

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
January 10, 2007

PRESENT: Mr. Phil Cox, Chair,
Mr. William Chaffey, Vice-Chair
Mr. Terry Churney
Mr. Alastair Lawrie
Mr. Ron McKinnon
Mr. John Merrick
Ms. Angela Miller
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth
Mr. Steve Scott
Councillor Brad Johns

STAFF: Mr. Don Scribner, Transit Technician, Transportation and Public
Works
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER/ INTRODUCTION

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm in Boardroom #1, Sackville Planning Office, 1st Floor, 636 Sackville Drive, Lower Sackville.

The Chair welcomed new member Ms. Angela Miller to the Committee.

2. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

- Addition:**
- 8.1 Passenger Complaints - Mr. Churney
 - 8.2 Retirement of Buses - Mr. Churney
 - 8.3 Service to Fall River - Mr. Churney
 - 8.4 Sackville Metro Link - Mr. Lawrie
 - 8.5 Sackville Terminal Parking Lot - Mr. Seyffarth
 - 8.6 Small Buses/Neighbourhood Service - Councillor Johns

MOVED by Mr. Churney, seconded by Mr. Seyffarth that the agenda, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - October 18, 2006 and November 15, 2006

October 18, 2006

- Changes:**
- Page 4: 100% increase in ridership - Change to *significant* increase.
 - Page 4: ALF buses, winter performance - omit opening of doors - issue is *overall winter performance*.
 - Item 4.1.5: Pedestrian Activated Signal on Barrington Street - Two separate issues 1. Signal, 2. Request for stop at CFB location.
 - Page 5: 3rd paragraph: Remove word "route" and leave as "80 series".

MOVED BY Mr. Merrick, seconded by Mr. Seyffarth that the minutes of October 18, 2006, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- Correction:** Mr. Scribner advised that he erroneously reported that Route 88 would not go to Glendale Drive. That is to be corrected as Route 88 *will* go to Glendale Drive.

Clarification: Item 9.1, second paragraph: minutes should reflect that 15 of the first 25 buses will be replacement vehicles.

MOVED BY Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. Churney that the minutes of November 15, 2006, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Status Sheet

4.1.1 Traffic Warrants

- (i) Pedestrian Activated Signal - Barrington Street (CFB Halifax)**
- (ii) Pedestrian Activated Signal - Lacewood Drive (near Keshen Goodman Library)**
- (iii) Pedestrian Activated Signal - Bedford Highway (MSVU)**

- An e-mail from Ken Reashor dated December 12, 2006 was before the Committee.

Mr. Phill Cox explained the engineering term “traffic warrant” as a term meaning justification or criteria. The criteria is usually based on statistical information such as pedestrian/vehicle counts. Mr. Cox again requested information specifically for the Mount Saint Vincent University area along the Bedford Highway.

MOVED By Mr. John Merrick, seconded by Mr. Terry Churney that this item be deferred to the next meeting. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4.1.2 Notification of Transit Service Cuts

- The draft North West Transit Advisory Committee report to the North West Community Council was before the Committee.

Mr. Phil Cox signed the report which is to be forwarded to the North West Community Council for consideration at their January 2007 meeting.

4.1.3 Wilson Lake Park and Ride - Acquisition of Land

- The draft North West Transit Advisory Committee report to the North West Community Council was before the Committee.

Mr. Phil Cox signed the report which is to be forwarded to the North West Community Council for consideration at their January 2007 meeting.

Councillor Johns advised that he has already discussed the issue of land acquisition with staff. He intends to forward the NWTAC report to the appropriate staff person to have developers include the requirement for park and rides in future developments.

Mr. Scribner commented that it is refreshing to hear transit service being thought of in a more pro-active manner rather than an after thought.

Mr. Alastair Lawrie commented that discussions are possible if there is a development agreement but negotiating abilities are lost with as of right developments.

4.1.4 Direct Transit Service to the Cobequid Community Health Centre (Route 88)

- The draft North West Transit Advisory Committee report to the North West Community Council was before the Committee.

Mr. Phil Cox signed the report which is to be forwarded to the North West Community Council for consideration at their January 2007 meeting.

Mr. Cox addressed the issue of property ownership by indicating on a map the portion owned by the provincial Transportation and Public Works Department and HRM's portion.

The Committee reviewed the previous concerns raised in regard to why direct to the door transit service was not viable at this location. The concerns are as follows:

- The exit from the Cobequid Community Health Centre is small and tight (90 E angle). The bus would take up all of the road when trying to make the turn.
- Clearance of the canopy at the entrance and air/noise pollution concerns.
- The turning bulb at other entrance is too small for a bus to turn around. Going beyond the turning bulb would require permission of the Cobequid Community Health Centre as it is a private driveway.

Mr. Scribner responded to the Committee that the provincial Department of Transportation and Public Works would probably not permit a bus stop on Duke Street/Glendale Drive due to the higher speed and volume of traffic.

Councillor Johns advised that he will contact Mr. Paul Benoit, Chair of the Cobequid Foundation, regarding this matter.

Mr. Seyffarth inquired when the smaller buses would be available suggesting that a smaller bus could make the turn. The Committee requested that the issue of smaller buses be added to the next meeting's agenda for discussion.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - None

6. REPORTS

6.1 Route 66 and 87 (Service through Bedford)

Mr. Chaffey expressed concern that the Route 66 does not run to Bedford on Sunday's, it stops at Highfield Park in Dartmouth.

Mr. Scribner advised that Metro Transit prefers to review and understand the impact of the Northgate Route 88 (perhaps over one year) in order to make better decisions on the routes. If Metro Transit acted too quickly, by making additional changes, it may cause problems to undo those changes in the future. He clarified that the Route 66 does not provide service to Sackville after 6:00 pm on weekdays nor on Saturday/Sunday. Metro Transit considered having Route 66 provide service to the Northgate development (up Rocky Lake Road to Cobequid) but the route is long and already has schedule adherence issues. Extending the trip by fifteen minutes to accommodate Northgate would not be well received. Metro Transit did review adding time to Route 66 to service Northgate which requires extending the Route 66 evening/weekend service to Sackville but it was too cost prohibitive (over \$1 million before revenue). Mr. Scribner advised that the Route 66 previously provided service to Sackville on week nights/weekends but due to low ridership that service was cut.

Mr. Scribner responded to questions of the Committee as follows:

- Metro Transit does try to obtain/secure land in new developments for new terminals/infrastructure so that transit has more control over their own destiny.
- The developers have to approve requests for bus stops as the roads are private streets.
- Metro Transit will not provide service to the door of retail outlets as it causes difficulty with schedule adherence due to the pedestrians, people loading their cars.
- If the Route 87 went through Bedford there would be a schedule cost, depending on traffic, of approximately five or six minutes. At rush hour, the schedule cost could be higher.
- There are not sufficient vehicles to switch the Route 87 with additional running time as it would require two peak hour vehicles.

- Currently, there are trips (Route 87) that skip the Highfield Terminal in Dartmouth to maintain the schedule.
- The Route 88 was a quick stop gap response to a development that came on the books very quickly. Service will grow to an eventual thirty minutes. Some consideration is being given to extending the Route 88 to Rocky Lake, to service the school, if the schedule can match the school day.
- Consideration is being given to perhaps providing a link to the RIM (Research In Motion) development via the Route 88.
- In response to possibly connecting the Route 87 with other 80 routes coming out of Sackville, Mr. Scribner advised it would be like asking two bullets to connect in mid-air. Metro Transit is attempting to answer issues by increasing frequency rather than setting up unrealistic expectations.
- The addition of the Route 81 reduced the load on Route 80 and improved its schedule adherence.
- The Route 86 is more of an express bus (limited stop bus).
- Operators are now picking up shifts with the 80 routes whereas previously, operators would avoid those shifts due to schedule problems/lack of facilities for the operators.

The issue of service through Bedford is to be added to the next agenda.

6.2 Approval of the 2007 Meeting Schedule

The Committee had previously agreed to meet the second Wednesday of the month in order to allow sufficient time to prepare and forward required reports to the North West Community Council.

MOVED by Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. Alastair Lawrie that the 2007 North West Transit Meeting Schedule, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 Route 80, 83 and 66 (Service from Sackville to Burnside)

- An e-mail from a Sackville resident re: transit service from Sackville to Burnside

The resident expressed concern and frustration with the length of time it takes for her to travel to and from her home in Sackville to her work in Burnside using Metro Transit.

Mr. Scribner commented that when funds are available, the Route 66 is one route for which Metro Transit would like to initiate some changes. One consideration would be to extend service along the Old Sackville Road as there are now more apartment buildings in the area. Currently, the Route 66 is the tightest route in regard to scheduling with ½ hour service and only four buses. The Route 66 does not connect at either end to a terminal. Mr. Scribner advised that Metro Transit needs the budget to provide small bus service (neighbourhood buses) and get the concept in place. There is already a need for more large buses.

Councillor Johns commented that there is a need for neighbourhood buses, particularly now that there is a terminal in place (in Sackville) that could work as a hub. People become frustrated with the transit system and start using their cars. Metro Transit is using money to provide service to new developments instead of addressing existing areas such as Lucasville Road. Mr. Scribner advised that Metro Transit has to service the big developments.

In response, the Committee questioned why HRM would be pursuing the Fast Ferry initiative given the existing service deficiencies with the current transit system. The money from the Fast Ferry project should be invested in the current bus system.

The Committee requested that Metro Transit staff respond to the resident providing options for her and that Councillor Johns and the Committee be copied on the response.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Passenger Complaints

Mr. Churney requested information on the number of transit complaints and the nature of those complaints from Bedford/Sackville residents. He also requested information on the number of breakdowns and standing loads on buses. Monthly or bi-monthly reports from Metro Transit on these issues would be beneficial to the Committee in providing more accurate/detailed information to the North West Community Council which may assist with the budget process.

The Committee agreed that this information would be beneficial and clarified that they were not looking for personal information, only the statistical data.

Mr. Scribner advised that Metro Transit now uses the HANSEN system to track complaints. He offered to bring a sample of a HANSEN report although not specific to

Bedford/Sackville, the HANSEN report will show a list of breakdowns by route. He explained that the technology for finer data searching is not available at this time although it is a searchable data base.

Mr. Chaffey offered to assist Metro Transit staff in searching the data base for the information if permitted to do so by Metro Transit.

In response to Mr. Churney, Mr. Scribner advised that Metro Transit no longer uses the Area Supervisor system and that all information would be in the data base.

8.2 Retirement of Buses

Mr. Churney requested clarification on the recent news article in regard to the retirement of fifteen buses and the purchase of older buses from Vancouver. He questioned why buses would be retired, and old buses purchased, when there is a need for buses.

Mr. Scribner advised that there are approximately 225 buses in the fleet and 25 low floor buses have just arrived. He will provide the exact numbers of the transit fleet for the next meeting. All new buses have front facing seats. He added that the older buses from Vancouver were in pristine condition and were high floor buses. Councillor Johns explained that manufacturers are not making high floor buses as much therefore they are more difficult to obtain.

Mr. Churney requested further information from Metro Transit on the retired buses such as; are any of the buses being retired double seaters and what is the qualification as to why you retire high floor buses.

8.3 Service to Fall River

In response to Mr. Churney, Mr. Scribner advised that ridership on the Fall River route is extremely low. As with all community transit routes, it is on a shift. He explained that discussions are underway with the area Councillor in regard to the future of the service. He further advised that there is a report expected from Regional Planning on the issue of transit service to/from Fall River. Community transit has been in a holding pattern since amalgamation. There are areas paying the urban rate but not receiving Metro Transit service (such as up to the Kinsac Road and Lucasville Road).

Councillor Johns commented that there is a time when a community develops to a point that it should trigger transit service particularly when the residents are paying the urban rate.

8.4 Sackville Metro Link - Commuters Standing During Morning Commute

Mr. Lawrie advised that there were fifteen (15) people standing on the Metro Link this morning. He explained that January was like September in terms of ridership. Mr. Lawrie indicated that there are long line ups. He inquired if there were more buses on their way to the Sackville Terminal since the Cobequid Terminal will not be getting Metro Link service and whether the frequency would increase at peak times to five minutes. Commuters are paying \$2.50 to stand all the way downtown.

Mr. Scribner advised that:

- Commencing on February 18, 2007, a 7:22 a.m. helper bus will be introduced.
- Metro Transit is aware that people are choosing to wait for another bus rather than stand.
- There is no budget to run another bus as it would cost an additional \$70 per hour.
- Consideration is being given to utilizing an articulated BRT bus on BRT routes. It would have the same frequency but would provide more seating.
- To increase frequency from ten minutes to five minutes would double the cost.
- Until a decision is made in regard to the use of articulated BRT buses, there will be more helpers (piggybacking trips) as it is a more cost responsible response.
- There are no new Metro Link buses currently on order.
- Service was expanded to Sackville initially due to the decision not to provide Metro Link service to Cobequid.
- Metro Link service will not go to Cobequid as it would recreate the previous issues of lack of parking, overflow parking.
- There are issues with overflow parking at the Sackville Terminal even after the expansion of the parking lot.
- Load count data is being compiled.

Mr. Lawrie concluded his comments indicating that the Metro Link service is a widely popular service for which funding must be found.

8.5 Sackville Metro Link Terminal Parking Lot

In response to Mr. Seyffarth's comment that the parking lot was not completed, Mr. Scribner advised that the Sackville Metro Link Terminal parking lot is paved and the lights are up.

8.6 Small Buses / Neighbourhood Service

Councillor Johns requested an update from Metro Transit General Manager, Mr. Paul McDaniel on the neighbourhood bus concept including the cost to operate a small bus

as opposed to a larger bus.

The Legislative Assistant advised that Mr. McDaniel will be attending the February meeting.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE - February 14, 2007

Items for the February agenda:

1. Fall River Community Transit
2. Winter Service of ALF Buses
3. Service Through Bedford
4. Status of 2006 Ridership Counts
5. ½ Hour Service at Peak (Sackville Students/Bayers Lake)

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned a 9:03 pm.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant