

# HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

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## NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### MINUTES

December 15, 2004

**PRESENT:** Phil Cox, Chair  
Bill Chaffey  
Alastair Lawrie  
Ron McKinnon  
Troy Mitchell  
Gunther Seyffarth

**ABSENT  
WITH REGRETS:** Councillor Brad Johns

**STAFF:** Eddie Robar, Scheduling Coordinator, Metro Transit  
Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Phil Cox, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm in the Fenerty Room, Sackville Library, 636 Sackville Drive.

**2. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

**Additions:** 7.1 Assault on Bus Driver - Mr. Phil Cox  
7.2 HRM Rapid Transit Growth - Chronicle-Herald Article, Mr. Ron McKinnon

**MOVED BY Mr. Gunther Seyffarth, seconded by Mr. Alastair Lawrie, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - September 15, 2004, October 20, 2004 and November 17, 2004**

Mr. Robar advised the information from the November 17, 2004 minutes on Item 5.2 is to be added to the September 15, 2004 minutes, Item 6.2. *In further discussion with Mr. Robar it was agreed to place in the September 15 minutes "service changes would be discussed at the November meeting".*

Mr. Troy Mitchell clarified that in the September 15, 2004 minutes his reference to debris around the Cobequid Terminal Park and Ride was not intended to imply the debris was from the nearby construction site. The comment was in regards to there being a lot of debris in the area and a request was made that the Provincial Department of Transportation and Public Works be contacted to clean the area.

**MOVED BY Mr. Gunther Seyffarth , seconded by Mr. Alastair Lawrie that the minutes of September 15, 2004 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**MOVED BY Mr. Alastair Lawrie, seconded by Mr. Bill Chaffey that the minutes of October 20, 2004 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Correction:** Item 5.2 from November minutes: New Year's Eve service not available on Route 83 this year. Other 80 routes will have New Year's Eve service and it will be available for Route 83 next year.

**MOVED BY Mr. Gunther Seyffarth, seconded by Mr. Ron McKinnon that the minutes**

**of November 17, 2004 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

4.1 Status Sheet Items

The Legislative Assistant advised an ongoing review of the Status Sheet is underway. She will advise the Committee of further updates at the January meeting.

4.1.1 Intersection of Spring Garden Road/Barrington Street and Spring Garden Road/Summer Street - report from the Downtown Business Commission

Mr. Eddie Robar advised Mr. David McCusker will address this matter at the January 19, 2005 meeting.

4.1.2 New Year's Eve Service to Sackville (Driver Availability)

Mr. Robar advised he spoke to two Metro Transit Bus Drivers and neither were available to work extended hours for Route 83 this New Year's Eve. New Year's Eve Service will be available for Route 83 next year. **Item to be removed from the Status Sheet.**

4.1.3 Ridership Count for Route 83

Mr. Robar advised the ridership out of Downsview is 3.683 passengers per trip. Ridership leaving Springfield is 1.4 passengers per trip. There are a total of 19 trips per day.

Mr. Robar responded to questions of the Committee and provided the following information:

- ! 35 passengers per hour could warrant an increase in service.
- ! A pilot project could not be done to see if increased service would increase ridership as Metro Transit simply does not have the buses. There are issues with core services that have to be dealt with first.
- ! Community transit extension cannot be expected for at least five years on this route.

The matter was **deferred** until Councillor Johns is available to clarify why he requested the ridership information. (Did Councillor Johns request the information for possible increased service or was it due to residents paying an Urban Tax Rate when they have Community Transit).

4.1.4 Gas Tax Rebate

Mr. Robar suggested approval to pre-order buses should be added to the agenda.

#### 4.1.5 Regional Planning Committee Composition

The Legislative Assistant distributed information on the Regional Planning Committee from the HRM website regarding composition.

It was suggested that a representative from this Committee be put forward for appointment to the Regional Planning Committee. Mr. Alastair Lawrie volunteered and was nominated as the representative. The Legislative Assistant will contact the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) to forward the request that Mr. Alistair Lawrie be considered as a citizen appointee to the RPC representing the North West Transit Advisory Committee.

#### 4.1.6 Criteria for Community Transit Service

Mr. Robar advised he spoke with Mr. Silver, Manager Transit Services, regarding this matter. Further discussion will be held with Mr. Silver later in the New Year. Mr. Robar provided the following information in response to question raised by the Committee:

There are currently three community transit services offered: Beaverbank, Porters Lake and Fall River.

Community transit can be replaced with conventional service but there are issues with that such as tax rate (some residents are paying transit tax but not an urban tax). Currently, Community transit is an option for residents who live beyond the urban core.

A slide presentation has been prepared in regards to what transit service will be in the next five years regarding local and core routes. All categories have to be filled during peak hours. There has been a 7% increase this year to core coverage. It will jump drastically in the next year with rapid transit. Core routes, such as the 80, at one time did not have core services on Sundays but it does now. Only option for transit now is to increase off peak frequency. It is hoped off peak service on Saturdays and Sundays will be solved this year.

BRT service will help but this service is not reflected in the corridor as the BRT does not service the corridor but will only be a stop or two away. BRT could be called a service at the terminals.

Community Transit Service fares are not transferable to regular Metro Transit services. Community Transit service is subsidized somewhat as the fare does not cover the entire cost. Biggest expense is the maintenance, Metro Transit will send out one of their buses if the Community Transit bus breaks down. The Community Transit Fare is approximately \$2.50 plus the regular fare for Metro Transit if you transfer to a regular route.

The Sambro community will be purchasing a bus through their taxes for Community Transit Service. The Councillor for the Sambro area realized a need for Community Transit and held community meetings (members of this Committee attended those meetings). A community vote was taken by surveys that were sent out to all residents

by postal code and the results are currently being tabulated. The residents were informed that the service would require an increase to their tax rate.

The Committee commented it would be great to have more Access-a-bus service to accommodate community service areas as well. Mr. Robar explained the Metro Transit fleet is slowly being replaced with low floor buses.

Mr. Robar advised he does not do the scheduling for Community Transit service.

The Beaverbank Community Transit service will feed into the new terminal at Downsview.

The new Regional Plan will address more Park and Rides for the less populated areas.

**Mr. Cox requested a copy of the Fall River Community Transit Service for the next meeting.**

Mr. Cox asked what the criteria is for changing from Community Transit Service to Regular Transit Service. Mr. Robar advised 1) resources 2) ridership in area would be considered. He added the Route 83, for example, services a geographically large subdivision but the area is not densely populated. To extend service to the end of the subdivision would require an addition of 5.6 km to the route. Mr. Robar commented some denser populated areas, such as Hammonds Plains, have an area rate for their service. Metro Transit does not provide service to an area that is area rated so Park & Rides would work well. The Route 33 was recently changed from Community Transit to Regular Transit. The service on Route 33 is two trips per day at peak hours (two morning and two evening) and runs to Summer Street in Halifax. Mr. Robar again stressed the fact that Metro Transit cannot service the outer core before it services the inner core that pays for transit service.

Mr. Cox asked if there is an established criteria for when a community transit service would become part of the regular Metro Transit Service. **Mr. Robar will discuss this matter with Mr. Ken Silver and report back to the Committee in January.** He further clarified that once a community "switches" from community transit to regular Metro Transit service they cannot go back to community transit.

The Committee commented that HRM receives the least across North America in regards to subsidies for transit services. Mr. Robar responded that HRM's Metro Transit recovers the most of any transit company in North America (70% of its cost). He added that 70% will reduce a little as service is increased. He added the transit study (IBI study) is available on the HRM website for anyone who wishes to review it ([www.halifax.ca](http://www.halifax.ca)).

The Committee commented it may be useful to keep an eye on Community Transit.

4.1.7 Magazine Hill / Wright Avenue Congestion

Mr. Cox commented he noticed a marked improvement in the last week. **It was requested that the Legislative Assistant contact Mr. Reashor to determine if something had been done to rectify the problem, ie: *Was there a change made to the new traffic lights on Wright Avenue?***

**5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - None**

**6. REPORTS**

6.1 2005 Meeting Schedule

The Committee commented meetings have never been held in July or August. It was decided to leave the July and August dates on the schedule followed by "*If Required*".

**MOVED BY Mr. Gunther Seyffarth, seconded by Mr. Troy Mitchell that the 2005 meeting schedule be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6.2 Membership

Two reports, both dated November 18, 2004, to the North West Community Council regarding amendments to the NWTAC Terms of Reference were before the Committee.

The Legislative Assistant advised two reports were forwarded to the North West Community Council regarding changes to the North West Transit Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference. The NWCC approved both reports and Mr. John Merrick has been appointed as the third representative for District 20. NWCC also approved the recommendation to have a representative from an adjacent district serve on the Committee if required. Mr. Mitchell's name will be put forward in a report to NWCC to have him appointed as the District 2 representative.

Mr. McKinnon commented the other Community Councils should be made aware of this change to permit representatives from adjacent districts. **The Legislative Assistant advised she will forward the information to the adjacent Community Councils (Western Region Community Council - serving Districts 18, 22 and 23, and the Marine Drive, Valley and Canal Community Council - serving Districts 1, 2 and 3).**

**7. ADDED ITEMS/ NEW BUSINESS**

7.1 Rapid Transit Growth

Mr. McKinnon advised Tuesday's Chronicle-Herald had an article on the Ecology Action Centre's (EAC) *Option's Program*. He commented the EAC may be one way of getting word out to the public that Metro Transit would like to expand but are limited in their resources. He added the article gave great statistics. Mr. Robar commented that there has been an increase in ridership.

The Committee suggested offering various pass options for transit service may increase ridership even more: family passes, work passes, weekend passes, more University Passes etc. It would probably cost less to have passes than to print and then destroy the tickets. Mr. Robar added bus capacity and frequency is a concern as well as resources to provide such service.

#### 7.2 Assault on Bus Driver

Mr. Cox requested an update on the condition of the bus driver who was recently assaulted by passengers. Mr. Robar advised he will inquire about the incident and report back to the Committee in January. Mr. Mitchell suggested perhaps bus drivers (and cab drivers) should consider having "cages" installed on the buses for their protection.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** - Wednesday, January 19, 2005.

9. **ADJOURNMENT** - The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 pm.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant