

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

January 21, 2004

THOSE PRESENT: Phillip Cox, Chair
Bill Chaffey (7:16 pm)
Troy Mitchell
Gunther Seyffarth
Councillor Brad Johns

ALSO PRESENT: Eddie Robar, Schedule Planner, Metro Transit
Geoff Wright, Project Manager, Metro Transit
Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

Regrets: Alastaire Lawrie
Ron McKinnon (*did not receive sufficient notice of meeting*)

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. in the LeBrun Centre, 36 Holland Avenue, Bedford.

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

Additions:

- 6.3 May Schedule Changes - Mr. Eddie Robar
- 6.4 Beaverbank Transit and Connection with Route 80 - Councillor Brad Johns
- 6.5 Route 84 - Mr. Troy Mitchell

The Committee agreed by consensus to the order of business as amended.

3. **PRESENTATION RE: BUS RAPID TRANSIT**

Mr. Geoff Wright, Project Manager, Metro Transit, presented a PowerPoint presentation on BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) for HRM. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is on file.

The following issues were raised during the ensuing discussion:

- ! BRT does not service the corridor so it will not be counted in the Service Standards.
- ! Possible reduction to service to Route 84 with introduction of the BRT
- ! The fare for the BRT is being discussed. It will be slightly more than the current transit fare.
- ! Transfers from regular transit to BRT possible but you would have to pay the difference in fare.
- ! Not sure about ticket users - still in discussions. Trying to get infrastructure first, then the details will be settled as there is a list of issues to discuss.
- ! BRT is offered in other areas in Canada, Ottawa for example, where there are dedicated running ways and BRT does not run in mixed traffic.
- ! Speed of BRT vs. Route 84 - would depend on traffic. The BRT's will have better suspension so they will be able to travel faster on highways. Also, the priority signaling will assist in getting through traffic faster.
- ! BRT will have space for two bicycles to be attached to the front of the buses with independent access.
- ! Unfortunate Province is not contributing more that \$786,000.00 as they will only fund infrastructure for Provincially owned intersections.

Concern with other vehicle drivers “abusing” the bus right turning lane designed for signal priority for buses. Province of Nova Scotia has to be approached regarding changing the Motor Vehicle Act for “queue jumping” regarding signal priority. This should be done by Spring 2004.

Mr. Geoff Wright advised that some Transit Operators have been pulled over by police for using the queue jump lanes. There is obviously a need for more education.

Suggestion that fines be considered for abusing the changes to the Provincial Legislation (Motor Vehicle Act) regarding queue jump lanes. *(Mr. Wright showed a video on his laptop regarding how the queue jump lane would work).*

Next steps involve public meetings and input and there is a PR Consultant working on this.

Councillor Johns advised he would like this to be on the North West Community Council agenda.

Advertisements will be up at some terminals.

Metro Transit Quarterly newsletter will have information. Councillor Johns added that his Councillor’s newsletter could include information on this as well.

New Sackville Terminal will have all amenities similar to the Mumford Terminal.

Wheaton’s property is a bit out of the way for the Sackville Terminal - could the Beaverbank/Windsor Junction Intersection be incorporated into the BRT system? Also, fair number of users coming from Mount Uniacke/Beaverbank.

The BRT will bypass Downsview completely.

Should look at a “feeder” system so other buses will connect with BRT routes.

Mr. Robar explained a service adjustment to have smaller buses running more frequently through the community was turned down.

Suggestion to have a terminal at the tracks near Beaverbank

Route 84 service is not great as the bus is always packed and riders often must stand all the way to downtown.

Mr. Robar commented there has been a 10% increase in ridership on Route 84 in the last year. He further advised more service is needed in Sackville but there are no more buses. He added with BRT, the ideal is to have seated only - no one should be standing.

Mr. Wright added February 2005 is the target date for BRT service but there is a phenomenal amount of work yet to do. Mr. Robar added the BRT schedule could be completed in a day but the Infrastructure has to be completed first.

Suggestion, have PR person tell public there will be no double header for Route 84 once BRT is in place.

How will fares be determined for the BRT? Will it be a public process or will Regional Council decide? *This item to be added to the next agenda for staff report/comment.*

Mr. Robar advised there will be an extensive marketing campaign for the BRT.

The Committee thanked Mr. Geoff Wright for his presentation.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES - November 19, 2003**

MOVED by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth, seconded by Mr. Troy Mitchell to approve the Minutes of meeting held on November 19, 2003 as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

5.1 **Bus Shelter - Fenerty Road**

Mr. Robar and Mr. Wright, Metro Transit, explained the Fenerty Road shelter was included in the request for replacement shelters after Hurricane Juan which totaled 13 shelters. They added that all requests over \$50,000 must be approved by Regional Council, therefore, the request had to go as a report to be approved by Regional Council. Councillor Johns advised the report will be before Regional Council on Tuesday, January 27, 2004.

Mr. Robar added as soon as the frost is out of the ground, the cement can be poured for the Fenerty Road Shelter base. Mr. Seyffarth commented that lights should be installed in the shelter since there has been such a long delay. Mr. Robar responded Metro Transit shelters do not have power. He explained it is the Viacom shelters that have light and Viacom pays for that.

The Committee requested this item remain on the status sheet until the shelter is installed.

5.2 **Intersection of Spring Garden Road and Barrington Street and Spring Garden Road and Summer Street** - *No new information, still under review.*

5.3 **Bus Shelter - Bedford Highway at MSVU**

Mr. Robar advised depending on the number of shelter improvements to be done, an attempt will be made this spring to move the shelter down.

5.4 **Service to Former Sackville Heights Elementary School**

Councillor Johns will set up a meeting with Mr. Eddie Robar and Mr. Ken Silver of Metro Transit.

5.5 **Bus Schedules - Concerns with 80 Series Buses**

5.5.1 Route 83 - Map

Mr. Robar advised Mr. Ken Silver reviewed the re-route and it would be 5.3 km more. He added, if the time change is too substantial, Metro Transit will not make the change. Councillor Johns advised this area does pay for transit in their tax rate and they are 2.5 km from any service. He further added staff will re-assess if the area is an urban or suburban tax rate and, if Metro Transit is not prepared to provide service, staff will recommend a change in rate from urban to suburban.

Mr. Robar advised he will respond to the resident Mr. Brad Rodgers regarding this issue. Councillor Johns advised he will contact staff regarding changing the tax rate.

5.5.2 Route 82 - Service to NSCC on Leeds Street

Mr. Robar will follow-up with member of the public regarding service.

5.6 **Access A Bus**

5.6.1 Low Floor Accessibility Service - Policy and Procedures

Policy and Procedure document was received. No further action required. To be removed from Status Sheet.

5.7 **Park and Rides**

5.7.1 Beaver Bank Park and Ride - No new information.

5.7.2 Upper Sackville Park and Ride

Mr. Cox suggested the Planners inform this Committee of developments as we would not be aware if we did not see the proposed Armoyan development for Middle/Upper Sackville in the paper.

5.7.3 Downsview Park and Ride

Mr. Robar advised the signs were up at Downsview Park and Ride. Mr. Seyffarth will check the signage at Downsview Mall.

Mr. Troy Mitchell advised you must go into Bayers Road Shopping Centre to get a pass from the Information Desk to put in your vehicle in order to park at the Park and Ride. He asked if you would have to do this at Downsview as well. Mr. Robar responded it should not be necessary and he will check into this.

Mr. Mitchell added he could not find the Park and Ride at the Mumford Terminal as he did not expect it to be so far from the buses. He explained the Park and Ride is located next to the fence by the rail road tracks. He suggested there be better signage/labelling. Mr. Robar commented the Malls will not allow Transit to mark the Park and Rides.

5.7.4 Cobequid Park and Ride

Mr. Mitchell commented parking is ridiculous at this site. He advised vehicles are parked in the NO STOPPING / NO PARKING zone and blocking the lane. Councillor Johns advised the owner of adjacent property is asking a very high price. Mr. Cox advised HRM had approached the owner regarding leasing for parking. Councillor Johns added there will be an 80, 78 and 48 unit apartment buildings built near this Park and Ride. Mr. Robar added it would be good to have the BRT running before the apartment buildings go up as there will be increased ridership.

5.8 Long Range Issues

5.8.1 Status of Beaver Bank Bypass - *No new information.*

5.8.2 Future Service to New Cobequid Health Centre - *No new information.*

5.8.3 New Use for Present Cobequid Multi-Service Centre - *No new information.*

5.8.4 Future Service for New Recreation Facility in Bedford - *No new information.*

5.8.5 Future Service for New Community College in Woodside - *No new information.*

5.8.6 Transit Service to Halifax International Airport - *No new information*

5.8.7 Transit Service to Bayers Lake Business Park from Sackville - *No new information.*

5.8.8 Commuter Rail Committee

To be removed from the status sheet as per e-mail from Mayor's Office. There is a Committee working on this issue.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

6.1 Promotion of Transit - Mr. Ron McKinnon

Deferred to February meeting.

6.2 Use of Biodiesel in Metro Fleet - Mr. Phillip Cox

Mr. Geoff Wright informed the Committee that biodiesel is in use in the Metro Fleet at present. Mr. Wright added he has no further information as to how well this new fuel is performing.

Mr. Cox provided some background on biodiesel stating it is a by-product produced at a fish plant in Mulgrave, Nova Scotia. He added the fish oil extraction can be mixed with regular #2 fuel oil in an 80/20 mix. Mr. Cox advised this mix gives the oil a higher congealing temperature. He added the benefits of this product are: less pollution than regular #2 fuel oil, it is locally produced, it is good use of a by-product that would otherwise be wasted, it is a "green fuel".

Mr. Cox further advised that 20 provincial buildings are currently using this product as a heating fuel. He added this product may have tax benefits (for example: long-haul truckers would not pay tax for 20% of the fuel as it would be biodiesel). Mr. Cox also advised that Wilson's Fuel currently has exclusive use of the product in the home heating industry. He added the Mulgrave Plant, where the product is produced, uses 100% of this "waste" to heat their plant. Mr. Cox commented the biodiesel will "eat" rubber gaskets and "O" rings as it acts as a bit of a solvent.

The Committee requested Metro Transit (Mr. Paul Beauchamp) provide information on how this product is working in their Fleet.

6.3 May Schedule Changes

Mr. Eddie Robar reported the following changes for the 80 series buses:

Route 80: brought up to core standards: will run on 30 minute service all day on Sundays. Core service is 15 minutes during peak hours and 30 minutes on regular schedule.

Route 82: local standard service on Sundays (hourly) Cobequid Terminal to Downsview Terminal only - this route currently has no Sunday service.

Route 83: will run all day on Sundays.

Route 87: will run from morning until 10:00 pm and will run hourly to the bridge and all day on Sundays

The following comments were made during ensuing discussion:

: Sackville should have smaller bus running constantly between the two terminals

Mr. Robar commented there has been an increase of 100 hours per day to Sackville to meet service standards.

: Will there be service after 9:20 pm?

Mr. Robar responded that all service will be until 10:00 pm including Sundays.

Mr. Geoff Wright added the recent transit review showed service was at 60% and with these changes, it will be brought up to 90%. Mr. Robar added this will be a 70,000 km increase in service in the next year (140 hours per week which equals an additional 10 shifts).

: the new buses will mean less downtime (for repairs).

Mr. Robar advised there will be seven new buses arriving in March 2004.

: double headers should be considered for the 84 as the ridership is there.

: will the 82 run downtown before the additional 20,000 residents move into the Bedford developments?

Mr. Robar responded the 82 will eventually run downtown but presently it is too costly. Mr. Geoff Wright added local conventional transit will be planned when the residential development is more laid out. Councillor Johns advised that an exit to Highway 102 must be built first before the development can be completed. Mr. Robar commented Mill Cove will have a ferry service (with a park and ride lot) within the next three years which will take huge load off the Bedford Highway. He added the cost of a ferry would be less than rail. Councillor Johns added there is a Ferry Reserve Fund in HRM in which a certain amount is deposited each year toward the cost of future Ferry Service.

6.4 Beaverbank Transit and connection with Route 80

Councillor Johns gave resident information to Mr. Eddie Robar concerning a complaint with the last scheduled bus to leave Downsview Terminal departing 20 minutes before the movies let out. Mr. Robar will contact the resident.

6.5 Route 84 - Mr. Troy Mitchell

Mr. Mitchell informed the Committee that one rainy, cold day in December, the Route 84 was re-routed but the waiting passengers were not informed and waited over 40 minutes at the North and Barrington Street stop by the Dockyard. He added they finally noticed the 84 going over the MacDonald bridge and realized it must have been re-routed so they walked down to catch the bus on the other side of the road. He added that there is no other bus for them to take if the 84 is re-routed. Mr. Mitchell added that he became ill due to the long wait in the cold and rain.

Mr. Mitchell asked what Metro Transit's policy was for notifying riders of a re-route. Mr. Robar advised he will speak to (Doug) Metro Transit regarding the policy for re-route notification.

Mr. Cox explained that re-routes are done only if there is a structural problem on the bridge or if the wind is too high.

7. **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Wednesday, February 18, 2004 at 7:00 pm. Meeting location to be in the Councillor's Office, Acadia School, Sackville Drive.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant