Who is the Sackville Rivers Association?
- Sackville River Sub-watersheds
- Overview of the proposed Conservation Corridor
- Bedford Sackville Connector Greenway/Fort Sackville Walkway
- History of the Sackville Greenway
- To be built in 5 sections:
 - Section A: Fultz House to Sackville Cross Road
 - Section B: Sackville Cross Road to Beaver Bank Road
 - Section C: Beaver Bank to Beaver bank Cross Road
 - Section D: Beaver Bank Cross Road to Millwood Drive
 - Section E: Millwood Drive to Little Lake

Mr. Regan reviewed landscape drawings of the proposed crushed stone footpath and the shared use sidewalk.

Mr. Regan concluded his presentation asking for the Transportation Standing Committee's support with this initiative.

The Chair thanked Mr. Regan for his presentation and his work on behalf of the Sackville Rivers Association (SRA).

At the request of members, Mr. Regan reviewed on a map areas of the Sackville Greenway that will connect with other trails, the railway tracks, and transit hubs, which will promote the Sackville Greenway as a daily transportation connection. He also spoke to the active transportation opportunities associated with the Greenway.

Responding to questions about construction materials, Mr. Regan reviewed details of construction materials proposed for the trail. Mr. Regan also reviewed ownership of the Sackville Greenway lands, noting that 3 km of the 12 km proposed Greenway is in private ownership.

Responding to further questions from members, Mr. Regan advised that Halifax Water Commission (HWC), and the Halifax Regional Trails Association (HRTA) are stakeholders in this project. HRM trails staff have been working with HWC on behalf of the SRA and HRTA on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding. Parking lots will be taken into consideration during the planning stages and built for trail users.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Hum, that the Transportation Standing Committee refer this presentation to staff and encourage

**them to help facilitate the development of the Sackville Greenway Corridor.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

Councillor Dalrymple left at 1:40 p.m.

4.3.2 HRM/Halifax Harbour Bridges – Dynamic Message Signs

A copy of the presentation was before Committee members.

Mr. David McCusker, Regional Transportation Manager, and Mr. Dennis Kelly, Halifax Harbour Bridges (HHB) Operations Manager, presented on Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), including the following:

- Why Dynamic Message Signs:
 - Incidents and planned closures create congestion
 - Congestion results in lost productivity, safety issues
 - Increased severe weather events
- The Vision – To develop a network of real time message signs to benefit the regional transportation system.
- Status – HHB operates six DMS; Province of NS operates two DMS; broadly used throughout North America.
- DMS Applications:
 - Improved road safety and traffic flow through real time messaging:
 - Collisions and other incidents
 - Construction and other road closures
 - Weather related events
 - Emergency evacuation
 - Public safety and Amber Alert messages
- Benefits of DMS:
 - Routes traffic away from incidents or closures and reduces congestion.
 - Better access to incidents for emergency response.
- Map of existing, immediate priority, and longer term priority DMS.
- The Plan
 - HHB operates the signs from their 24/7 control centre.
 - Protocol established for message generation
 - Signs that are more remote from the harbor bridges are cost-shared
 - Proposal for 2013-14 is \$2 million for 5 to 6 signs.
- Congestion reduction: DMS do not add capacity to the network; they make better use of existing capacity when incidents or abnormalities occur.

Mr. McCusker noted that this is for the information of the Committee, and is included in the current capital budget and the 5 year plan.

MOVED by Councillor Watts that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council defer the \$2 million in the 2013/14 capital

budget for Dynamic Message Signs and transfer it to the active transportation fund.

Councillor Watts commented that there are 22 trails groups in HRM that need money to grow the trails system and these funds could be used to improve the safety of the trails system and make it a first choice for people to use as active transportation. She noted that this would help relieve congestion on the roads as a long term strategy.

There being no seconder, the **MOTION WAS LOST.**

Mr. McCusker responded to questions from members relating to cooperation with the Province for their approval to put these signs on provincial highways. He clarified that the messaging would remain focused on HRM and HHB messages. Mr. McCusker also clarified that the two DMS currently owned by the province are located on the Cobequid Pass.

Councillor Hendsbee wished to disclose for the record that three members of the Transportation Standing Committee are also members of the Halifax Harbour Bridges Board of Commissioners: Councillor Barkhouse, Councillor Blumenthal, and himself.

Councillor Hendsbee further commented that he hopes the province will partner with HRM on this project. He noted that having the signs at critical points to get people on and off the peninsula is a critical piece of infrastructure to move people smartly through HRM.

Councillor Hum questioned why this presentation was not made leading up to the budget debate. She noted that although she sees the advantages of the signs that are currently in use, she is unsure of the need for more signs with the use of social media and other electronic communication methods. Councillor Hum indicated she would rather have this discussion at a Committee of the Whole meeting with all of Council to discuss the overall costs and benefits of the program.

Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation and Public Works, noted that funds for HRM's portion are included in the current capital budget, and Council were given an opportunity for questions at that time. He commented on the benefits of the project, including coordinating messages with HHB regarding the winter parking ban, or traffic issues on the peninsula.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Hum, that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council request a staff report to examine the opportunity to move the allocated funds for Dynamic Message Signs to be considered for reassignment for other transportation priority needs. MOTION DEFEATED.

The Chair thanked Mr. McCusker and Mr. Kelly for their presentation.

Hum left the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - None

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – None

7. REPORTS

7.1 STAFF - None

7.2 MATTERS REFERRED FROM REGIONAL COUNCIL - None

7.3 MATTERS REFERRED FROM STANDING COMMITTEES - None

7.4 MATTERS REFERRED FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL - None

7.5 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.5.1 Update from Councillor Watts (verbal)

Councillor Watts provided an update on the activities of the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, including the following:

- The Bike and Greenway map is coming out at the end of May.
- Crosstown Connector public meetings have been taking place, and the potential loss of on-street parking is one of the main issues coming out of feedback. Staff will be coming to Peninsula Community Council and the Transportation Standing Committee with proposals.
- Discussions with Point Pleasant Park about having designated bike routes through the park on weekends.
- Switch – Open Street Sundays program.
- An upcoming workshop on walkability on the peninsula.

7.6 ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.6.1 Update from Councillor Blumenthal (verbal)

Councillor Blumenthal indicated that the Committee has been working hard with HRM staff to complete the accessibility assessment of HRM owned and operated facilities. They have also been providing feedback to the Emera Oval staff for accessibility improvements there. Work is upcoming at the Needham Centre to make the first floor of the facility accessible, based on recommendations from the Committee.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Presentation – HRM Medallion Agency – HRM Taxi Medallion Proposal

Mr. Al DesLaurier and Mr. Dave Buffett presented the HRM Taxi Medallion Proposal to the Standing Committee, reviewing the following:

- The HRM Taxi Medallion Agency is not a union, and represents 750 taxi drivers over the three HRM taxi zones;
- They have researched many medallion systems in different cities;
- HRM taxi drivers do not have a system of ownership
- The demographics of the Halifax taxi zone creates the problem with the lack of taxis in downtown Halifax:
 - There are a large number of drivers collecting pensions from previous careers and only driving taxi part time or retired drivers only using their roof light half the year;
 - There are a number of drivers that have other jobs beside driving taxi;
 - There are a large number of older and/or ill drivers;
 - The medallion program would create an exit strategy for these three groups, to get more full time drivers on the road;
- The medallion program includes a self-funded pension plan, at no cost to HRM, and which would have no affect on meter rates;
- The program would also include survivor benefits;
- The medallion program would increase the movement of medallions from an older group of drivers to a younger group;
- HRM would collect 5% of all medallion sales;
- The taxi medallion would be a property, attached to a roof light, and would become a sole proprietorship;
- There would be a professional aspect of the program, with drug testing, driver and language training.

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Barkhouse, that the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report on the HRM Taxi Medallion Proposal. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Hendsbee noted that the report will have to address what legislative changes would be required, noting that amendments to the *Motor Vehicle Act* would be required, which is Provincial legislation.

Mr. Deslaurier and Mr. Buffett responded to questions from members, clarifying that the one medallion would be available for each driver, which would eliminate some drivers owning several lights.

Mr. Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, HRM Taxi and License Standards, indicated that there are a number of items raised in the presentation that he will address in the staff report, including legislation, and financial and economic elements.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Blumenthal noted that taxi drivers have not received a raise for a number of years. He noted that he is aware there is a staff report on a general taxi/limousine rate increase coming forward.

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee, that Transportation Standing Committee request that the General Taxi/Limousine Rate Increase staff report be brought before the Transportation Standing Committee at the earliest opportunity. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8.2 Matter Referred from Regional Council – Metro Transit Evening Ferry Service

This matter was referred from the April 24, 2012 Regional Council meeting.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Fisher, that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council defer the decision on cuts to the ferry service until the end of June and for a staff report to consider the possibility of expanding the service on Friday and Saturdays to the current scheduled time

Mr. Dave Reage, Manager, Planning & Scheduling, Metro Transit, clarified that the reduced hours of service were intended to come into effect as of May 21, 2012. He indicated that, should Council choose to delay implementation of the reduction in ferry service hours to the end of June or the end of August 2012, such a reduction could be funded within the 2012-13 Metro Transit Operational budget.

The Committee discussed options for the service adjustments.

MOVED by Councillor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the motion be amended to defer cuts to service from the end of June to the end of August. AMENDMENT PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Barkhouse commented that many people rely on the ferry for evening classes and programs at the Nova Scotia Community College Waterfront Campus, and employment at the Dartmouth General Hospital. They further noted that there are upcoming developments in downtown Dartmouth that will utilize the ferry, and businesses that rely on the ferry to bring customers to downtown Dartmouth. HRM needs the ferry service to grow, recognizing its value as an integral part of the transportation system, and needs a consistent service to capture the market.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Fisher, that the motion be amended as follows: That the Transportation Standing Committee request that Regional Council defer the decision on the cuts until the end of August and to have staff explore continued funding options to maintain the status quo service. AMENDMENT PUT AND PASSED.

Members requested that the following areas be included in the staff report:

- That staff develop a list upcoming special events in the Capital District that would likely affect ferry ridership;
- A breakdown of ridership figures and costs for different scenarios;
- Options for funding;
- Policy implications for non-adherence to Council service standards for reductions for both ferry and bus transit services.

AMENDED MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9. NEXT MEETING – May 24, 2012

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 24, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

Councillor Watts requested, with the agreement of the Committee, that staff provide an update at the next Transportation Standing Committee meeting on the Commuter Rail Feasibility Study.

9.1 Notice of Motion – Councillor Watts

“Take notice that at the next regular meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee to take place on May 24, 2012 I intend to request a staff report on options for increasing funding of transit services, including looking at partnerships and how other municipalities fund transit services.”

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

Jennifer Weagle
Legislative Assistant

INFORMATION ITEMS - None