

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 2006

PRESENT: Mr. Phil Cox, Chair,
Mr. Bill Chaffey, Vice-Chair
Mr. Ron McKinnon
Mr. John Merrick
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth
Councillor Brad Johns

ABSENT
WITH REGRETS: Mr. Alain Bourgeois
Mr. Alastair Lawrie

STAFF AND
OTHERS: Mr. Edward Robar, Metro Transit
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 the Boardroom, Sackville Planning Office, 1st Floor, 636 Sackville Drive.

2. PRESENTATION - ECO PASS

Mr. Phil Cox introduced Ms. Stephanie Sodero from the Ecology Action Centre's TRAX Program. Her verbal presentation included the following comments:

- Due to the success of the U-Pass program (University Transit Pass), TRAX is now considering a workplace transit pass program.
- There are currently over ten workplace transit pass programs in Canada. The local program will be called the GO Pass.
- A summary of the ECO Pass programs in Canada was circulated to the Committee at this time. The summary included the minimum number of employees required for the transit authority to offer the program, the discount offered, whether the employer or transit authority would offer the discount, the number of employers participating (statistics are from CUTA 2003), the number of employees participating and the percentage of new riders (those who previously drove alone to work).
- It is an annual or monthly program paid for through payroll deduction.
- The most common program is a twelve month enrolment program with a discount of 10 - 17% in exchange for the guaranteed revenue.
- A 15% discount in Halifax would represent a savings to the participating employee of approximately \$100 per year.
- It would be an annual pass and would eliminate the need for the employee to pick up a monthly transit pass. The employee receives a plastic card that is difficult to replicate.
- The payment is made through payroll deduction.
- TRAX has received funding from Environment Canada to explore such a program in Halifax as there is no such program east of Quebec.
- Surveys have been conducted at various workplaces asking employees what type of discount they would like to see and would they use transit more often if this was offered.
- On May 18, 2006 a one day ECO PASS workshop will be held with presenters from Vancouver and Ottawa.

- For Fall/Winter 2006/07, TRAX will explore the potential for a pilot project at one or two smaller work places in the Halifax area.
- 5% is the average across North America for a switch from single occupancy vehicles to transit with the workplace program compared to 25% for the U-Pass.
- Three workplace surveys have been completed and two - three more will be completed for TRAX's annual report.
- The surveys included which payment option the employee would prefer. Choices of payment were cash, automatic payroll deduction, credit card.
- There was some interest in a seasonal pass for the winter months when walking/cycling weather was not ideal.
- Another point of interest was in with employees using the transit pass while on a waiting list for a parking space.
- The transit pass has also been used as a "perk" for those employees who currently use transit.
- An advertisement was placed in the GO TIME and over 30 workplaces have contacted TRAX expressing interest in the pass.

Mr. McKinnon expressed concern with offering this program when the current transit system may not be able to accommodate the increase in ridership.

Ms. Sodero advised that TRAX will write a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper requesting more funding for transit.

Councillor Johns commented that HRM will soon receive approximately \$20 M from the Federal Government for transit services. Mr. Robar added that the funding will be used to address the current transit deficiencies.

Ms. Sodero responded to Mr. McKinnon's question on financial impact indicating that 1.5 to 2.5 full time positions were established to administer the transportation/demand program in Vancouver (TransLink). She further responded to Mr. Merrick that even with the discount, vacations and time off would equal out so there would be little or no financial impact.

Mr. Robar confirmed that the U-Pass is actually cost neutral. He added that a 5% increase in ridership would not be a huge impact on the transit system.

Ms. Sodero responded to Mr. Chaffey that the minimum number of participating employees would be 25 in order for Transit to deliver the passes to the workplace. She added that either the employee would make the commitment or the employer would

purchase the 25 passes and have them available for employees.

Ms. Sodero advised that all local workplaces surveyed were on the Peninsula.

The Committee thanked Ms. Sodero for her presentation.

3. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Addition: 8.2.1 Correspondence from Mr. Robar regarding the Mount St. Vincent Transit Shelter.

8.2.2 Update from Meeting Held with Mr. Silver, Mr. Robar - Councillor Johns.

8.2.3 Urban Transportation Showcase Program - Presentation by Mr. Robar

The agenda was **approved as amended**.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - February 15, 2006 and March 8, 2006

MOVED BY Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. John Merrick that the minutes of February 15, 2006 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Approval of the March 8, 2006 minutes was **deferred** to the May meeting.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

5.1 Status Sheet Item

5.1.1 Transit Study Update

Mr. Bill Chaffey previously circulated statistical data to the Committee via e-mail. He requested comments/suggestions be sent to the Legislative Assistant or himself prior to the May meeting.

Mr. Robar will provide a projector for the next meeting to assist the Committee in viewing the statistical information.

Mr. Robar responded to a question from Councillor Johns in regard to liability to Metro Transit for having people standing on the buses indicating that there is no real load capacity for buses only a load line (a line on the floor that passengers must stay behind). He added that usually one half the seating capacity is the figure used to calculate for standees. Mr. Robar explained that every transit system experiences standees. Mr. Chaffey commented that there should be no standees on routes with a higher rate of speed.

The data that Mr. Chaffey is using to compile the statistics does not indicate what type of bus is in use (low floor or articulated). The Committee requested that Mr. Robar provide information as to which routes have articulated buses.

Mr. Chaffey advised that the statistics for the next meeting will focus on the Routes 80, 82 and maybe the 86/87. He added that he will try to include something with time and distance as well as a line for the seating capacity of the low floor buses.

The Committee expressed concern with the low floor buses and the reduction in seats. They also expressed concern that the low floor buses are not functional in the winter.

Mr. Robar advised that prior to amalgamation, transit received annual funding from the provincial government.

Mr. Chaffey commented that there are at least two car pools travelling in from Windsor who now use the Sackville MetroLink service and which is not being subsidized by Hants County. Councillor Johns requested information on who is using the park and ride at the Sackville Terminal. He suggested that a survey be available at the terminal for people to complete and drop off which would include questions on where they are travelling from/to.

Councillor Johns also added that there are two more apartment buildings to be built on the Cobequid Road which may affect ridership at the Cobequid Terminal.

Councillor Johns suggested that a notice be placed at the Cobequid Terminal thanking the North West Transit Advisory Committee for all the work they are doing on behalf of Metro Transit. The Committee respectfully declined this offer.

The Committee commended Mr. Chaffey and Mr. Merrick for all their work to date.

5.1.2 Pedestrian Walkway Sackville area near Highway 101

A report on this matter was forwarded to the North West Community Council for the April

27, 2006 meeting.

5.1.3 Cobequid Community Health Centre

Mr. Robar advised that training staff were sent to the area to determine if it could be accessed by a bus. Staff reported the following concerns:

- There is a 90 degree curve and the bus would run up the curb trying to manoeuvre the turn.
- It would require a U-turn on a public street to get the bus turned around.

Councillor Johns requested that Metro Transit respond on whether or not the Route 82 could go all the way in, past the bulb, and come out the other side. Mr. Cox also commented that he would like a response from Metro Transit on whether or not a bus could go in Freer Lane and come out the other side. Councillor Johns requested how this would affect the timing for the route.

Mr. McKinnon expressed extreme frustration with the fact that service was not incorporated into the concept plans as he raised the issue years ago.

5.1.4 Amendment to the NWTAC Terms of Reference

The Legislative Assistant advised that a report has been forwarded to the North West Community Council on this matter for their April 27, 2006 meeting.

5.1.5 NSCC Transit Service

The Committee expressed concern with the length of travel time/connections for Sackville residents to reach the new Dartmouth Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College.

Mr. Robar advised that it is possible that the Route 60 service would be increased to fifteen minute service in November. Sackville residents would have to transfer to the Route 60 or take the Woodside Ferry.

Councillor Johns suggested Shannon Park would be an ideal area for converging routes and perhaps transit could be incorporated into any plans for that area. Mr. Robar agreed that it would be a good central location.

5.1.6 New Metro Link Terminal - Sackville

The Committee expressed concern with the lack of landscaping at this location and requested that trees/grass/shrubs be placed at this location as it is an eyesore. Councillor Johns suggested a *Welcome to Sackville* sign also be placed in that area.

Mr. Robar advised that the construction of that terminal was on a tight time-line and was done in the winter months. He added that some landscaping had been suggested but there were By-Laws that hindered the number of parking spaces that could be constructed. He suggested that Mr. Geoff Wright, Metro Transit, be requested to respond to this issue.

5.1.7 New Rink in Bedford

The Committee requested that a recommendation go forward to the North West Community Council now, to ensure that adequate transit service/infrastructure will be incorporated at the earliest possible stage in the planning for the new three rink complex in Bedford and also for the Rocky Lake Road Development area.

Mr. Cox commented on the safety issues associated with a bus pulling over to make stops on a road with a 70 km/hour speed limit.

Mr. Robar advised that transit would not be able to provide service at this location if they are not able to enter and exit the area.

MOVED BY Mr. John Merrick, seconded by Mr. Bill Chaffey that the North West Transit Advisory Committee recommend that the North West Community Council request that HRM Planning and Development Staff ensure transit service and all related infrastructure is included in the development agreement process for the Rocky Lake Road development area and the proposed three rink complex in Bedford. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS

6.1 Count Down Pedestrian Traffic Lights

Mr. Merrick advised that this item could be deleted.

7. REPORTS - None

8. NEW BUSINESS / ADDED ITEMS

8.1 **NEW BUSINESS** - None

8.2 **ADDED ITEMS**

8.2.1 **Correspondence from Mr. Robar regarding the Mount St. Vincent Transit Shelter.**

The Committee acknowledged receipt of Mr. Robar's letter of confirmation that the MSVU shelter will be installed this year.

8.2.2 **Update from Meeting Held with Mr. Silver, Mr. Robar - Councillor Johns.**

Councillor Johns advised that he met with Metro Transit staff regarding extension of transit service, specifically to the Lucasville Road area. Mr. Paul McDaniel, the new General Manager for Metro Transit, has suggested a type of shuttle (feeder) service in this area to see if it will work. It would be a smaller, 25 seat bus. Mr. Robar added that it would give higher frequency and less problem with traffic delays. This is considered a "hub and spoke" system.

Councillor Johns added that this may create employment as more drivers would be required. He added that this service would work very well in Bedford such as the Paper Mill area as there would be the ability to go into smaller communities where a larger 40' bus would not be able to access.

Councillor Johns further commented that he suggested this area as a pilot project as it is the only region that has a transit advisory committee that could report back to staff.

The Committee commented that the community shuttle service would be better than no service.

8.2.3 **Urban Transportation Showcase Program - Presentation by Mr. Robar**

This item was deferred due to time constraints. The information is to be e-mailed to the Committee members in advance of the next meeting.

9. **NEXT MEETING DATE** - To be determined.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 pm.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant