

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

**NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

June 13, 2007

PRESENT: Mr. Philip Cox, Chair
Mr. William Chaffey
Mr. John Merrick
Mr. Stephen Scott
Mr. Terry Churney
Mr. Ron McKinnon
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth
Ms. Angela Miller

REGRETS: Councillor Johns

STAFF: Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation Planning
Mr. Dave Reage, Planning and Project Delivery Coordinator
Ms. Chrissy White, Legislative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER	3
2.	APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS	3
3.	APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 11 and May 9, 2007	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES	3
4.1	STATUS SHEET ITEMS	3
4.1.1	Route 88 RIM Development	3
4.1.2	Ridership Counts - Discussion on Presentations Going Forward	4
4.1.3	Parking at Sackville Bus Terminal	5
5.	CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS	5
6.	REPORTS	5
6.1	Fast Ferry Update	5
7.	CORRESPONDENCE	7
8.	ADDED ITEMS	7
9.	NEXT MEETING DATE	7
10.	ADJOURNMENT	8

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Fenerty Room, Sackville Library, Sackville.

2. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Additions:

- 8.1 Bus Operators Rules and Regulations
- 8.2 Ron MacKinnon Resignation

MOVED by Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. John Merrick, that the Order of Business be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 11 and May 9, 2007

Changes April 11, 2007:

- 8.1 The third bullet should read "smaller engines."
- 8.1 The fourth bullet should read "33% operating cost."
- 8.1 Top of page five should read "more cost effective use of funds."
- 8.1 Bottom of page 4 should read "future GPS systems."
- 8.1 The Committee would like to receive a report on this item when completed.

Changes May 9, 2007

Under Approval of the Minutes change the date from March 21st to March 14th.

- 4.1.1 Change the word "may" to "would."
- 4.1.2 Second paragraph switch the 80 and 81.

MOVED by Mr. Stephen Scott, seconded by Gunther Seyffarth, that the minutes from April 11 and May 9, 2007 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 STATUS SHEET ITEMS

4.1.1 Route 88 RIM Development

Mr. Reage advised that the ridership in Bedford West is not anticipated to be as high

as the ridership at the Dartmouth Crossing. He further advised that specific data would not be available until the ridership counts are completed in the fall. He noted that space will be made available for buses to turn onto RIM property, and this will be outlined in the site plan for this area.

The Committee agreed to leave this item on the status sheet to be revisited at the September meeting.

4.1.2 Ridership Counts - Discussion on Presentations Going Forward

- A handout outlining ridership counts was circulated to the Committee.

Mr. Cox, Chair advised that the numbers outlined in the above noted document were accumulated and calculated by a team of staff and Committee Members. These counts outline areas that are lacking in Metro Transit Service.

Mr. Bill Chaffey advised that the numbers are lower the last year, but there are still a significant number of people standing on buses that exceed 70 km per hour.

Committee Members provided comments on the above noted where the following points were made:

- The Committee expressed concern that the Bedford Fast Ferry will not remedy this problem for the numbers 80 and 82 buses as most of the passengers are University Students and would exit the bus before downtown,
- The count results are unpredictable and manual method causes constraint.
- Concern was expressed regarding the amount of standees on buses and the safety concerns associated with this problem. Members suggested introducing more metro Link buses to meet the need,
- The manual counter does not record how many seats are on the bus.

Mr. Reage advised that he would inquire about the possibility of purchasing technology to do electronic counts to determine ridership. He noted that treadle mats could be a cost effective alternative to manual counts, and would report back to the committee regarding this issue at the September meeting.

Mr. David McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation Planning advised of the three year transit plan that will introduce 80 new buses, depending on approval by Regional Council.

Mr. Reage advised that Metro Transit will meet in July to develop a plan regarding service increases for the 2008/09 budget year. He noted that he would bring the committees concerns to staff at this meeting.

MOVED by Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. John Merrick, that North West Community Council request that staff:

- 1. Provide a solution to the safety problems caused by standing ridership that is expected to increase with the introduction of the Mount Saint Vincent University U-Pass; and**
- 2. Review attached tables illustrating standing ridership, and give priority to the series 80-86 routes in the 2008/09 budget to increase seating capacity to ensure all riders are seated when speeds are 70 km per hour or higher.**

Mr. Reage advised that a new transit route will be created to link Mount Saint Vincent University and Dartmouth. He noted the extra funding accumulated from the Mount Saint Vincent U-pass will be used to introduce this route.

4.1.3 Parking at Sackville Bus Terminal

- An e-mail dated may 18, 2007 from Mr. Mike Cowper, Development Technician was before the Committee.

Committee Members advised that they would like to see more handicap parking at the Sackville Bus Terminal. It was noted that this is a big problem during the daytime hours.

Mr. Reage advised that staff have conducted surveillance on this area and it was found that the number of handicap parking spaces are compliant with the By-law. He noted that It was found that at most times there was at least one handicap parking spot available. He further advised that the demand must exist in order for a change to occur.

Mr. Cox advised that he had supporting materials to dispute the staff claim, and will bring them to the September meeting.

The Committee agreed to keep this item on the status sheet for further review at the September meeting.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS- None

6. REPORTS

6.1 Fast Ferry Update

Mr. McCusker provided an overview where the following points were noted:

- The Fast Ferry will provide a high order service that is attractive to wide areas

- and accessible through park and ride,
- The ferry will provide transit as an alternative for more HRM residents,
- The primary transit priority is getting the highest number of vehicle drivers possible to switch to transit,
- Hammonds Plains Road and Bedford have been identified as places with a need for increased transit,
- The Regional Plan identifies a need for high capacity services, and the fast ferry will accommodate that need,
- A cultivation survey was completed where 72 scenarios were applied,
- The terminal analysis has been assessed,
- Various combinations of fares will be offered depending on the extent of the service. Parking and shuttles may be included in the fare for those who are interested,
- Operating and capital costs will be covered, and it is assumed that a profit will be generated as some of the scenarios support cost recovery,
- Rail was not included in the Regional Plan due to its inefficiency. The rail trip would take 26 minutes and the fast ferry only takes 15.
- The sharp curves on the rail cut only allow for 15 mile an hour speeds,
- Rail would result in the need for more capital costs and staff,
- The vis rail station does not accommodate the majority of passengers who travel to the downtown,
- Market study results support the implementation of a fast ferry in Bedford,
- Smaller ferries will be purchased in the beginning to gauge ridership. If larger ferries are needed, the need will be accommodated by purchasing or building a larger vessel,
- Staff have lobbied with Transport Canada and are continuing work with Harbor Stakeholders,
- The proposal will refined into a business case after more market analysis is completed,
- This process will take approximately two years and 60 more transit buses will be on the road by that time,

Committee Members provided their comments on the above noted:

The committee expressed concern with the time frame of the fast ferry, and advised that there may be other problems that need to be addressed before its implementation.

In response to questions raised by Committee Members, Mr. McCusker advised:

- Fuel consumption is high on a ferry compared to buses and trains,
- The economic plan is based on diesel fuel but alternative fuel sources are being reviewed,
- There will be a minium of 10 new buses transit buses per fiscal year ,
- According to research, 1/3 of ferry passengers would walk to the terminal, 1/3 would be park and ride and 1/3 would be transfers,

- The Bedford West development is designed around transit,
- Park and ride lots have not been determined yet,
- Parking will not be free,
- There will be three to four access points to the Bedford highway once the terminal is built,
- The ferries will accommodate a capacity of 250 passengers,
- The ferries could possibly depart as frequently as every 20 minutes,
- The design of the vessel with accommodate the water conditions,
- There will be days that the ferry may have to be shut down due to weather,
- The shuttle infrastructure is outside the 20 million cost,
- The sole purpose of the Strategic Growth Fund is to allot money to leverage new money,
- The Fast Ferry plan is contingent on Federal money,

Mr. Cox advised that he believes the market being accommodated by the fast ferry is minimal.

The Committee decided to contemplate this issue over the summer before sending any recommendations to North West Community Council.

7. CORRESPONDENCE- None

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Bus Operators- Rules and Regulations

Mr. Cox advised that he has noticed an increase in unprofessional behavior regarding Metro Transit Bus Drivers and questioned enforcement practices. He noted that some behaviors are unsafe and need to be addressed. He suggested hiring more Metro Transit Enforcement Officers to fix this problem.

Mr. Reage advised that a citizen can file a complaint through the Corporate Call Center.

Committee Members advised that they would like to see more emphasis put on the rules and regulations of service providers.

8.2 Ron MacKinnon Resignation

The Chair accepted Mr. Mackinnon's resignation and thanked him for his participation.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the North West Transit Advisory Committee will be in September 2007.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

The Committee adjourned for the summer months and will return to service in September.

Chrissy White
Legislative Assistant