

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

June 24, 2009

PRESENT: Michael Cormier, Chair  
John Merrick, Vice-Chair  
Philip Cox  
William Chaffey  
Stephen Scott  
Ian MacLaine

ABSENT: Terry Churney  
Gunther Seyffarth  
Councillor Brad Johns

STAFF: Ms. Patricia Soanes, General Manager, Metro Transit  
Mr. Edward Robar, Manager, Planning and Product Development,  
Metro Transit,  
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Michael Cormier, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm in the Metro Transit Boardroom, 200 Isley Avenue, Dartmouth.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - May 13, 2009**

**Correction:** Remove “regrets” after Councillor Johns as he was in attendance.

**MOVED BY Mr. Stephen Scott, seconded by Mr. Phil Cox that the minutes of May 13, 2009, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**3. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS**

**Additions:** 8.1 Budget Discussion - Ed Robar  
8.2 GOOGLE Transit - Ed Robar

The Committee agreed to the order of business as amended.

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - NONE**

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

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS**

**6.1 Correspondence - NONE**

**6.2 Petitions - NONE**

**6.3 Delegations**

**6.3.1 Metro Transit**

Ms. Patricia Soanes, General Manager, Metro Transit, Transportation and Public Works, assisted by Mr. Edward Robar, Manager, Planning and Product Development, Metro Transit, Transportation and Public Works, responded to concerns of the Committee in regard to their lack of opportunity to provide comment to the Consultant working on the transit plan as follows:

- The on-line responses received (from the survey) were much higher than expected, therefore; analysis of that data was very time consuming.

- A preview of the Consultant's Report should be presented to the Committee following Regional Council's review of the document in September.
- The Consultant's Report was a five-year product and any implementation of the suggestions would depend entirely on Regional Council approval and funding.
- Staff assured the Committee that many suggestions previously raised by them were incorporated into the report. The Consultant's were not invited to present the plan to the North West Transit Advisory Committee due to an obligation by Metro Transit to ensure a fair and impartial process. Having the Consultant's meet with one Committee representing a specific area without extending that same benefit to all areas could be interpreted as showing a bias toward that area and a perception that the plan may have been swayed according to the interests of that one area.
- All suggestions had to be considered in relation to existing fiscal and infrastructure pressures on the system.

The Committee thanked staff for the update and suggested that a visioning briefing from the General Manager, at a future meeting, would be informative and useful for the Committee.

## **6. REPORTS**

### **7.1 Bedford Visioning**

Mr. John Merrick advised that the Bedford Waterfront Visioning Committee previewed three 25-year conceptual plans presented by the Design Consultant. The following are highlights of the presentation that would be of interest to the North West Transit Advisory Committee:

- Each proposal placed significant emphasis on pedestrian and multi-modal transit access to the development.
- Proposed sites for the Harbour Link terminal; local/community bussing and potential light rail interface, were discussed.
- The Steering Committee will meet in July to decide on the final conceptual plan to be presented to Regional Council.

The Committee thanked Mr. Merrick for his update.

### **7.2 Cost Sharing Possibilities with Wal-Mart for Bus Shelter**

Mr. Robar advised that cost sharing of transit shelters was an accepted way of doing business where appropriate arrangements could be made. He noted that more information on transit shelters would be provided during the budget update under Item 8.1.

The Legislative Assistant advised that a staff report had been prepared in regard to the proposed cost-sharing for the bus shelter on Damascus Road, however; the report had not been received in time for the meeting.

### **7.3 MetroX Rural Transit Service - Tantallon**

Mr. Robar advised that the plan was to have the MetroX service launched in the fall of 2009, possibly by August 31<sup>st</sup>. There will be two stops in Tantallon; one at the rink and one at the MacDonald's then straight through to Albermarle Street at Scotia Square via Bayers Road. There will be ½ hour service from Tantallon with a forty-seven minute travel time. The fare will be \$3.25; passes will be \$100 and will provide full access to the transit system.

Ms. Soanes and Mr. Robar responded to comments/concerns of the Committee as follows:

- The Express Route was not contingent upon the widening of Bayers Road as the service was based on today's traffic.
- Metro Transit has been very involved with the implementation of this service including monthly meetings with the Regional Transportation Group, branding of the vehicles and identifying corridors.
- Ten (10) MetroX vehicles have been received with a possibility of seven (7) more being added.
- Additional corridors have been identified.
- Plans to expand the MetroX services to feed the Park 'd Ride sites would be outside the current Five-year Transit Plan.

The Committee thanked staff for the update.

### **7.4 Meeting with Consultant re: Transit Plans**

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. See page 3, Item 6.3.1.

## **8. ADDED ITEMS**

### **8.1 Budget Updates**

Mr. Robar provided a verbal update on the budget. He advised that there were some busy timelines over the next year due to the implementation of a number of projects including the Transit Garage in Ragged Lake. He noted that:

- The tender for 45 articulated buses was placed on June 6<sup>th</sup> with an August closing date.

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- The new Ragged Lake Transit Facility has been sized to house articulated buses; will be built to accommodate 150 buses with the capacity to expand to 200 vehicles if need be and will be built to LEEDS Silver standards.
- The addition of a route into Ragged Lake and provision of a relief facility for Operators is also planned.
- Older terminal facilities will be upgraded as follows:
  - a new bridgehead is to be built at the MacDonald Bridge; accessibility stop and environmental design work to be done so as not to resemble a concrete jungle.
  - Highfield Park Terminal will be upgraded with new shelters/signage and include a washroom for Operators.
  - Lacewood Terminal will have signage and design work. The goal is to have Metro Link service available one year from completion of these upgrades.
  - The Penhorn, Cobequid and Tacoma terminals will also have upgrades to amenities on site.
  - Purchase of land at Cobequid Terminal for a Park 'n Ride did not occur as the price was too high.
- The current transit fleet size is 299 including the Access-a-Buses.
- The following three routes will be accessible routes: Route 1, 17 and 18.
- Approval has been received to retrofit all vehicles with bike racks; the work will commence on June 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Approval has been received for 40-45 bus shelters; usually only ten are approved per year.
- Approval for funds (\$12 million) for the new Conventional Ferry to provide all day service to/from Woodside. The ferry will be compatible with the existing ferries.
- Regional Council has approved service increases as follows: Route 1 at midday increasing to ten minute service; Route 66 on weekdays (offpeak) increasing to thirty minute from hourly service and extending service to Burnside/Sackville/Mic Mac Mall and evening service to Cobequid until 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.; Route 16 - Saturday service through Dartmouth/McKay Bridge via Lacewood/Parkland Drive.
- Approval for a one year pilot project for rural service to Sambro via Ketch Harbour/Williamswood from the South Centre Mall; one hour and twenty minute frequency from 5:30 a.m until 8:00 p.m. Service will be contingent on meeting the standards.
- There were nine requests from Regional Council for rural transit service which include Lucasville; none were contemplated in the Five -Year Capital Plan.
- The pilot project was made possible by the tax structure change recently approved by Council.
- The tax structure change involves two rates and will replace the current tax structure:

- A regional rate to be applied to all residents of HRM for regional services (MetroLink, Ferry and MetroX) at a cost of 2.7 cents per \$100 of assessment, and;
- A local rate to be applied to all dwellings within one kilometer of a transit route at a cost of 10.3 cents per \$100 of assessment.
- There will be no extension to hours of service for the Route 80.
- Metro Transit is focussing on demand and development while targeting ridership generation for the low performing routes.

In response to Mr. Cox, Mr. Robar advised that:

- He would check the GPS for reasons why the first bus servicing the Route 84 each morning is arriving late to the Cobequid Terminal. Ms. Soanes noted that the route has been an incredibly tight schedule for the Operators.
- Route 89 is doing better in terms of ridership than the Route 88.

Ms. Soanes advised that Metro Transit has been talking to Regional Council in regard to closing the operational funding gap stressing that a funding plan was needed. Currently, the funding is 52% through the tax payer. Mr. Robar added that staff would be aggressively pursuing government funding.

Mr. Cox commented that it made no sense for the buses to be paying to cross the bridge considering that the transit service removed vehicles from the bridge and was beneficially to the environment.

Ms. Soanes advised that once the Ragged Lake facility was open, the annual cost for bridge tolls, currently at \$400,000, would decrease significantly.

## **8.2 Google Transit**

Mr. Robar advised that GOOGLE Transit would be launched next week. The program is a Trip Planner accessible by the public to determine:

- Exactly which routes the commuter should take to get from Point A to Point B.
- Information on walk time, travel time and cost.
- Ability for commuters to plan their trips by arrival time/departure time.
- The service will be free.
- The times will be based on scheduled times that are sent to GOOGLE and uploaded.
- GO Time would be in service; Real Time information would not be available.

In response to questions/comments from the Committee, Ms. Soanes and Mr. Robar provided the following response:

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- HRM may purchase the trip planner software, HUSTUS, at some future date.
- GOOGLE sells advertising on their site and have coast to coast transit information available.
- There will be a link from Metro Transit's website.
- Data in regard to the utilization rate for the accessible portion of users was uncertain but was not a very high percentage.

The Committee thanked staff for the update.

9. **NEXT MEETING DATE** - Wednesday, September 9, 2009

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:xx p.m.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant