

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

June 11, 2008

PRESENT: Mr. Philip Cox, Chair
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth
Mr. Steve Scott
Mr. William Chaffey
Mr. John Merrick
Mr. Terry Churney

REGRETS: Councillor Brad Johns

STAFF: Mr. Dave Reage, Planning and Project Delivery Coordinator, Metro
Transit
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in Boardroom #1, Sackville Planning Office, 1st Floor, 636 Sackville Drive, Lower Sackville.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - May 14, 2008

Correction: Page 5, Item 8.1 Tabling of Bedford West and Bedford South Developments
Mr. Scott noted that in the third paragraph, the 60,000 is not just for Bedford.
Mr. Reage noted that instead of “*existing bus routes*” the wording should be
“*roads that are compatible with future bus service.*”

MOVED BY Mr. Merrick, seconded by Mr, Seyffarth, that the minutes of May 14, 2008, as corrected, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

The agenda was approved as presented.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Status Items

4.1.1 Sackville Terminal Park and Ride and Link Bus

- An Information Report dated May 27, 2008 was before the Committee.

Mr. Dave Reage, Planning and Project Delivery Coordinator, Metro Transit, explained that the study was done as part of the monitoring reporting process for the Metro Link Project. Commuters arriving at the Sackville Terminal were asked where they were arriving from; the responses showed a wide range of areas including Sackville, Upper Sackville and Windsor. Mr. Chaffey added that the data for the study had been collected two years ago.

During the ensuing discussion on the Information Report, Mr. Phil Cox, Chair, offered to follow up with the Provincial Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal on whether or not they had ever been officially approached by HRM in regard to the possible use of their lands near the exit ramp for expansion of the Sackville Terminal parking area. Mr. Reage advised that the land is slated for use as part of the provincial interchange project, therefore; the province most likely would not be willing to part with it.

Mr. Cox further advised that he has drafted a letter of thanks for Wheaton's in regard to their generous offer of free parking on their property for commuters who register with them and obtain a parking pass. The letter will be sent by the end of June. The Committee requested that a copy of the letter be sent to the North West Community Council and the Bedford/Sackville news. This item to remain on the Status Sheet.

4.1.2 2007 Load/Ridership Counts

- A copy of the 2007 statistics was circulated to the Committee at this time.

Mr. William Chaffey presented the information. He advised that:

- The information is based on buses with a seating capacity of 39 persons.
- All data represents weekdays, not weekends, although some charts show Saturday or Sunday due to an error when the original information was recorded.
- None of the dates showing standees immediately precede or follow a holiday weekend; the counts are fairly typical. (Dates were not checked for runs that did not have standees.)
- The bars on the charts show standees as the bus leaves the stop (shown on the x-axis).
- There has been an increase in ridership overall (since October 2006) due to the rising cost of fuel.
- An adjustment will be made to the data in regard to the Route 82 morning runs as there are a couple that start at the Cobequid Terminal not Sackville.
- The number of standees on the Route 80 is up from 2006 but the speed limit along the Bedford Highway is decreasing, down to 60 km in some areas and may further reduce to 50 km in a few years; the concern with riders standing at high speeds/rapid stops would be diminished.
- There are standees on the link buses; more information will be obtained on whether there has been an increase from last year. Currently, people are standing on the Route 185's three morning runs (7:40, 7:50 and 8:00 a.m.). There are also standees in the evenings.
- There are no standees on the Route 81.

During the ensuing discussion on the data presented, the Committee raised the following comments/concerns:

- Request for a comparison, if possible, between the 2006 and 2007 data to determine any increase in standees.
- The Route 81 does not appear to have helped the Route 82 as there are still quite a few standing. People who want to go downtown during rush hour do not take the Route 80. Route 80 and 81 are mostly commuters heading to Dalhousie and St. Mary's University and by the time it reaches Barrington Street there are very few riders left. The 82 has more riders at 7:36 a.m. than at 7:06 a.m.

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- Request to normalize the data, if possible, so that it reflects the same seating capacity for both years (40 seat capacity / 39 seat capacity).
- Request an articulated bus for the Route 84 in the morning.

Mr. Reage responded to the Committee's request for an articulated bus for the Route 84 by explaining that many of the articulated buses are nearing or are in the process of having their mid-life refits, therefore; fewer are available for service. The requirement to use articulated buses on the Route 84 was pulled some time ago. Mr. Reage will confirm if the Route 84 is a regularly scheduled articulated bus route. He added that there is a floater Supervisor who handles the Sackville area but is not assigned full time to Sackville. There is one standby bus at the bridge terminal in Dartmouth in case it is needed to be called into service.

- If it can be shown that ridership and the number of standees has increased, it may be possible to request another bus to supplement the runs.

Mr. Reage commented that overall transit ridership has increased by 3.5 to 3.7% over last year. The largest increase being with Sunday service, up by 20%, due to Sunday shopping which is an easier demand to deal with as it is not a peak hour situation. There will be further increases to Sunday service for the Routes 1 and 52 this year; Route 1 will go to 15 minute service on Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the Route 52 to 30 minute service all day. There has also been a small reduction in Saturday service to Bayers Lake since Sunday shopping came into effect.

The Committee questioned the future of the Artz Street stop for the Routes 84 / 85 and requested a copy of the Information Report recently sent to the North West Community Council.

Mr. Cox, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Chaffey for the data.

4.1.3 Letter to Wal-Mart re: Bus Shelter

Mr. Cox advised that he is drafting the letter and will send it by the end of June. The Committee suggested that a letter be sent to the Developer to determine if they would be willing to cost share for the bus shelter.

4.1.4 Barrington Bus Stop Report

The Committee requested a copy of the report regarding the Artz Street bus stop that was sent to the North West Community Council in May.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS - NONE

7. REPORTS

7.1 Gas Tax Update

The Committee requested an update on the Gas Tax for their next meeting.

7.2 Bedford Waterfront Visioning - Update (Verbal)

Mr. John Merrick advised that he is one of six (6) persons serving on the Bedford Waterfront Visioning's Task Group on Transit. Their first meeting will be held on Thursday, June 13, 2008 at the LeBrun Centre, Bedford. A briefing for the Visioning Group was held recently, facilitated by Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation, Infrastructure and Asset Management, wherein the Committee was provided detail concerning HRM's Five Year Transit Plan. The focus for Bedford will be on improving transit service overall and servicing the fast ferry. There was mention of a shuttle service from a park and ride to bring people to the proposed ferry terminal although neither location, terminal building nor park and ride, have been finalized.

Mr. Reage added that there are funds allocated in the Fast Ferry project for a shuttle bus system. \$3 million has been budgeted, hopefully to come from the province, for a new vehicle bridge that will run from the Bedford Highway over the train tracks to the proposed Ferry Terminal. The vehicle bridge will have to be built before the ferry is up and running.

The Committee requested that Mr. Dave McCusker be invited to the September meeting to present the Five Year Transit Plan. Mr. Reage advised that the report is available on the Metro Transit website. He responded to the Committee that it is hoped the five-year plan will be a floating five-year plan so that in year three (3), for example, tentative approval in principal for year eight (8) will be requested during Council's budget session.

8. ADDED ITEMS

The Committee added the following items to the agenda at this time:

8.1 Transit Service to RIM (Research in Motion) Development.

Mr. Reage advised that transit service to RIM will be dependant on when the traffic signals are in place, however, Metro Transit, will be ready to provide the service after the August picks. The road widening for the area is underway at this time. The service will be a stand alone service at first and will run from the Cobequid Terminal down the Bedford

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Highway to the Hammonds Plains Road to RIM back to the Hammonds Plains Road and up to Bluewater to Parkland and then Lacewood. The travel time from the Cobequid Terminal to the Lacewood Terminal is expected to be about one hour. It will be the Route 89 Bedford. This item is to be added to the Status Sheet.

8.2 Go Time System - Technology Upgrades

The Committee requested that Mr. Philip Herritt, AVL Project, Acting Supervisor Employee Services, Metro Transit, Transportation and Public Works, be invited to a fall meeting of the Committee to provide an update on the GPS technology. Mr. Reage advised that both the wheel revolution and new GPS systems are currently in use as some of the buses are still on the old control system.

8.3 Access - A - Bus

The Committee requested that Mr. Larry Hilton, Supervisor Special Services, Access-A-Bus, Transportation and Public Works, be invited to a fall meeting of the Committee.

8.4 Security on Buses for Operators

Mr. Reage advised that Metro Transit's Operations Department is working to have cameras installed on all buses. There are additional security measures currently in place.

The Committee requested an update on this issue for the fall meeting.

8.5 Electronic Fare Box

Mr. Reage advised that electronic fare boxes are budgeted in the five-year transit plan. The design portion is planned for late 2008, early 2009 with the implementation to occur in late 2009, early 2010.

8.6 Committee Q & A

The Committee requested that a Q & A section be added to the end of each future agenda as a method of capturing items for upcoming agendas.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE - Wednesday, September 10, 2008.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm.

DRAFT