



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES
January 18, 2016**

PRESENT:

Councillor Steve Craig
Patricia Gates
Yvon Clement
Gerry Post
Krista Daley, Vice Chair
Councillor Wayne Mason
Sue Uteck

REGRETS:

Mikiko Terashima
Nancy Beaton
Meredith Fillmore

STAFF:

Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure
Glen Bannon, Manager, Transit Operations
Ahmad Kidawi, Manager, Accessible Transit
Trevor Harvey, Acting Winter Works Superintendent
Barry Yanchyshyn, Landscape Architect, Planning and Development
Cathy Collett, Legislative Assistant
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/access/index.php>

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m., and adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Roll call was taken.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 14, 2015

Ms. Gates noted that there were two spelling mistakes in the Minutes. “Site” should be sight and “Braille” was spelled incorrectly.

MOVED by Ms. Krista Daley, seconded by Councillor Steve Craig

THAT the minutes of December 14, 2015 be approved as amended.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

10.1 Mr. Clement to discuss 3-1-1 if time allows.

MOVED by Ms. Sue Uteck, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley

THAT the Order of Business be approved as amended.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – None

5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – None

Ms. Gates stated that she may have a conflict of interest with the presentation by Ms. Milena Khazanvicius. The Vice Chair will act as Chair during this portion of the meeting.

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – None

6.1 Mr. Barry Blakeney re: Access A Bus Service

The following was before the Committee:

- Correspondence from Sue Uteck regarding Mr. Barry Blakeney’s concerns with changes to Access A Bus service in HRM.
- Correspondence from Patricia Richards, Halifax Transit, re: Changes to Access A Bus service in HRM.

Ms. Uteck read a statement by Mr. Blakeney expressing his concerns regarding Access A Bus to the Committee.

MOVED by Mr. Gerry Post, seconded by Mr. Yvon Clement

THAT staff respond to Mr. Blakeney's letter.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Ms. Uteck outlined the main issues expressed in Mr. Blakeney's letter and asked if the route is being cancelled and if the route is cancelled will Access A Bus services also be cancelled. She also expressed concerns about the commitment of the city to grandfather in individuals who currently use the Access A Bus Service. Mr. Blakeney and Ms. Uteck indicated that they are worried about individuals who may develop disabilities in this area and need the Access A Bus Service in the future.

Ms. Collett gained consent from Mr. Blakeney to distribute his statement to Committee members following the meeting.

Mr. Bannon confirmed that Access A Bus users on the current route will be grandfathered into the new system once the route is cancelled.

Mr. Clement noted that he has faced similar challenges with Access A Bus in the past.

Mr. Kidwai stated that the Access A Bus model is following best practices and has been approved by Council. He also noted that this is a bigger question for Council because if this were to be changed the entire transit model would have to be changed. This would have profound impacts on Halifax Transit and the city's budget.

Ms. Uteck noted that when the transit plan was approved by Council they were not made aware of the fact that the Access A Bus transit model would follow the model that they were approving.

Mr. Post noted that he made a presentation regarding accessible taxis that could be of assistance to this conversation because it included cost savings. He noted that the service could almost be doubled under the same budget.

Mr. Stapledon joined the meeting at 4:23p.m.

Mr. Ahmad and Mr. Bannon left the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

7.1 Correspondence – None

7.2 Petitions – None

7.3 Presentation

7.3.1 Pat Gates, on behalf of Jim Sellers – Accessibility Concerns at the Halifax Central Library

Ms. Gates explained that she would be presenting on Mr. Sellers' behalf because he is unable to present himself due to anxiety.

As Ms. Gates explained, Mr. Sellers expressed a number of concerns with accessibility at Central Library: the accessibility button for incoming traffic opens so that he and his chair were not visible to people exiting the building; that library patrons took advantage of a door opening and blocked his ability to enter the library; that the outgoing accessibility button is positioned in a way that a person in a wheelchair require assistance to press it. He noted that he has discussed this with library staff but has not received any indication that these issues will be addressed.

Mr. Post noted that he goes to the library almost every day and has not experienced any accessibility issues. He did share that the accessibility exit is in the same area as the regular exit so it can be crowded. He also noted that individuals in the library are very helpful, offering to hold doors for him.

Mr. Young offered to make a site visit this week. He clarified that by 'the entrance' he means the entrance on Spring Garden. Ms. Gates will ask Mr. Sellers to forward his concerns in writing so that Mr. Young can ensure that he looks into all of his concerns.

Mr. Post offered to meet Mr. Young at the library and said that Mr. Young could navigate the library in his wheelchair.

Mr. Rutt noted that the library has its own board and own management but they also have their own Manager of Diversity at the library. Ms. Gates noted that Mr. Sellers attempted to contact her but was unsuccessful.

Councillor Mason arrived at 4:35pm.

7.3.2 Mr. Rob LeBlanc – Ekistics re: Argyle Development

Mr. LeBlanc introduced himself and expressed his excitement about sharing the Argyle Development initiative that Halifax is undertaking. He also introduced Mr. Barry Yanchyshyn, Landscape Architect, Planning and Development.

Mr. Yanchyshyn shared that this project on Argyle Street is going to be worked on over 5 years with a \$17M budget for this and a project on Spring Garden Road. The Argyle Street project is seen as a priority because of its proximity to the Nova Centre.

The timelines for the Argyle Development are being coordinated with the Nova Centre schedules. The design began in December 2015 and they are on schedule for a summer 2016 tender.

The pilot project of Argyle Street as a shared street went well so that model is being continued.

Interviews and consultations around Argyle Street have been going on for years. Mr. LeBlanc emphasized that his team is taking all of the information that has been collected in the past and information from business owners to finalize their schematic design concepts.

Mr. LeBlanc shared with the Committee that an Accessibility Workshop will be taking place on February 4th at the Halifax Central Library, the time has yet to be confirmed.

The concept of the shared street was pioneered in the 1980s in Denmark. It is a curbless street profile. The walking surface is differentiated with linear drains. Current issues faced on Argyle Street like wooden sidewalks and patios will be eliminated by this. Parking from at least one side of the street will be removed and drop off zones for taxis and cars will added.

Mr. LeBlanc noted that part of the process around this project will be some Public Relations work, informing citizens about shared streets and how they are used.

Mr. LeBlanc shared some pictures with the Committee of different Shared Street models and noted some of their accessibility features. He emphasized that he is here because he recognizes potential issues with accessibility and his team wants to get this right.

There is gas on the streets so there is a possibility about making it a year-round destination with fire pits.

Mr. LeBlanc asked the Committee if there are any special considerations that need to be brought to the design team or anything else that he should know about.

Ms. Daley noted that in Europe she has found that over time cars stay away from shared spaces and they become more like pedestrian malls. Mr. Yanchyshyn noted that the Motor Vehicle Act will still apply in this area and motor vehicles will have the right of way. He also noted that snow removal of this area will need to be carefully planned.

Mr. Clement asked about the kind of tactile strips that will be used. Mr. LeBlanc noted that they are linear drainage features 6"-8" wide made of steel and coloured differently than the pavement around it. As a cane user, Mr. Clement suggested that the yellow tactile strips in use at the bridge terminal would be very effective for at differentiating the sidewalk from the road. He is concerned that his canes will get caught in the drain. The Committee informed Mr. LeBlanc that it would be useful if he could bring a tactile drain to the February 4th workshop.

Councillor Mason noted that in some of the pictures there were also rumble strips around the drains and noted the importance of any contrast being high contrast e.g. yellow or black poured concrete or stone.

Mr. Young noted that the surface looked to be all the same with the only separation being the drain and suggested more contrast. Mr. LeBlanc noted that the road will be a different surface than the sidewalk.

Ms. Uteck asked why the project is not being started from the outside instead of from the Nova Centre. She expressed concerns about the businesses on Argyle Street struggling already and facing additional challenges as a result of this. Councillor Mason informed the Committee that he has met with all of the business owners on Argyle Street and they are supportive of the timeline.

The Committee informed Mr. LeBlanc that he needs to arrange for ASL interpreters at the February 4th workshop and CART providers. The Chair offered to email him the information for ASL interpreters. She also offered to distribute invitations to the workshop to various disability organizations. Mr. Post suggested that they also advertise the workshop on the Access A Bus systems and that they provide online resource materials about the project.

Ms. Khazanavicius stated that she would not be going to Argyle Street if sidewalks were taken out because her guide dog would not be able to guide her properly. She explained that guide dogs are taught to avoid traffic and stop and down or up curbs.

Mr. LeBlanc thanked the Committee for their feedback and the Committee thanked Mr. LeBlanc for his presentation.

7.3.3 Ms. Milena Khazanavicius re: Segway Regulations and the Service Dog Park

Correspondence between Ms. Milena Khazanavicius and Ms. Margaret Soley regarding the Service Dog Park was before the Committee.

Vice Chair, Ms. Krista Daley, took over as Chair for this agenda item.

Ms. Khazanvicius expressed concerns about provincial legislation that is coming into effect that will allow segways to legally operate on sidewalks throughout Nova Scotia. She does not want anything operating on Halifax sidewalks aside from what already exists.

She explained that as part of the provincial legislation each municipality can decide whether or not they would like to implement the legislation.

There is no licensing or regulation needed for users, individuals have to be over 100 lbs and 16 years of age. On sidewalks segways will have to run under 7 km/hour but are capable of running up to 35 km/h..

Ms. Khazanvicius and a number of Committee members expressed frustration that the accessibility community was not consulted around this legislation. The individuals who were surveyed were 420 segway users in Truro, Chester and on the Halifax Waterfront. Ms. Khazanvicius noted that guide dogs are trained to avoid traffic and having segways on sidewalks will create confusion.

Ms. Collett accepted correspondence from Ms. Khazanvicius for the Committee to consider.

Mr. Clement shared concerns and difficulty that he currently has with skateboards on sidewalks.

Ms. Gates noted that she is a slow walker and has issues with her legs and feet. If she were to hear a bell indicating that she should move out of the way, she would have difficulty doing so.

Ms. Khazanvicius noted that she has to be listening for traffic, especially since three of her guide dogs have been hit by trucks pulling out of driveways. She cannot be listening for more things.

Councillor Mason noted that we already know there is not enough room on the sidewalks at busy times, segways would be very problematic. He noted that he would present the concerns shared regarding segways at Council.

Ms. Khazanvicius shared with the Committee that she is pleased with the new Service Dog Park. She has some concerns about the 4 ft. fence because it is easy to throw balls over. Ms. Khazanvicius noted that she has concerns about needing the swipe card to exit the park. The other day she dropped her card in the snow. If her sighted friend had not been with her she would have been unable to find her card and could have been locked in the dog park. She also mentioned that there is not enough time between when users swipe their card and when the gate re-locks. She often has to swipe her card a few times before she is able to get in.

With regards to the distribution of access cards to the park, Ms. Khazanvicius is concerned. She is concerned that swipe cards are being handed to anyone with a doctor's note. Dog tags are also being handed out and if a dog loses their tag it is possible that an owner of a non-service dog could pick up that tag. Ms. Khazanvicius believes that the doctor's note acceptance should be revoked until there is provincial legislation in place.

Mr. Young noted that the requirement around the doctors note is not to certify the service animal but instead to clarify the requirement of the individual to have a service animal. Mr. Young noted that Metro Transit might be of assistance with this issue since they went through a similar process recently.

Mr. Young stated that he would look into issues around the locking system to ensure that individuals using the park would be able to get out as well as amount of time that that gate is unlocked once a card has been swiped.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE

9. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

9.1 STAFF

9.1.1 HRM Winter Works – Mr. Trevor Harvie, Acting Winter Works Superintendent

Mr. Harvie noted that he was invited to go on a tour with Mr. Post and Councillor Mason to experience Halifax from the perspective of a wheelchair user. That experience inspired him to become more educated and encourage Winter Works to help make improvements that all residents of HRM can benefit from. He is interested in talking to committee members and the committee as a whole throughout this process.

Mr. Harvie noted that input from the Committee will assist in shaping future contracts and procedures to make the city more accessible.

Mr. Post noted that the sidewalks have been great this year so far. He also raised recommendations from the Committee, requesting that sidewalk standards be the same as the street that they are adjacent to. Mr. Harvie noted that there is a larger discussion planned for January 26th around standards. Councillor Mason noted that all contracts for service providers are timed to end at the same time so that they can all be changed at the same time.

Mr. Ryan Delehanty from Accessible Media Inc. informed the Committee that an accessibility design meetup will be happening on Wednesday. Mr. Paul Vienneau will be giving a presentation on at the Central Library 6:30pm.

9.2 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

9.2.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – Councillor Mason

The last Active Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting was cancelled due to lack of items.

9.2.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Gerry Post

There has been no meeting since the last report.

9.2.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Krista Daley

There has been no meeting since the last report.

Ms. Uteck left the meeting at 5:52p.m.

10. ADDED ITEMS – NONE

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING – February 29, 2016 (note date changed)** 4:00-6:00 p.m.,
Halifax Hall, main floor, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support
