

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

October 8, 2008

PRESENT: Mr. Philip Cox, Chair
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth
Mr. Steve Scott
Mr. John Merrick
Mr. Terry Churney
Councillor Brad Johns

REGRETS: Mr. William Chaffey

STAFF: Mr. Dave Reage, Planning and Project Delivery Coordinator, Metro
Transit
Mr. David McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm in Boardroom #1, Sackville Planning Office, 1st Floor, 636 Sackville Drive, Lower Sackville.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - June 11, 2008

Correction: Item 8.3, page 7: *Rocky Manor* should be *Rockmanor*.
Item 7.1, Page 7, first sentence: *Stephens* should be *Stevens*.
Item 5.1, page 4: d ate to be added re: Council Report.
Item 7.1, page 6, 4th paragraph, add:

Amendments: Item 7.1, page 7, 1st sentence, add: “extra lane” after “*reviewing the*”.
Item 6.1.1, 1st bullet, add: Rocky Lake Drive/Bedford Highway intersection after “*with a right turn at the*”
Item 6.1.1, page 5, 2nd bullet, add: “*from Route 84 and 87 thereby*” after “*offsetting service*”
Page 6, 4th paragraph,

MOVED BY Mr. John Merrick, seconded by Mr. Stephen Scott that the minutes of June 11, 2008 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Additions:

- 8.1 Route 86 Bedford - Mr. John Merrick
- 8.2 Membership Update - Legislative Assistant
- 8.3 Service Improvements for November - Mr. David Reage
- 8.4 Bedford South Development/Transit Planning - Mr. John Merrick

The Committee agreed to the agenda as amended.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Status Items

4.1.1 Sackville Terminal Park/Ride and MetroLink

Mr. Gunther Seyffarth advised that Wheaton's would be ending their monthly parking pass option at the end of October due to HRM's refusal to provide winter maintenance (snow clearing) of the gravel overflow parking area utilized by the Sackville MetroLink commuters. The forty-three (43) parking spaces provided by the overflow parking area are needed. A further concern is the additional 75 (approximately) cars parked along the road (Walker Avenue).

Mr. Dave Reage, Planning and Project Delivery Coordinator, Metro Transit, responded that HRM's legal department had advised against providing snow removal service on a gravel lot. The concern centres around liability issues. Metro Transit is looking into the matter.

Mr. Phil Cox, Chair, advised that he would forward the Wheaton "Thank You" letter to the Legislative Assistant for distribution to the Committee members.

4.1.2 2007 Load/Ridership Counts

This item was deferred to the November meeting.

4.1.3 Letter to Wal-Mart re: Bus Shelter

Mr. Cox, Chair, advised that the letter had been sent but no response has been received. He will follow-up on this matter.

4.1.4 Barrington Bus Stop Report

Mr. John Merrick confirmed that a report had been received on this matter. Mr. Cox added that the request to remove the stop was turned down, however; no justification for the decision was provided.

Mr. Reage explained that the Committee's suggestion to have the bus merge into the left lane to skip the stop in question and the traffic queuing for the MacDonald Bridge ramp, then merge again after passing the traffic was not viable as Metro Transit could not instruct their operators to take such action. The issue of relocating the bus stop had been covered in a previous report. The possibility of relocating the stop to just past the ramp is tied to the extension of the MacDonald Bridge ramp.

4.1.5 Bedford Waterfront Visioning

Mr. Merrick advised that the Transit and Transportation Sub-Group was looking closely at the Hammonds Plains intersection and possible location of the new access road into the Harbour Link Terminal. Transportation will also be part of the Bedford Waterfront Marketing Study.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS

5.1 Gas Tax: Update and Funding Allocation

- A copy of the Regional Council report dated xx was before the Committee.

The Legislative Assistant advised that a more recent report had been circulated to Council. A copy of that report will be circulated to the Committee.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATION

6.1 Correspondence

6.1.1. E-mail from Mr. Walter Regan

The following comments/concerns were raised by the Committee during the ensuing discussion:

- Extending Route 88 into Bedford and accessing all the malls/shopping districts, although a good point, is not in the 2008/09 budget. Pushing the service any further may be a concern. The service will become more popular as Bedford Common grows. Metro Transit has reviewed options and did consider traveling from Duke to Rocky Lake with a right turn at the intersection, however; there is not sufficient space at the intersection to permit a bus to turn. There is no extra running time on that route. An additional bus would be required and that would not be possible at this time.
- Consideration was also given to offsetting the service by increasing service to the Glendale Corridor, however; the goal is not to have much local service between Glendale and Cobequid.
- The time to increase service would be prior to the new housing development.

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- FRED (Free Rides Everywhere Downtown) is supported by the Downtown Business Commission. Metro Transit is not looking to promote free service as they cannot subsidize additional free service at this time unless the operating cost were raised from another source.

Mr. Stephen Scott and Mr. Phil Cox offered to prepare a response which will be forwarded to the Legislative Assistant for circulation to the Committee and distribution to Mr. Regan.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Five Year Transit Plan

Mr. David McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation, presented HRM's Five Year Transit Plan.

Councillor Johns entered the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

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

- There is a reserve fund to replace the aging ferries as required.
- The \$155 million proposed for the Five-Year Transit Plan is comprised of the Federal Government Gas Tax, dedicated transit fund from the Federal government and previous commitments for transit funding. The Municipality will contribute a portion and a small portion will be financed by debt. The province of Nova Scotia is providing zero funding.
- Metro Transit will not be expanding routes/services until the current critical issues are resolved. If there are funds remaining, Council will decide how that money will be dispensed.

Councillor Johns commented that he has been hearing from his residents that they are not in favour of the Fast Ferry. Residents have communicated that they are extremely frustrated with current transit service deficiencies. He expressed concern that the critical situation now facing transit was not brought before Council years ago in order for Council to make decisions to avoid this situation. Council has been informed that the current deficiencies cannot be addressed until construction of the satellite transit garage is complete. That could mean a minimum of two more years before any improvements can be made to existing service or the expansion of service to rural routes. Residents are fed up and saying that they will not get on transit anymore.

Mr. McCusker advised that red flags had been raised for many years in regard to the critical transit issues. He explained that there was simply no money to build a garage. The

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critical issues were capacity; more buses and routes had to be added to address those concerns.

Councillor Johns added that the Access-A-Bus service leaves behind 100 people per day as they cannot meet the demand. It seems that every issue that exists now is due to the transit garage. He added that it is difficult to sell the fast ferry when you hear comments/concerns such as these from the residents.

Mr. McCusker explained that the Regional Plan lives and dies on high speed. Transportation needs to avoid major roadway improvements such as a third harbour crossing. Ferries require a high market to make them work. There is enough of a market in Sackville and Bedford to make a ferry work. Small populations in places such as Bermuda and Mobile, Alabama utilize ferries. Ferry travel is effective if the commute can be done faster by water than by road. Purcell's Cove to downtown, for example, would be a shorter trip by water than by road therefore it would be more effective.

He further explained that one consideration is for community buses traveling from Lantz, Enfield and Elmsdale areas that would go to the airport area where the commuters could pick-up a Metro Transit route to the downtown. It is not within Transit's mandate to build an intercity bus line. The first park and ride in Tantallon may attract commuters from the Chester and Bridgewater areas. A portion of the funding for that parking lot would be provided through area rates. HRM did offer to cover the capital costs to expand existing provincial park and ride lots if the province would share the cost of maintaining those lots; that request was turned down.

Mr. McCusker added that the Tantallon Rural Express Transit service will be up and running by the spring of 2009. The last ten buses in the transit garage were for this service. Frequency will be thirty-minute service to start. Upon review of the ridership, more frequency may be added if required.

Metro Transit is reviewing the situation at the Fairley & Stephens area in Burnside to the Brewery area. Mr. McCusker added that there appears to be room for construction of a third lane that could be utilized by transit on Windmill Road prior to the Wright Avenue intersection.

Consideration had also been given to having a third lane or a reversing lane along the Bedford Highway by Mill Cove to Mount Saint Vincent University. The issue is the section around Flamingo Drive being blocked by left turning cues. Merchants along the commercial strip of the Bedford Highway fought hard against a four lane Bedford Highway. There was a report on this issue that will be sent to the Legislative Assistant for distribution to the Committee.

The Committee thanked Mr. McCusker for his presentation.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Route 86 Bedford

This item was dealt with under Item 6.1.1. See page 4.

8.2 Membership Update

The Legislative Assistant advised that all terms expire as of November 30, 2008. Anyone interested in serving on the North West Transit Advisory Committee are to forward their volunteer application form/resumes to the North West Community Council. An advertisement will be placed in the local newspapers in the near future.

8.3 Service Improvements for November

Mr. Reage, presented the service changes for the November pick.

- 14 routes being changed. Two new routes, 5 of which are 80 series routes.
- Route 80 - adding additional am peak trip departing Cobequid at 8:00 a.m.
- 82 - 1 additional pm peak trip from Sackville to Cobequid at 3:59.
- 83 - additional pm peak trip departing Sackville at 5:30 and 6:20.
- 86 - adding round trip departing Rocky Manor at 7:20 a.m. - reverse trip from downtown departing Summer Street 5:05 p.m. All low floor buses.
- 89 - service to commence with November pick change. Although the traffic signals will not be ready, service will commence but not stop at RIM until the signals are activated which is expected by December 10, 2008. The Route 89 should take 40 - 45 minutes to run from Cobequid to Lacewood. All low floor buses.
- No service improvements at this time for Dartmouth Crossing as the RIM area was the priority.

The Committee thanked Mr. Reage for his update.

8.4 Bedford South Development/Transit Planning

Mr. Merrick advised that there would be a Public Information Meeting on Thursday, October 9, 2008 which would include information on the proposed street structure, community bus and transit service for the Bedford South development which has the potential for a population of 10,000 - 12,000 people. The Committee has previously noted

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that progress on this development approval should be closely watched to ensure transit has a valid place in the proceedings considering the proximity to the Bedford Terminal of the Harbour Link. The Committee noted that the Bedford South development would also require scrutiny in its turn. Mr. Merrick will provide an update at the next meeting.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE - Wednesday, November 12, 2008.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 pm.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant